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WORLDS ENDING. ENDING WORLDS

UNDERSTANDING APOCALYPTIC TRANSFORMATION

Edited by Jenny Stümer, Michael Dunn and David Eisler

APOCALYPTIC AND POST-APOCALYPTIC STUDIES

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Worlds Ending. Ending Worlds

Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies

Edited by
Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies

Volume 1

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Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies is edited by the Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies (CAPAS) at Heidelberg University. The series highlights thought-provoking voices and wide-ranging perspectives that explore the ends of worlds and their various cultural, political, and material implications.

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Robert Folger

Preface

In 2007, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung*) instituted the Käte Hamburger International Centres (KHK) with the purpose of advancing innovative, interdisciplinary, and internationally visible research in the social sciences and the humanities. In the second round of calls of proposals for KHK the Ministry widened the reach by funding two centres which explore topics rooted in the humanities but with a particular focus on transdisciplinary work. As a result, the University of Heidelberg was awarded funding for the Centre of Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies (CAPAS), starting in March 2020.

The inter- and trans-disciplinary nature of our research centre accounts for the fact that the apocalypse as a trope, figure of thought, and discourse – as it is studied in the humanities – is complementary to empirically observable catastrophic change in natural and/or social systems. In contrast to other notions of existential threat (for instance, existential crisis, catastrophe, cataclysm, rupture), apocalypse allows us to think about the end not as total destruction but as a form of radical change of the "paramount reality" of a lifeworld: the end of the world as we know it on different scales (from global to individual), followed by a predominantly dystopian post-apocalypse, but also as the founding event – in the sense given to the term by Alain Badiou – of a potentially better world. The trope of the apocalypse (and its post-apocalyptic corollary) conceptualized as a point of no return, as folding back of the end times unto its foundations, allows the study of various essential "boundaries" of our epoch (ecological, economic, technological, military, cultural, institutional, psychological, etc.) as a complex system. In this sense, the apocalypse is not primarily a research topic which can be approached in an intra-disciplinary way. Rather, the notion of apocalypse constitutes the line of flight for a broad range of academic disciplines that study the finiteness of comprehensive orders, self-reproducing systems, and paramount realities. Moreover, the trans-disciplinarity of CAPAS implies that this collaborative research on a topic which addresses concerns (and hopes) in everyday life provides the basis of a dialogue with society at large.

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 CAPAS to caution against accepting this universal and transcultural validity of apocalyptic thinking. Historical records and current developments in the non-Western world show that apocalyptic thinking has been and is

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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 as well as radical critiques of Western Modernity and the capitalist world-system.

As an international centre for advanced studies CAPAS enables and relies on the work of fellows who explore these issues with original and varied outlooks. Each year CAPAS hosts a new cohort, approximately ten fellows, who are invited to Heidelberg University to pursue their individual projects and conduct collaborative research. In order to further these discussions and to make them available to a broad range of interested audiences and academics, CAPAS uses a variety of scholarly formats such as a public lecture series, a book series, and an open-access peer-reviewed journal *Apocalyptica* to reach out to colleagues, disseminate research, and, at the same time, invite contributions to Apocalyptic and Post-apocalyptic Studies.

Part and parcel of this academic outreach agenda, is the Annual CAPAS Conference, the first of which took place in April 2022 at the Marsilius Kolleg in Heidelberg. Around 50 international researchers from various disciplines discussed the theme "Worlds Ending. Ending Worlds" producing novel, varied, and often surprising approaches to the topic of apocalypse. In the first year of CAPAS' existence many of the discussions at the centre had revolved around the notion of "world" and the "ending(s) of world(s)" as a fundamental and rich problem inflecting our discussions of apocalypse. In choosing this topic, we hoped to provide a broader platform for these important questions in the effort to gain a more nuanced understanding of their propensity in a developing field of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic studies. Guided by the question of how to conceptualise the world and its ending(s), this forum, in other words, was an attempt to untangle the very premise of a/the "world" as the object of end time scenarios. It was a first step in theorising the convergence of crisis and world-shifting catastrophe, alongside the possibility of thinking (and perhaps making) new worlds.

The present volume offers a selection based on the many enlightening talks that took place at this first annual conference. We are grateful to all participants who came to Heidelberg to discuss, debate, and conceptualise the many worlds affected by the/an "end" and thereby shed new light on a topic which is age-old and simultaneously gaining new contours in this critical era of apocalyptic transformation. We look forward to exploring these topics and many others with the help of all those interested in the myriad possibilities of the apocalypse as a trans-disciplinary field and hope that the following edition can set a productive tone for such encounters.

Robert Folger,
Director of the Käte Hamburger Centre for
Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies

Jenny Stümer

Introduction: Understanding Apocalyptic Transformation

What does it mean for the world to end? What of the many worlds that have already ended? In its Judeo-Christian origin, apocalypse evokes images of catastrophic destruction and final judgement. The world that has been created will be destroyed in the ultimate act to redeem the righteous and punish the wrongdoers. More recently, apocalyptic motifs have been reinvigorated by secular predicaments to make sense of the terminal condition of our world in the context of climate injustice, nuclear politics, or territorial warfare. Fuelling apocalyptic sentiments as the cornerstones of communal anxiety in the face of a hegemonic world system that feels inevitable,[1] these contemporary invocations of "the end" highlight the enduring significance of apocalyptic narratives as part and parcel of collective imaginaries. Jacques Derrida has further insisted on the profoundly particular and somewhat personal scale of "the end," famously reminding us that every death marks the end of the world, "each time singularly, each time irreplaceably, each time indefinitely."[2] And finally, there is, of course, also the literal end of the material world, routinely abstracted as "an unceremonious act of mass accretion"[3] in, give or take, five billion years from now. In each of these different musings, apocalypse provides a prism through which to examine trajectories of radical ontological and epistemological change. It is the moment of final breaching, the point of no return.

Apocalypse, in other words, is subject to transformation, while transformation endures as a central subject of apocalypse. In fact, the notion of the end of the world has been frequently invoked as a quintessential metaphor, narrative, and empirical experience to highlight profound change, upheaval, or rupture in past, present, and future. At the same time, these multi-layered mediations have also distinctly transformed what apocalypse can mean and how it speaks to an end

1 Carl Cassegård and Håkan Thörn, *Post-Apocalyptic Environmentalism: The Green Movement in Times of Apocalypse* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 2.

2 Jacques Derrida, "Rams: Uninterrupted Dialogue – Between Two Infinities, the Poem," in *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 140.

3 David Eisler, "When 'The End of Everything' Really Is," Review *Until the End of Time: Mind, Matter, and the Search for Meaning in an Evolving Universe* by Brian Greene and *The End of Everything (Astrophysically Speaking)* by Katie Mack, *Apocalyptica* 1 (2022): 181, accessed April 23, 2023, doi: 10.17885/heiup.apoc.2022.1.24614.

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of the world, thereby also changing the vast onto-epistemological implications of what we perceive as "world," "end," or "aftermath." In particular the traumatic events of the last century, from the Holocaust to Hiroshima to 9/11, have firmly emplaced the apocalyptic imaginary as a sounding board for concerns about necropolitical violence, ideological warfare, and mass extinction in the new millennium. Similarly, the proverbial "ends" of history, philosophy, or even "truth" have brought about new forms of apocalyptic representations that "articulate anxieties related to aspects and side effects of the project of modernity, such as industrialisation, imperialism, urbanisation and environmental degradation."[4] Notoriously, Slavoj Žižek has already identified "an apocalyptic zero-point," which the global capitalist system is congruently approaching, foreboding the ecological crisis, biogenetic technology, economic disparity and social division as the relentless horsemen that will bring about the proverbial "end."[5]

Of course, not everyone is mourning the prospect of systemic collapse, which has also been read as a much-needed corrective to modernity's violent progress. As early as the late 1930s Walter Benjamin had already warned that the very concept of progress is "grounded in catastrophe" and that the fact "that 'things just go on' is the catastrophe."[6] Read through this lens, apocalypses and their aftermaths (concrete and imagined) may also produce emancipatory potentials that engage with the possibilities of plural worlds, embodied utopia, and non-linear temporalities. Consider for example the ways in which political movements, such as Black Lives Matter, Ni Una Menos, Feminist Green New Deal, or the Indigenous Lands Rights Movement are increasingly concerned with various trajectories of world-ending and world-building. Numerous other individuals, scholars, artists, and activists are likewise longing to escape a sense of communal inertia in the midst of catastrophic progress fuelled by the racialised capitalism of Western hegemonies. Crisis and upheaval, in that sense, also inspire desires for transformation, to build new and better worlds. The various utopian hopes that enthused people in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic might serve as a standout example to implicate such possibilities on a large scale, but similar yearnings and dreams saturate political, intellectual, and artistic endeavours far and wide. In order for these ambitions to take root beyond romanticising the revolutionary twinkles of ubiquitous calamity, however, "the end" as traumatic disruption, profound shift, or radical beginning requires not only the seeds of apocalyptic transformation, but also de-

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4 Monica Germanà and Aris Mousoutzanis, introduction to *Apocalyptic Discourse in Contemporary Culture: Post-Millennial Perspectives on the End of the World* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 4.
5 Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso, 2011).
6 Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings: 1938–1940*, ed. Michael William Jennings (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 184.

mands the laborious undertaking of understanding what's going on, how we got here, and where we can go.

It is worth reflecting on the principal meanings of apocalypse in this context, pointing not only to destructions but to disasters that uncover or produce a particular trajectory of sense making. Etymologically, apocalypse means 'revelation' which, in its original Christian connotation, describes an end of the world – a world whose very sense and meaning only comes through its end. Similarly, empirical destructions of and in the world resonate with this pivotal moment of insight, recognising apocalypses not simply as catastrophes that take hold and lead to senseless devastation, but reproduce them as the end of particular understandings of the world. Such understandings turn out to always already have been determined by modes of self-destruction, which, however, are only revealed in the instant of breakdown. Apocalypses in their far-reaching entanglement with questions of transformation and understanding, hence, do not merely describe those events of remarkable disruption that make obvious a world in peril, but also attend to the more subtle, pervasive, or slow shifts that underlie these bigger disasters and simultaneously disclose their temporal and ideological intersections. For instance, apocalypses may be invoked prospectively exposing the technocratic authoritarianism of contemporary macho-billionaires. They may retrospectively invoke the violence of colonial conquest in the past as persisting in the present and fuel the xenophobic resentments that inflame aggressive forms of nationalism and white supremacy today. Or, they may concoct the disturbing links between the tenacious construction of a value continuum that details precarious attributes of personhood, citizenship, and even humanness as enduring hallmarks of ability, culture, and politics.[7]

Seen in this light, apocalypses are key players in the composition of contemporary social practices and the shared understandings that underlie them. Apocalypses operate as sites of meaning production, made tangible through a complex web of discourses, histories, stories, images, narratives, and representations. The end of the world is, hence, both a concept and a lived experience which is context dependent and malleable. As such, apocalypse habitually accentuates understandings of disaster, catastrophe, or collapse and, simultaneously, resonates with ideas of opportunity, reformation, and change. It is a tool of cultural, political, and philosophical analysis: a lens through which to complicate the premise of a/the world (as the object of end time scenarios) and through which to examine the various

7 See, for example, Claire Colebrook, "Lives Worth Living: Extinction, Persons, Disability," in *After Extinction*, ed. Richard Grusin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 151–171. See also Dan Holloway in this collection.

convergences of crisis and world making, exploring the radical possibilities (and limitations) of new worlds. As Christopher Palmer explains, “apocalyptic and millenarian thinking tends to flare up as a challenge to the normality of the ongoing.”[8] At the same time, apocalypse marks an “ever-present, but never ‘actual’,”[9] that provides “a second reality”[10] against which we construct an inevitable and ongoing horizon of ordinary violence.

The titular notion of *Worlds Ending. Ending Worlds* is central for understanding apocalyptic transformations and their wide-ranging intersections with past and present experiences of catastrophe (including colonialism, nuclear threat, social upheaval, economic disparity and routinised discrimination). The title’s grammar is intentional: A comma would suggest a pause that nevertheless implies continuation between ideas and worlds. The full stop, however, provides a kind of vertex which is also a turning point that simultaneously plays on the notion that an irrevocable end is required before a new beginning can take hold. Most notably, however, these joints and ruptures have consequences for engaging with the many promises of the “end” and its real and imagined “aftermaths.” This book begins charting some of these threads with the aim to inspire productive exchanges about past, present, and future formations of ‘apocalypse’ as the node for much needed transformations. It is an attempt to provide insight into the complex and often confusing orientations toward the apocalyptic as well as an effort to map out examples, scenes, and critiques that speak to the myriad interventions in which apocalypses encroach on understanding the frequent and far-reaching undoings of this ominous place we call “world.”

Is this the End of the World?

In the first instance, apocalypse (real and imagined) produces conceptual problems about the ontological status of what is habitually conceived as “the world” to describe a metaphysical principle as well as the many worlds this notion entails. The end of the world hence throws up essential questions about the processes that have shaped and transformed a multifaceted Earth into the one imperial World. It is a way into thinking about the various magnitudes of accelerated globalisation and settler colonialism in particular as well as a means to explore the

8 Christopher Palmer, *Apocalypse in Crisis: Fiction from The War of the Worlds to Dead Astronauts* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021), 7. For an example also see James Crossley in this collection.

9 Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “Two Notes on the End of the World,” *New Left Review* 110 (1978): 74.

10 Enzensberger, “Two Notes,” 74.

emergence of hegemonic networks that link and homogenise dominant political, economic, technological, cultural, and environmental interests into a project of "worlding" that operates on a planetary scale.[11] Modernity's project of totalising the World has had notable devastating consequences for the worlds of disenfranchised communities. Black, Indigenous, migrant, queer and trans people, for example, have lived through and continue to live with and despite the many ends of their worlds. These marginalised groups are routinely pushed to the fringes of the system, locked out behind walls and inside prisons or relegated to a past that has been declared passed. This destruction of lifeworlds in the name of progress, of course, also extends to non-human communities (who were never really separate from humans in the first place). The end of the world, in other words, is inherently linked to questions of position and power: to race, gender, class, ability etc. As Danowski and Viveiros de Castro put it, the end of the world poses the question "for whom the world that ends is a world, who is the worldly or 'worlded' being who defines the end."[12] In other words, the act of hierarchising some lives over others entails an apocalyptic logic that profoundly shapes the distribution of belonging to the World.

Settler colonialism has long treated "new worlds" as *worlds without humans* that are essentially up for grabs in an effort to expand the imperial World. Exponentially these acts of colonial violence have become structural; in turn producing a large contingent of *humans without worlds*:[13] notably those communities that are disregarded and ostracised due to their social, racial, or gendered status and consequently tend to remain invisible or ghosted within the political realms of Anderson's imagined community. While increasing numbers of people worry which shape the world might take (if any), these ostensibly "unimagined communities,"[14] those groups that are not considered part of this World, are condemned to the precarious existence of 'worldlessness' from the outset and simultaneously underpin the political structure and possibility of the World. There are countless examples that expose "worldlessness" as a systemic feature and biopolitical framework of

11 For an in depth problematization of the ontological status of the world see also Tommy Lynch's contribution in this collection. For a discussion of the relation between apocalypticism and colonialism in particular, see Paolo Vignolo's and Patricia Zalamea's respective contributions in this collection.

12 Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World*, trans. Rodrigo Guimaraes Nunes (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), 20.

13 Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World*, 105–106.
See also Cristine Hentschel and Julia Grillmayr in this collection.

14 Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 150.

modern politics.[15] Premised on the "inclusive exclusion" identified by Agamben,[16] the cruel treatment of refugees and migrants might serve as a paradigmatic pattern of such structural abandonment. However, worldlessness is also expressed in more quotidian forms of disbelonging, as reflected, for instance, in the daily experience of BIPOC, women, differently abled people, etc. All bodies (human and nonhuman) arrive into the world differently, precisely because worlds are "made to shelter some bodies and not others"[17] as Sara Ahmed puts it and therefore the World structures political consciousness and experiences in fastidious ways. A politics of "worlds ending. ending worlds" thus negotiates contentious practices of sense making and knowledge production that shape the apocalyptic drive of our times.

As capitalist modernity unravels and the Western mastery over "the future" is no longer a given, living in the end times is predicated on a sense of inevitability, by which the future is imagined as "simply 'cancelled' or foreclosed."[18] Conversely, this sentiment of a future that no longer beholds the privilege of progressive betterment and the promise of the proverbial "good life"[19] reciprocally assumes a present that is intolerable or lacking. To some, this anti-climactic setback postulates the apocalyptic transformation of the World as the end of unfolding a particular kind of expectation, which in turn produces aggressive, and, in Benjamin's sense, catastrophic, attempts at preserving the way that things have always been and should continue to "just go on."[20] As Wendy Brown puts it, "there is a form of Nihilism shaped by the waning of a kind of social dominance of a historical kind," which results in the overt display of white supremacist movements on the one hand and in more subtle proliferations of evolving forms of enclosure and social exclusion, such as reflected, for example, in the emergence of ever new gated communities, bunkers, prisons, and walls on the other.[21] The apocalyp-

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15 For a related discussion see Alejandra Bottinelli Wolleter's contribution in this collection.

16 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1.

17 Sara Ahmed and Sigrid Schmitz, "Affect/Emotion: Orientation Matters. A Conversation between Sigrid Schmitz and Sara Ahmed," interview in *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Geschlechter Studien* 20:2 (2014): 110.

18 Lisa Baraitser, *Enduring Time* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 8.

19 Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

20 Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 184 "that 'things just go on' is the catastrophe."

21 See, among others, Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (New York: Zone Books, 2010); Robert E. Kirsch and Emily Ray, *Worse Case Scenario: The Politics of Prepping in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023); Jaspir K. Puar, "Spatial Debilities: Slow Life and Carceral Capitalism in Palestine," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 120:2 (2021): 393–414; Jenny Stümer, *Walled Life: Concrete, Cinema, Art* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2022).

tic imaginary, it seems, is ubiquitously "available for the release of ambivalent or aggressive feelings"[22] and, as Brown further explains, to the extent that a Western patrimony of capitalist abundance finds itself "in a world emptied not only of meaning, but of its own place, far from going gently into the night, it turns toward apocalypse."[23] In this scenario apocalyptic transformations become themselves the crux for producing further patterns of destruction and violence as they lampoon fantasies of righteousness delivered in the performance of maintaining a long lost sense of hegemonic sovereignty.

Crucially, in aiming to preserve the privileged tenets of capitalist modernity, responses to apocalyptic anxieties of this kind (which do not only emerge from the Right) appear, themselves, stuck in a particular interpretative framework whereby the problems at hand are met in such a way that the "solutions" routinely repeat and escalate the very premises that have led to the current gridlock of existential dead ends. Unpacking this flawed logic, Kyle Powys Whyte warns that hasty assumptions that a particular emergency is new, unprecedented, and urgent, can lead to actions that disadvantage disenfranchised communities once more – thereby escalating, slowly but incessantly, the very structures that have brought about these crises in the first place.[24] Infrastructural solutions to climate emergency that end up flooding Indigenous communities, for example, not only reinstate the problematic questions of whose world is ending and whose world is to be saved, but also postulate that some "ends" of the world are only up-to-the-minute from a position of power or a settler point of view. Understanding the various shapes of contemporary apocalypse in their intersectional significance is part and parcel of finding ways to cope with the current crises without reducing them to another means of subjugation and violence. After all, "ends," their "aftermaths," and the various trajectories of "worldlessness" they produce and congeal have long been the parameters of political paralysis and powerlessness that predominantly mark the disastrous experiences of marginalised communities but ultimately destroy the planet for all. The end of the World (as we know it) can hence also be read as a project to dislodge the present from its current conundrums and long held materialisations of power, profit, and systemic control.

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22 Palmer, *Apocalypse in Crisis*, 3.
23 Wendy Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 180. See also Della Torre's contribution in this collection.
24 Kyle Powys Whyte, "Against Crisis Epistemology," in *Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies*, ed. Brendan Hokowhitu, A. Moreton-Robinson, L. Tuhiwai-Smith, C. Andersen, and S. Larkin (London: Routledge, 2021), 52–64; see also Christian Long's discussion of apocalypse and infrastructure in this collection.

Living and Dying in the End Times

At the forefront of the negotiation of world-breaking and world-making hails the Anthropocene as a categorical reminder of differential worldings and what Kathryn Yusoff calls "the ends of Master subjects: Man, History, Civilisation."[25] According to Yusoff the Anthropocene as a material framework of planetary predicament appears to "offer a dystopic future that laments the end of the world,"[26] but, at the same time, "is just now noticing the extinction it has chosen to continually overlook in the making of its modernity and freedom."[27] Optimistically speaking, as the Anthropocene project escalates the notion of an apocalyptic horizon, emerging imaginaries meet these challenges of the present via intellectual and practical engagement with what Donna Haraway designates as "staying with the trouble."[28] Opposing the quick seduction of apocalyptic technofixes as well as cynical investments in apocalyptic futurities, Haraway's call to vital forms of stirring, mixing, and troubling is focused on kinship as "a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in the thick of the present."[29] To her this is about staying with the "myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings"[30] in an effort to exist in "response-ability on a damaged earth."[31] Put simply, we need worlds to world: an obvious, yet easily overlooked point, that Indigenous scholars and activists have long argued.

Further highlighting the twin logic of climate emergency and enduring colonialities, Amitav Gosh states that "poverty is itself an effect of the inequities created by the carbon economy; it is the result of systems that were set up by brute force to ensure that poor nations remained always at a disadvantage in terms of both wealth and power."[32] Rejecting this premise of slow violence, Ghosh highlights that "the scale of climate change is such that individual choices will make little difference unless certain collective decisions are taken and acted

25 Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 1.
26 Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes*, xii.
27 Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes*, xii.
28 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).
29 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 1.
30 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 1.
31 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 2.
32 Amitav Gosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 110.

upon."[33] Similarly, Malcolm Ferdinand unpacks what he calls "modernity's colonial and environmental double-fracture"[34] in order to deconstruct the intersecting forms of ecological and structural violence that underwrite "the sixth mass extinction" underway.[35] He maintains that "both historical colonisation and contemporary structural racism are at the centre of destructive ways of inhabiting the Earth."[36] Collectively, these writers echo a broader uneasiness with Anthropocene universalism, emphasising the various erasures invoked by world-ending histories that were always already "incubated through the regulatory structure of geological relation."[37]

Of course, nuclear destruction is part and parcel of this oblique logic of the apocalyptic Anthropocene, whereby intersecting forces of destruction are homogenised under the umbrella of planetary threat and all-encompassing end times anxiety. Similar to climate catastrophe, the threat of nuclear destruction is a significant vehicle of world-breaking but also (toxic) world building,[38] precisely because the 'bomb' is so closely associated with a megalomaniac modernity's being-towards-death, in the Heideggerian sense, which simultaneously unites the World in peril and produces a particular perspective on Dasein. In fact, Gabriele Schwab insists on the emergence of nuclear subjectivities and explains that nuclear necropolitics "must be added to climate change as one of the foremost challenges to the survival of the planet."[39] Schwab maintains that radioactivity is "the most destructive footprint that humans have left on the planet,"[40]escalating the means of ontological insecurity as well as the meanings of epistemological limits. Nevertheless, nuclear weapons have become a "national form of infrastructure"[41] that determines the flow of resources, risks, and security as Jessica Hurley points out. In this sense, nuclear politics stitch together the coordinates of quotidian existence in ways that "profoundly shape our being in the world;"[42] however, at the same

33 Gosh, *The Great Derangement*, 133.

34 Malcolm Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World*, trans. Anthony Paul Smith (Cambridge: Polity, 2021), 3.

35 Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, 1.

36 Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, 11.

37 Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes*, 2.

38 See, among others, Alastair Lockhart's and Tommy Lynch's respective contributions in this collection.

39 Gabriele Schwab, *Radioactive Ghosts* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2020), xii.

40 Schwab, *Radioactive Ghosts*, xii.

41 Jessica Hurley, *Infrastructures of Apocalypse* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2020), 3.

42 Schwab, *Radioactive Ghosts*, xi

time the biopolitical, psychopolitical, and ecological efficacy of the nuclear is subject to elaborate and systemic repression.[43]

Rather than simply producing an epistemological frisson or unarticulated absence of meaning, the presence of nuclear apocalypse and Anthropocene crisis renders "the end of the world," both a charged imaginary and an empirical experience that makes visible the myriad and intersecting forms of violence that threaten the planet. In other words, engagements with apocalyptic transformation must recognise the plural temporalities and dispersed geographies and experience of "the end of the world." In this sense, apocalypse continually enfolds the questions posed by the slow catastrophe of planetary subjugation: the convergence of structural, colonial, and environmental violence. "Where is it happening, and to whom, by whom"[44] asks Hurley, and how might apocalypse itself function as a form of transfiguration, one that works "by radically changing the imagined future" and by allowing "for different realities to become imagined in the present."[45]

The Apocalyptic Imaginary as Transformation

Ultimately, the apocalyptic imaginary emerges in (at least) two complementary ways. First, apocalyptic imaginaries underwrite our ongoing predicaments and challenges and therefore help us to make sense of the shape trajectories of human and non-human disasters currently take. Second, the apocalypse itself can be read as an imaginary – one that has touched base with a range of existing political institutions, social practices, texts, and representation – but which also distinctly marks the end (and beginning) of specific imaginaries or views of the World. As such, the apocalyptic is inherently entwined with notions of mediation and transformation. As Hurley explains, apocalypse "is never a locatable event but rather an imaginative practice that forms and deforms history for specific purposes: an aesthetic that *does* as much as it represents."[46] Apocalypse as practice, in this sense, is about offering openings and new paths to challenging dominant structures through which power, privilege, and oppression are enacted.

Apocalyptic thinking may expose false hopes and quick fixes but ideally it also connotes an interest in contesting, reinterpreting, or broadening existing avenues

43 See Schwab, *Radioactive Ghosts*; Elaine Scarry, *Thermonuclear Monarchy: Choosing Between Democracy and Doom* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014); Hurley, *Infrastructures of Apocalypse.*

44 Jessica Hurley and Dan Sinykin, "Apocalypse: Introduction," *ASAP Journal* 3:3 (2018): 453.

45 Hurly, *Infrastructures of Apocalypse*, 4

46 Hurley and Sinykin, "Apocalypse: Introduction," 451.

of understanding. The way apocalypse is represented in popular culture, political, historical, religious or scientific discourses – as well as everyday experience – is then also a means of making visible (and sometimes upending) hegemonic understandings of progress and catastrophe. For example, Richard Grusin considers the premediated logic of the apocalyptic imaginary through the notion of extinction, asking not only what it would mean for an image, text, or film to "take after" the "end" but also suggesting that the premediation of cataclysmic scenarios serves "to generate anxiety about future catastrophic events and to provide reassurance that they have already been anticipated, remediated and survived."[47] Grusin wonders about the way in which such mediations might avoid pressing concerns of the present but also bring into existence the catastrophic actuality of mass extinction. At the same time, he considers, similar to Hurley and Haraway, how the upending of the future can become a progressive feature of crafting the present; a mode of living in the face of disaster. Just like mediation itself, apocalypse is ambivalent yet generative, producing channels that appeal to the tenets of transformation and reorientation and opening political imaginations to the possibilities of new attachments, connections, and articulations.

Apocalypse, in other words, has become a staple of a wider discourse unravelling a plethora of scenarios that resonate with the end of worlds as cultural, political, and social mechanisms. Part and parcel of these debates is the notion that world ending catastrophes are not a distant prospect to be averted at all cost but a present, ongoing, and lived reality that beckons new forms of responsibility, care, and transformation. Apocalypse as presence, concept, practice, and lived experience has thereby significantly altered common understandings of old and new predicaments, from individual to planetary scale, producing unexpected intellectual junctures that find expression in a vast array of new trends and questions in scholarship, politics, activism, and creative practice. In a time obdurately shaped by world-breaking and world-building, apocalypse no longer appears as a specialist pursuit or moral narrative but emerges as a key point of reference and major subject for understanding the many challenges and opportunities that are transforming our many worlds.

47 Richard Grusin, introduction to *After Extinction* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2018), x; for an interesting discussion of the relation between temporality and apocalyptic imaginaries see also Jaideep Unudurti in this collection.

Structure of this Book

The book highlights the polysemic nature of apocalypse, demonstrating that apocalyptic trans-formations – the various shapes of "across," "beyond," and "other side" implied by the end – productively entangle intriguing points of conjunction between seemingly disparate subject areas. Moving from old worlds to new worlds, from world-ending experiences to apocalyptic imaginaries and, finally, from authoritarianism to activism and advocacy, we begin to map an emerging (if age-old) and timely ground for debate. Combining traditional eschatology and philosophical conceptualisations of world and worlding with a range of historical and contemporary apocalyptic understandings and practices, the multifaceted field we are aiming to contour, makes visible the myriad ways in which collective imaginations of apocalypse underpin ethical, political, and, sometimes, individual aspirations. The apocalyptic imaginary, in other words, problematises the "World" as an inevitable background to doom and destruction; instead fracturing (and potentially rethinking) the ways human and non-humans inhabit and belong to this Earth. Highlighting the continuous role of eschatological apocalypticism in the mobilisation of diverse movements, performances, and ideas that grapple with the means of world-making and world-breaking politics, we seek to engage the apocalypse as a mode of converging different perspectives into a productive conversation.

Opening the collection, Thomas Lynch complicates the concept of the World as an object of apocalypticism in order to postulate a kind of ontological certainty capable of critiquing the world and its various endings. Lynch's nuanced analysis is pivotal in initiating the possibilities of apocalyptic thinking, highlighting the multivocal nature of the concept on the one hand and stressing the universal materialism of the World as an imperialist project on the other. The aim is not to provide a more definite conceptualisation of world and worlding, but to identify a problematic account of "world" underwriting the rejection of apocalypticism more broadly today. Ultimately, Lynch's discussion exposes that attempts at changing or saving the world are steeped in the resources of colonial structures, in whose place, he intimates an apocalypticism less interested in imagining new worlds than concerned with the formulation of a different kind of end – one that advances "the kinds of relations opened up by living towards these different ends."

Drawing on the British Priest Ronald Knox's apprehensive musing on the moral and cultural significance of the atom bomb at the dawn of World War II, Alastair Lockhart traces the emergence of a godless apocalypse, or an apocalypse without meaning in the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Lockhart (alongside Knox) suggests that the escalation of nuclear violence in the 1940s changes the

ways apocalypse is imagined in popular culture and beyond, consequently transforming wide-ranging behaviours and systems of beliefs that thus far governed moral epistemologies, cultural practices, and political realities. Working through various tenets of this process of destabilisation and disorientation in relation to Saint-Amour's concept of the nuclear uncanny, Lockhart suggests that "the atomic bomb imaginatively removes the apocalypse from the divine." The godless apocalypse thereby significantly alters the way humanity attributes meaning to its many worlds, destabilising existing social orders as well as concepts of moral self-possession.

James Crossley negotiates competing forms of apocalypticism in their relation to the emergence of English socialism by tracing the reception history of John Ball, the Priest who led the 1381 Peasant Revolt in England. Crossley argues that depictions of Ball have gone through "a process of domestication," projecting his apocalyptic call for radical social and political transformation, first as a proto-communist threat and later as social democratic prophecy of love and peace. To Crossley this development not only highlights the divorce of socialist thinking and eschatology over the past centuries, downplaying the importance of religious rhetoric in the emergence of politically salient labour movements, but it also points to the historical emergence of competing forms of apocalypticism that produce a kind of inert anti-capitalist and environmentalist performance in the contemporary moment, without providing much needed historical contextualisation that is capable of reviving a more active and much-needed apocalypticism from below.

Shifting the focus from English politics to Latin American colonialism as a world-ending project, Paolo Vignolo explores cartographic imaginaries of the sixteenth century in order to trace the persistence of apocalyptic motifs in the visual mystification of the so-called New World. Exploring this notion of the "New World," synonymously evoked with the conquest of the Americas as both a geographical and a religious perspective, Vignolo is interested in drawing out the complex entanglements between New World rhetoric and end-of-the-world beliefs. Focusing on three maps in particular, the *planisphere* of Juan de la Cosa, the *mappemonde-nouvelle papistique* published in Geneva in 1566, and the *mapamundi del Reino de las Indias* by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, Vignolo emphasises the non-linear narratives and temporalities depicted in these maps, demonstrating that visual anachronisms and religious references are not merely decorative elements in European map making at the time but rather explicitly structure colonial strategies in the narrativisation of the conquest as an apocalyptic imaginary.

Expanding this discussion of the aestheticisation of geopolitical space, Patricia Zalamea discusses the development of a specific iconography in the apocalyptic representations of Latin American colonial art. Investigating the apocalyptic imaginary through images associated with Saint Francis, variations on the Immaculate

Conception as well as depictions of the Last Judgement and associated imagery of purgatory, Zalamea's analysis unfolds artistic re-conceptualisations of space and time in the Andean context. Providing a variety of close readings, she demonstrates how aesthetic attempts at charting Latin America's evangelisation functioned under Spanish rule to confirm pre-existing conceptions of European time. Zalamea's analysis highlights an insistent, transformative, and ambivalent recurrence of apocalyptic motifs, which ostensibly mark the practice of Christian conversion, the negotiation of Indigenous identities, and the inspiration of political insurrections as the pillars of colonial worlding in the Americas.

Thinking about the southern confine of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego as both a geographical and imaginary space, Alejandra Bottinelli Wolleter considers "the end of many worlds at the end of the world." Looking, in particular, at literary engagement with the southern confine, Bottinelli Wolleter's discussion investigates the mystagogic work of disaster in order to think through the way the confines emerge as a crossroad for intersecting forms of violence, as most pertinently enacted in the world-ending practices of colonialism and Nazi genocide. Examining both expressions of this violence and forms of resistance through restitutive writing, the chapter engages with the apocalyptic revelations projected by literature; but also makes the case for the importance of piecing together lost or unacknowledged history through memory, in an effort to imagine common futures and "other ways of inhabiting the world."

Shifting the view to the post-apocalyptic rebuilding of new worlds, Christian Long focuses on the *Planet of the Apes* film series in order to foreground infrastructure as a "background that speaks" in cinematic representations of dystopic space. To Long infrastructure is crucial in understanding how film imagines the possibilities of post-apocalyptic world-building and works as a diagnostic of the social imaginaries that drive communal life in these narratives. In paying attention to the edge of the frame, Long suggests that we use infrastructure as a segue into understanding contemporary power structures. The chapter unpacks how dystopic infrastructures inform apocalyptic scenarios on the one hand and envision future forms of rebuilding after the "end" has taken place on the other. Cinematic infrastructure, in this sense, provides a tool for cultural criticism, ideological analysis, and socio-political preparation, which Long deems essential for the making of better future worlds.

Staying with the critical charge of spectacular apocalyptic representations and working through the tenets of contemporary science-fiction in India, Jaideep Unudurti traces a renewed interest in traditional Hindu eschatology and apocalyptic futurities, intimating a genre-blend of Indian mythology and Western blockbuster aesthetics. Looking at the *Prayala* as "a complex, multimodal operation, involving the collapse of several linked worlds in the cosmic architecture," Unudurti identi-

fies two competing trends, one based on the Nehruvian secular model geared towards liberal progress and one steeped in political Hinduism invested in the deep past, negotiating conflicting narratives, temporalities, and visions for the future against the backdrop of increasingly vexed political tensions in the country. Looking at a range of comics, novels, and cinematic examples, Unudurti posits that the Hindutyan worldview, energised by the rise of the BJP under Narendra Modi, experiences the apocalypse as having already happened and therefore seeks the future as the nostalgic retrieval of a golden past, whereas the Nehruvian intellectuals dedicated to the secular, liberal post-independence order tinge their political critique with increasingly pessimistic outlooks toward a dystopian future as the outcome of present-day politics.

Turning to yet another context of negotiating apocalyptic politics in the grip of nationalist movements, Bruna Della Torre's chapter explores the emerging role of an Anti-feminist coalition in the proliferation of right-wing politics in Brazil. Looking in particular at the role of gender in the political elevation of Jair Messias Bolsonaro, Della Torre identifies a conspicuous presence of right-wing women on Brazilian social media that boost the misogynistic affects of Bolsonaro's power claim through a pointed performance of antifeminist alliances. In particular, Della Torre's chapter works through the intersections between white supremacy, homophobia, hetero-normative motherhood and pro-gun agendas in order to demonstrate Bolsonaro's affinity with Trumpism and National Socialism. Her analysis highlights how these politics mobilise gendered anxieties and fantasies about end time scenarios and pinpoints a gendered performance of resentment as the footing for competing visions of futurity at the heart of the 2022 Brazilian election.

Shifting the view, once more, from right-wing activism to progressive movements in the context of climate emergency, Julia Grillmayr and Christine Hentschel examine the work of German philosopher Günther Anders, productively applying his well-rehearsed thoughts on the atomic bomb to a more contemporary and situated understanding of the Anthropocene. In particular, Grillmayr and Hentschel interrogate Anders's notion of "the *Frist*," as the time still granted, and his call for "moral stretching exercises" in order to develop the notion of "affective workouts" capable of mobilising a vital or "loving fear" that ultimately works "against apocalypse." Coming full circle in the discussion and drawing on different examples of storytelling and activism, the chapter helps to frame the current moment as a final chance to address slow violence and unequal inhabitation of "the world." The contribution demonstrates that Ander's pessimistic philosophy of the nuclear energises attempts at transformation of/in the Anthropocene.

Finally, Dan Holloway's chapter problematises the exclusion of disabled bodies from a postapocalyptic vision of the future. Holloway identifies a significant coinciding of the subjective absence of disability with the symbolic presence of "broken

bodies and broken minds," in the apocalyptic imaginary, which function as warning and hope preparing and sustaining inequitable and damaging conceptualisations of futurity. The chapter maintains that this framework is held together by a mechanism of disgust that drives a particular fantasy or "final eschatology" tethered to harmful notions of purity and "holiness." Opposing this exclusive outlook, particularly in relation to contemporary efforts to mitigate climate disaster, Holloway proposes a mode of what he calls "realised eschatology" which recognises the presence of disability as essential for an ideal world and future. Holloway's impassionate call for "empowering disabled people to be subjects in the fullest sense" invokes the end the world (and the end of this collection) with a striking reimagination of eschatological transformation through inclusiveness.

Post-Apocalypse

While most ideas of apocalypse are routinely deferred to a doomed future, it is vital to consider that as a narrative, prospect, and figure of thought "the apocalypse is always already a post apocalypse" as Monica Germanà and Aris Mousoutzanis point out, precisely because to think and write about the end implies that it has already happened.[48] The understandings delivered by this account unfold paradoxically, in so far as any interpretation of apocalypse intimates worlds that have ended or are ending right now. Beckoning the question of "who is writing and who is reading"[49] to what "end," deference, in this sense, betrays the urgencies of the past and present, as it conceals the brokenness of the world. Instead of preluding the possibility of future world destruction, writing and thinking the post-apocalypse in the present however, is an invitation to make worlds in the here and now. As Alenka Zupančič puts it poignantly: "The apocalypse has already started and is becoming an active part of our life and our world, such as it is. It is not waiting for us somewhere in the future, but is dictating our social, economic, environmental conditions as we speak."[50] *Worlds Ending. Ending Worlds* neither approaches the apocalypse as unique instance nor do we propose the end as a prophetic threat. Rather, apocalypse in this collection, emerges as a series of cataclysmic transformations that recognise the need of complicating a broken world that bears the marks of countless endings, worlds, and aftermaths.

48 Germanà and Mousoutzanis, introduction to *Apocalyptic Discourse*, 5

49 Alexandra Warwick quoted in Germanà and Mousoutzanis, introduction to *Apocalyptic Discourse*, 5.

50 Alenka Zupančič, "The Apocalypse is (still) Disappointing," *Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 10 & 11 (2017–18), 24.

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Part 1: **From Old Worlds to New Worlds**

Thomas Lynch

A Political Theology of the World That Ends

The end of the world is a multivalent concept. Millenarian ideas can inspire peasants, but just as easily fuel American interventions in Middle Eastern politics. Anticolonial calls for the end of the world may have revolutionary potential, but the threat of the end of the world can also be invoked to cultivate fear and legitimise increasingly oppressive political regimes. Not only is apocalypticism multivalent, it requires a degree of ontological certainty. As Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro argue, "'[e]nd of the world' only has a determinate meaning…on the condition that one determines at the same time *for whom* this world that ends is a *world*, who is the worldly or 'worlded' being who *defines the end.* The world, in short, is an *objective perspective.*"[1]

This combination of political ambiguity and ontological certainty makes apocalypticism an uneasy theoretical position, easily assumed to be reactionary, even if unintentionally so. Consider Catherine Keller's diagnosis of the "apocalypse pattern": the habit of declaring the end of the world. "Whatever the anti-imperialist merits of the original [pattern] may be, I consider the habit *as a habit* destructive, and perhaps first of all self-destructive."[2] Her response is to offer a counter-apocalypse, dancing and wrestling with endings of worlds, without accepting the finality or closure of the "straightforward" apocalypse.[3]

While Keller's response is a paradigmatic example of playing with the multivalence of apocalyptic ideas, neither accepting them on their own terms nor insisting on rejecting them as such, her counter-apocalypse is predicated on rejecting the ontological certainty diagnosed by Danowski and Viveiros de Castro. Even amongst those who argue more forcefully for apocalypticism, myself included, the emphasis is usually on untangling the problem of political multivalency. In this chapter, I focus on the problem of ontological certainty. Too often, the call for the end of the world is unclear about the nature of this world and, consequently, whose world is ending.[4] I consider two objections to the concept of "the world"

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1 Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World*, trans. Rodrigo Nunes (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), 20.

2 Catherine Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then: A Feminist Guide to the End of the World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 11.

3 Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then*, 19.

4 I attempt to address this issue of "the world" in my *Apocalyptic Political Theology: Hegel, Taubes, and Malabou* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 13–26. This chapter is a reformulation and expansion of those initial ideas.

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and argue for a kind of ontological certainty regarding the world. Against critiques which link apocalypticism with a kind of hysteria[5] or find it reducible to another form of imperialism,[6] I argue for a form of apocalypticism which is opposed to the world as a universalist project.

Against The World

Discussions of the end of the world presume that there is something called the world that could end. While this apocalyptic pronouncement can function for individuals in an analogous way ("I feel like my world is ending") and at the level of larger communities (the arrival of Europeans in the "Americas" resulted in the end of many Indigenous worlds), it is less clear that one can speak coherently of the end of the world when "the world" is taken as something which is singular and planetary in scope; when the world is understood as The World.[7] There are at least two compelling reasons for rejecting this grander sense of The World. The first is that this concept is philosophically incoherent. The second is that this notion of The World is an imperialist attempt to impose a unitary imaginary on a planet that is home to many human and other-than-human worlds.

Perhaps the most succinct philosophical argument for the incoherency of The World is offered by Markus Gabriel.[8] For Gabriel, The World is synonymous with totality. "It is supposed to be the place where everything takes place."[9] His "meta-metaphysical nihilist" position is derived from his ontological claim that all things must appear in a "field of sense." Nothing appears without a background. If The World is the ultimate background – that in which all other things appear – then there is nothing in which The World itself appears. Defined this way, The World falls prey to an infinite regress and cannot exist.

A fuller account of Gabriel's argument would require engaging with his development of a new realist philosophy and a greater exploration of his notion of fields

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5 Tyrone S. Palmer, "Otherwise than Blackness: Feeling, World, Sublimation," *Qui Parle* 29:2 (2020): 260.

6 Indigenous Action, "Rethinking the Apocalypse: An Indigenous Anti-Futurist Manifesto," *Indigenous Action*, March 19 2020, accessed February 15, 2022, https://www.indigenousaction.org/rethinking-the-apocalypse-an-indigenous-anti-futurist-manifesto/.

7 It is common to use "the world" in a variety of ways, so for the sake of clarity I have used "The World" when speaking of that which ends in apocalypticism.

8 This argument is put forward in a book-length argument in his *The World Does Not Exist* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015) and in a shorter, more technical form in *Fields of Sense: A New Realist Ontology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 187–207.

9 Gabriel, *Fields of Sense*, 187.

of sense. Without delving into this wider ontology, it is sufficient to point out that his primary objection is to The World as a totality. The whole, everything, cannot be conceived of "at once" because there is no perspective from which this whole, that we ourselves are part of, could be seen.[10] His emphasis is on the inherently totalising nature of the world. He readily admits that there exist "infinitely many worlds, which in part overlap but are also partly independent of one another."[11] His objections are levelled at the closed totality of the concept of *The* World.[12]

Gabriel is aware that The World so conceived might seem to be a "peculiar object," so he also considers alternatives that cast The World as "a relative idea, a horizon, or a source of infinite eidetic variations."[13] For Gabriel, these ideas are no more successful. In order to exist, something must be an object (though not necessarily a physical one),[14] and these attempts to discuss The World as something other than a totality ultimately wind up positing a non-object object.[15] In other words, everything that can be discussed exists in a field of sense and is thus an object. To insist that The World is not an object, but then turn it into an object of discourse, is self-defeating. The result is a kind of new realist apocalypse; not the end of The World, but the end of the world perspective.[16]

Gabriel's argument is, of course, dependent on his definition of The World. It is certainly the case that when The World is discussed in the context of apocalypticism, underlying metaphysical claims are being made (even if only implicitly). Yet when someone worried about climate change adopts an apocalyptic tone, The World is indicating something different from Gabriel's understanding of the term. For example, when people worry about the end or "postponing the end of the world"[17] or "the end of civilisation,"[18] these concerns are not about the field of sense containing all other fields. This different understanding is not only evident in discussions of climate change. When Aimé Césaire writes that the end of the

10 Gabriel, *Fields of Sense*, 196.
11 Gabriel, *Why The World Does Not Exist*, 65.
12 Gabriel, *Why The World Does Not Exist*, 65.
13 Gabriel, *Fields of Sense*, 200, 205.
14 "Material objects are not the only entities that exist, as there are also logical laws and human knowledge which we can recognize in the same way as material objects" (*Why the Wold Does Not Exist*, 119).
15 Gabriel, *Fields of Sense*, 205.
16 Gabriel, *Fields of Sense*, 206–7.
17 Ailton Krenak, *Ideas to Postpone the End of the World* (Toronto: House of Ansai International, 2020).
18 Adam Vaughan, "Is it True Climate Change will Cause the End of Civilisation by 2050?" *The Independent*, June 6, 2019 accessed February 22, 2022, https://www.newscientist.com/article/2205741-is-it-true-climate-change-will-cause-the-end-of-civilisation-by-2050/.

world is the only thing worth beginning, a claim later picked up by Frantz Fanon, Frank B. Wilderson III, Calvin Warren and others; they too seem to mean something other than the totality in which all other things appear.[19] Yet Gabriel is right in that whatever this other sense of The World is, it seems to be a kind of object. This notion of The World is more like a "form of life" that is imagined, feared or hoped to be ending. A form of life in this sense is "not quite a race and more than culture or style, this phrase refers to those ways of being in the world – always lived collectively – without which one would no longer be who or what one is."[20] Understanding The World in this way, one is not met with the same problem of infinite regress.

Though this argument evades Gabriel's critique, it also returns the debate to my initial set of questions. If the goal is to offer an account of the ontological certainty seemingly required by an apocalyptic pronouncement, turning to "forms of life" does not offer much of a solution. Conceiving The World in these terms is either doomed to relativise The World into different worlds or take one vision of The World, one form of life, as universal. It is thus still subject to the second critique: that taking any given apocalyptic threat – nuclear annihilation, climate change, the instabilities of capitalism, some combination of all of these – as a threat to The World assumes that one can speak coherently of a shared World. This assumption falsely unifies the diversity of life-worlds in an imperialist gesture.

While there are different versions of this critique, motivated by different concerns,[21] I will focus on Zakiyyah Iman Jackson's particularly interesting version of this argument. Not only is it situated within recent critiques of "an antiblack world" in which calls for the end of the world are increasingly common, she references Gabriel's critique in support of her rejection of "the imperial Western humanist conception of *the* world *as such*."[22] For Jackson, The World is anti-black, in

19 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1988), 71; Frank B. Wilderson III, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 120, 337; and Calvin Warren, *Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 171.

20 Jairus Victor Grove, *Savage Ecology: War and Geopolitics at the End of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 2. In the context of the present discussion, it is worth noting that Grove's definition would work just as well without the phrase "the world."

21 See, for example, Audra Mitchell and Audit Chaudhury, "Worlding Beyond 'the' 'end' of 'the world': White Apocalyptic Visions and BIPOC Futurisms," *International Relations* 34:3 (2020): 309–332.

22 Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 39. I read Jackson's "*the* world *as such*" in terms of The World. I have not changed Jackson's wording, but this equivalence is explored in the ensuing discussion.

that blackness bears "the weight of *the* world," or the weight of preserving the illusion of The World.[23] This World is built on the destruction of "local knowledge," even if that destruction is never as total as the presumed coherency of The World would indicate.[24]

Jackson sees this argument as extending Gabriel's rejection of the world. Reading Gabriel alongside Édouard Glissant, she argues:

> *the* world is problematic as a concept, not because of its ontological invalidity but its epistemological spuriousness[.][…] we can conceive of and contemplate *the* world as a unitary whole or totality as Glissant puts it, but we cannot know it. Any claim to knowledge of *the* world *as such* is tantamount to imperialism. Moreover, because we cannot know it and [it] appears in no context does not necessarily imply its ontological inexistence but rather this contextlessness should interdict any definitive – rather than speculative – claim about it, including affirming or precluding its existence.[25]

For her part, Jackson's response to *the* world *as such* is "diasporic practices of world-making" which do not operate according to the binaries, hierarchies, or praxes of *the* world *as such*, but "fails to signify in those terms, and mutates those terms and their grammar beyond recognition."[26] In other words, worlds against *the* world *as such.*

A similar critique of The World is offered by Tyrone S. Palmer:

> I take "the World" here to mean not a given material reality or a thing-in-itself but *a conception* meant to contain the totality of all things "in relation"—what Heidegger terms the "domain of all domains"—one that, I argue, is constituted through and held together by an anti-Black imperative. That the World takes on the appearance of dominating *the entire field of reality* is representative of a Western imperial, humanist grip on the very terms of conception and phenomenality through the field of metaphysics. The World thus marks an ensemble of processes that necessitates the violent abjection and domination of Blackness for its articulation as a coherent, ordered whole.[27]

Palmer, who draws on Jackson and Gabriel, emphasises both the constructed nature of The World ("conception"; "ensemble of processes") and its lack of success ("meant to contain"; "takes on the appearance"). The World is not what it pretends to be. Here the critique of The World as anti-black circles back to the problem of conceptual coherence. For Palmer, as well as for Jackson, The World is meant to be

23 Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 85.
24 Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 86.
25 Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 234n32.
26 Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 118.
27 Palmer, "Otherwise than Blackness," 273n1.

all there is. The foundation of this World is a rejection of blackness which means that this coherence or ordered wholeness is never finally achieved. My argument for apocalypticism depends on agreeing with this claim, while also holding that the "ensemble of processes" that "take on the appearance of dominating *the entire field of reality*," is The World that must end.

Even for this vision of apocalypticism, however, Jackson's and Palmer's critiques are more worrying than Gabriel's argument about conceptual incoherence. Discussing the end of The World requires reflecting on whose world is ending and what that might mean to those who are excluded from, or marginalised within, The World. Jackson is firm in her conclusions: "'The world,' and especially 'the world as such' [...] fails as a concept (at knowability) but succeeds as an idea(l) of imperialist myth [...] This critique is not limited to any particular representation of 'the world' but is a rejection of the concept of 'the world.'"[28] Jackson's argument highlights a tension between aspects of something which is world-like in its totalising drive and the undeniable fact that this totalisation is never complete. There are always those living at the edges of the world, rejecting, resisting, and evading the notion that The World is all that is. Palmer's response is more pessimistic, calling for "the end of *all possible worlds*, the *end of worlding* as a project of Human ontogenesis."[29]

Jackson's critique points toward resources for an alternative conception of The World. Her work frequently returns to the notion of the "onto-epistemo-ethical," which is sometimes shortened to "onto-epistemological." She adapts these terms from Karen Barad, who in turn defines onto-epistem-ology as "the study of practices of knowing in being."[30] The addition of "ethico" or "ethical" indicates the inseparability of ontology, epistemology and ethics.[31] Jackson also engages with the work of Denise Ferreira da Silva, who uses the term "ontoepistemological" throughout her work *Toward a Global Idea of Race.*[32] While Silva provides a glossary at the beginning of the book, ontoepistemology is not included as one of the terms and she does not define the term elsewhere in the text. It is clear throughout her work, however, that she is speaking to the connection between being and knowledge in the sense that neither of these categories are settled. Jackson shares

28 Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 230n11.
29 Palmer, "Otherwise than Blackness," 267.
30 Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs* 28:3 (2003): 829.
31 Karen Barad, *Meting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 185.
32 Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2007).

this concern in her efforts "to destabilize or even rupture the reigning order of representation that grounds the thought-world relation."[33]

While Jackson, Barad, and Silva use ontoepistemological in slightly different ways, at its core conceiving of The World, in these terms, allows one to recognise that The World is not all there is yet is more than an illusion or appearance. It goes further than historicism in arguing that while The World is contingent, it is inescapable in that The World dictates what is possible. In other words, attempts to transform or reform The World, by whatever means, can only draw on the resources of The World. Anything else requires its end.

In Defence of a Concept of The World

Though Jackson offers a particularly strong critique of the concept of The World, I am arguing that her critique of its essential imperialism is precisely what makes such a concept necessary. In thinking of The World in ontoepistemic terms, one must account for the materiality that accompanies the concept. In other words, the making of The World is the conjoined process of material transformation and epistemic imperialism. This claim is not entirely new and drawing on earlier work on the unification of the world combined with a concern for the imperial nature of this unification will show how understanding the making of The World is essential for understanding what it might mean for that World to end.

This language of the unification of The World is borrowed from a thesis advanced by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, who writes of the "unification of the globe by disease."[34] Ladurie argues that in the period between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, this process of unification begins in Eurasia and then spreads to the "New World" as a "'common market' of microbes" cataclysmically transforming human life.[35] These microbes travel through newly established trade routes in an unparalleled pathogenic migration.[36] Disease makes The World out of a globe. The late fifteenth century is an essential moment in this unification. As Ladurie shows, European expansion begins the material transformation of the globe which makes the concept of The World plausible. This expansion results in

33 Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 39.
34 Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Mind and Method of the Historian* (Brighton: Harvester, 1981), 29.
35 Ladurie, *The Mind and Method of the Historian*, 30.
36 Ladurie, *The Mind and Method of the Historian*, 39–40.

genocide on such a large scale that it likely impacted the global climate, contributing to global cooling.[37]

This period is not only significant for this microbial joining of different regions of the planet, though. In order to maintain attention to the "epistemic" as much as the "onto-," it is also important to note that it is in this same period that shifts in the classification of humans lay the foundation for modern concepts of race. The year 1492 not only marks an unprecedented spreading of disease, it inaugurates a "new world view."[38] As Sylvia Wynter argues, Columbus's journey plays a key role in establishing a theological knowledge of "an earth that would now be perceivable as single and homogenous."[39] A theological geography of the uninhabitable and habitable regions of creation begins to be transformed into a concept of a planet divided into peoples and lands that can be expropriated and those that cannot.

If Ladurie and Wynter trace the beginnings of the world, Günther Anders describes the moment that this project of totalisation reaches its apex in the nuclear arms race. In the mid-twentieth century, one can speak of a World capable of ending because for the first time there was an obvious and known risk that all human and many other forms of life could be destroyed by nuclear annihilation.[40] In addition to this unification by fear, The World is unified by radiation. The testing carried out beginning in 1945 spread "geochemical residue" that has been absorbed into the environment.[41] All human beings bear traces of the detonations that continued into the 1990s. These explosions are the most dramatic and extensive marker of this unified World, but, as Kathryn Yusoff argues, they are accompanied by markers of:

> the more geologically dispersed events of the "Great Acceleration" of the 1950s, with its material conversions of fossil fuels; dissemination of black carbon, inorganic and spherical carbonaceous particles, worldwide; new geochemical compounds of polyaromatic hydrocarbons, polychlorinated biphenyls, and pesticide residues; doubling of soil nitrogen and phosphorus

37 Alexander Koch, et. al., "Earth system impacts of the European arrival and Great Dying in the Americas after 1492," *Quaternary Science Reviews* 207 (2019): 13–36.

38 Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View" in *Race, Discourse, and the Origins of the Americas: A New World View,* ed. Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 5–57.

39 Sylvia Wynter, "Columbus and the Poetics of the *Propter Nos*," *Annals of Scholarship: An International Quarterly in the Humanities and Social Sciences* 8:2 (1991), 264.

40 Günter Anders, "Apocalypse without Kingdom," *e-flux Journal* 97 (2019), accessed May 31, 2021, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/97/251199/apocalypse-without-kingdom/.

41 Kathryn Yusoff, "White Utopia/Black Inferno: Life on a Geologic Spike," *e-flux Journal* 97 (2019), accessed May 31, 2021, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/97/252226/white-utopia-black-inferno-life-on-a-geologic-spike/.

> due to the Haber Bosch process of artificially producing nitrogen fertilizer; and dispersals of new materials, such as aluminum, concrete, plastics, and synthetic fibers.[42]

As with debates about the starting of the Anthropocene, it matters less precisely when one can speak of The World beginning. What is clear is that The World has not always existed, but there is a World now. It is not a World all experience in the same way, but it marks all of our bodies, alongside the bodies of other animals and the rest of the bodies which endure The World. That World is ending in slow but intensifying ways. Rather than focus on the possibility of other possible worlds, apocalypticism holds that another end is possible and enquires about the kinds of relations opened up by living towards these different ends.[43]

The World as a Universalist Project

This account of the making of The World is in full agreement with Jackson's assessment of the imperialism of the concept. Ladurie's account of the unification of The World by disease is clearly connected to colonialism. Nuclear proliferation is not, at first glance, as straightforwardly imperialist. Yet, as Malcom Ferdinand shows, Anders either does not know or does not acknowledge that the testing that animates fears and contaminates bodies was frequently carried out on colonised lands, including in Algeria and Polynesia. Beyond the explosions themselves, there is "the damage caused by the plundering of mines in Africa by Great Britain and France and by the exploitation of the subsoil of Aboriginal lands in Australia, the First Nations in Canada, the Navajo in the United States, and of the Black workers forced to extract uranium in apartheid South Africa."[44] The World, as an ontoepistemic object, is not static, but formed through the material transformation of the Earth. This transformation is entangled with the conceptual changes that enable these transformations while being transformed themselves. Rather than rejecting the imperialist concept of The World, then, it is imperative to reject the imperialist World itself.

The account thus far does not go beyond historicism. To go further, to identify not only what makes The World but the nature of its insistence, requires turning to

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42 Yusoff, "White Utopia/Black Inferno".

43 On the possibility of another end see Marcello Tarì, *There is no unhappy revolution: The communism of destitution* (Brooklyn: Common Notions, 2021), 8. Tarì rejects apocalypticism, but as I argue below that his concept of destitutive power has apocalyptic possibilities.

44 Malcom Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World*, trans. Anthony Paul Smith (London: Polity, 2022), 8.

the presumed universality that Jackson and Palmer identify as essential to The World. This universality means that The World is not simply what is but defines the limits of what can be.[45] The philosopher and sinologist François Jullien defines universality, in its strongest philosophical form, as asserting "from the outset, before any confirmation has been given by experience, that such a thing *must* occur in this way."[46] Jullien's concern is with intercultural dialogue, specifically between China and "the West" or Europe. He identifies a key problem for universalism, namely that appeals to or the search for universality forgets the epistemological and cultural origins of the concept of universality itself. The concept of the universal is assumed to be universal.[47] This forgetting is necessary to move from a notion of the universal as "maximal extension" to the universal entailing "a prescription."[48] When one speaks of universal human rights, for example, the word "universal" cannot mean "equally enjoyed by all" as any history of human rights discourse clearly shows. Rather it means that these are rights that are *a priori* the possession of any human being by virtue of being human. Similarly, The World as a universalist project does not deny that there are living and non-living things on Earth that have not been fully incorporated into The World, but marks these elusive or excluded beings as aberrations.

Adopting this reading of the universal as essential to the World casts Ladurie's and Anders's argument in new light.[49] While both are sensitive to some of the geopolitical issues that eventually constitute The World, neither is concerned with this question of universality. If their work is a resource for emphasising the ontological dimension instead of the epistemological (what is the world that it can be known), Jullien restores the need to think the two together in an ontoepistemic account.

Having identified this universalism as essential to The World, it is possible to differentiate it from related terms such as "the earth," "the globe," and "the planet"

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45 Daniel Colucciello Barber, "World-Making and Grammatical Impasse," *Qui Parle* 25:1–2 (2016): 181.

46 François Jullien, *On the Universal, the uniform, the common and dialogue between cultures*, trans. Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski (London: Polity, 2014), 1.

47 Jullien, *On the Universal*, 2.

48 Jullien, *On the Universal*, 3.

49 Jullien's account is not the only recent effort to think through the nature of universalism. Some of these accounts take universalism in the direction of maximal extension. See for example Nick Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008) or Madhavi Menon, *Indifference to Difference: On Queer Universalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2015). Serene J. Khader's "non-deal universalism" is closer to the sense of universalism discussed here, but she attempts to untangle her universalist project from imperialism and Eurocentrism. See her *Decolonizing Universalism: A Transnational Feminist Ethic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

(and their various permutations). The earth can be understood in ecological terms, as in references to "the Earth-System." If an ecosystem is defined by those things inhabiting a place together then the earth is the global ecosystem. "Global" is thus a judgment of scope in relation to the earth. To say something is a global phenomenon or to discuss globalization is not to say something is homogeneously present but that it is hegemonic. The end of The World is the end of something global; the end of a universalist project, which claims to have achieved an impossible universalism and is thus doomed to constantly and ever more violently reassert itself.

This is not the only way of understanding the relationship between these terms. For example, Ferdinand describes "*global*ization" as "the totalizing extension and standardizing repetition of an unequal economy on a global scale."[50] "*World*ization," by contrast, "is an opening, through the political action of a living together, of the infinite horizon of encounters and sharing."[51] This more positive use of world does not carry the same connection to universalism. My argument is not about a definitive account of a concept of the world, but to understand how the concept of The World developed here identifies a problematic which is overlooked in work that rejects apocalypticism as such. The universalist nature of The World is why historicist accounts do not go far enough. Being able to articulate the emergence of The World – its contingency – does not mean that it could easily end, nor that it is capable of being reformed. Over the course of the histories described above, The World is endlessly becoming what it should be in an *a priori* sense. The World is necessary, even if that necessity is itself contingent.

The End of the World

At this point, it is worth asking what is significant about the concept of The World and apocalypticism as a framework for thinking its end. Throughout the chapter, I have identified points of continuity with Jackson, Palmer, and others. Given the multivalency and theological baggage of apocalypticism, why not move on to other ways of thinking the end?

One key reason for maintaining that The World can be conceived of as an ontoepistemic object is that the materiality of The World is an obstacle to its overcoming. The pollutions described above cannot be undone through conceptual reimaginings. The water is still toxic even if one thinks in terms of worlds or the pluriverse. When Jared Sexton writes of the struggle for "another world in and

50 Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, 17.
51 Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, 17.

on the ruins of this one, in the end of its ends,"[52] these ruins cannot be only metaphorical. The lie of The World is that it is an ordered totality, all that is and can be. It is not enough to reject that lie: one must undo the conditions which make it believable (at least for some).

As for apocalypticism, the various rejections of the idea are often animated by legitimate concerns. It can be a form of surrender while apocalypticism has animated imperialist ventures. Wynter, along with many others, points out the centrality of apocalyptic motivations to Columbus's calamitous ventures.[53] Yet these rejections frequently confuse two modes of apocalypticism; what Jacob Taubes names apocalypse from above and apocalypse from below.[54] Imagining the end has not only motivated those who set sail to conquer unseen lands and hasten the apocalyptic return of Christ, it has been absorbed, transformed and turned against those colonial intruders.

"Above" and "below" are perspectival positions, so the question is how to identify from which perspective one is thinking. Taubes contrasts his own apocalypse from below with the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt's apocalypse from above. Schmitt thinks from above, because he thinks from the perspective of "the powers that be."[55] The problem is that the line between "the powers that be" and those who contest those powers is not always as obvious as Taubes assumes.[56]

This distinction can be clarified by reformulating it in terms of constitutive and destitutive power. Schmitt thinks about the apocalypse as a threat to that which must be preserved. He offers an "avertive" view of the apocalypse.[57] The chaos of the apocalypse must be restrained at all costs. Schmitt is a thinker of constitutive power: the making and conserving of the world.[58] Taubes is thinking of a destitutive apocalypse, one that sees this chaos as the only source of possibility,

52 Jared Sexton, "All Black Everything," *e-flux Journal* 79 (2017), accessed June 20, 2021, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/79/94158/all-black-everything/.

53 Wynter, "Columbus and the Poetics of the *Propter Nos.*"

54 Jacob Taubes, *To Carl Schmitt: Letters and Reflections*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 13.

55 Taubes, *To Carl Schmitt*, 13.

56 On Taubes's own identification with the "Occident" see Daniel Colucciello Barber, "Relational Division," in *Nothing Absolute: German Idealism and the Question of Political Theology*, ed. Kirill Chepurin and Alex Dubilet (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021), 73–86.

57 Catherine Wessinger, "Millennialism in Cross-Cultural Perspective," in *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.

58 As I argue in my *Apocalyptic Political Theology: Hegel, Taubes, Malabou* (14–8), Schmitt's *Nomos of the Earth in International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos, 2003), can be read in terms of this form of constitutive power. It is an account of the earth being constituted into The World.

though a possibility that remains shapeless. Destituent power, as Giorgio Agamben explains, is "inoperative" and, therefore, useless.[59] That is not to say that it is inactive, but that it takes the activities of The World and renders them inoperative according to the logic of The World, opening up new possibilities or meanings for those activities. Again, these new possibilities are not defined: apocalypticism is an end without ends. Or, in the words of Marcello Tarì, destituent power "demands nothing; it makes a negative claim."[60]

This distinction is not the only contribution that Taubes makes to the possibilities of apocalyptic thinking. He too seizes on the universalist pretence of The World. He writes that The World is "a power system" which presents itself as the only thing possible. Drawing on the Gnostic elements that he mixes with Judaism and Christianity, he declares The World is a lie that operates through this pretence. It is a prison of unfreedom. Apocalypticism is not concerned with social transformation but opposes the "totality of this world."[61] Or, as Wilderson writes of his emphasis on "a total end of the world": "They're trying to build a better world. What are we trying to do? We're trying to destroy the world. Two irreconcilable projects."[62] Through this destructive and creative negation, something (always undefined in Taubes) is founded anew. The World, understood in this way, is contingent. It has a beginning and it can have an end.

Conclusion

There is something in the concept of The World which captures the unavoidable ontoepistemic force of that which ultimately must be negotiated. Without a way of speaking of this World, however it is named, something is lost in trying to understand the overlapping crises that define the present; crises that are not crises in

59 Giorgio Agamben, "What is a destituent power?" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32 (2014): 69.

60 Tarì, *There is no unhappy revolution*, 49. Using Tarì to formulate apocalypticism is to read him against himself as he explicitly rejects apocalyptic accounts of destituency (*There is no unhappy revolution*, 45). However, his rejection of apocalypticism is clearly rooted in a different account of the world (the world is not The World) and his critique of apocalypticism could just as easily contribute to an extension of Taubes's thought as a rejection of the category of the apocalyptic.

61 Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*, trans. David Ratmoko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 9.

62 Frank B. Wilderson III, "'We're Trying to Destroy the World' Anti-Blackness & Police Violence After Ferguson: An Interview with Frank B. Wilderson, III." *Ill Will Editions* (2014), accessed May 17, 2021, https://illwill.com/were-trying-to-destroy-the-world-anti-blackness-and-police-violence-after-ferguson.

The World but of The World. The importance of this concept does not diminish the force of the most damning criticism of this notion of The World. Regardless of how well intentioned one might be, it is nonetheless a totalising concept that continues an ontoepistemic imperialism. The positions considered in this essay argue that positioning The World against worlds lends this World a false reality. In so doing, one erects barriers that are not there. If the imperialist project of the Anthropocene or Eurocene (or whatever one wishes to call it) is what threatens a wide variety of life in the Earth-System, describing this project as a vast, nearly inescapable force neglects the thriving multiplicities of the pluriverse. The World, these arguments hold, is not as successful as those who focus on its end seem to think.

And yet, the onto- of the ontoepistemic means that there are realities that resist discursive reformulations. The waters of all the many worlds contain plastic, the bodies of all the many worlds contain radiation and all the many worlds are threatened (if unequally) by those who consume and waste at never before imaginable rates. When Palmer writes "The world thus marks an ensemble of processes that necessitates the violent abjection and domination of Blackness for its articulation as a coherent, ordered whole,"[63] I take this as succinct description of The World as a universalist project. The problem is not the concept of The World, but The World itself; The World that must end.

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63 Palmer, "Otherwise than Blackness," 273n1.

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Alastair Lockhart

A Godless Apocalypse and the Atom Bombs: Ronald Knox and a New Concept of World Ending

On the morning of 6 August 1945, an American B-29 Superfortress dropped the first atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, followed three-days later by a second bomb on Nagasaki. The bombs were of a size and effect far exceeding any other weapon available at the time: the single Hiroshima bomb was equivalent to sixteen kilotons of TNT, and the Nagasaki bomb to twenty-one kilotons – compared to four or five combined kilotons in a conventional 500-bomber raid of the time.[1] Around 200,000 people were killed by the blasts themselves, and thousands more would die over time from their after-effects. The use of the bombs has long been justified on the grounds that they "obviated the need for an invasion of Japan, accelerated the conclusion of the war, and saved a vast number of American lives" – though the validity of that rationale has been contested since at least the 1960s.[2] Emperor Hirohito announced the Japanese surrender, and in effect the end of World War Two, on 15 August.

While the bombs mark the inflection point of a collapse of the social and political order in Japan,[3] and their production and testing complexes would be understood to injure and undermine marginalised communities for a long time into the future,[4] they were also the cause of disorientation and uncertainty amongst the

1 Ward Wilson, "The Winning Weapon? Rethinking Nuclear Weapons in Light of Hiroshima," *International Security*, 31:4 (2007): 168. Wilson here cites Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York: Random House, 1999), 253.

2 Samuel J. Walker, "The Decision to Use the Bomb: A Historiographical Update," in *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1941*, ed. Michael J. Hogan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 207. Quoted by Wilson D. Miscamble, *The Most Controversial Decision: Truman, the Atomic Bombs, and the Defeat of Japan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2. See also Miscamble, *Most Controversial*, 1–4, and Wilson, "Winning Weapon?" 162n1, 162n2, for discussions of the debate about the role of the bombs in ending the war.

3 See, for example, William G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan: Political, Economic and Social Change since 1850* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2000); Jeff Kingston, *Japan in Transformation, 1945–2010* (Harlow: Longman, 2011); William K. Tabb, *The Postwar Japanese System: Cultural Economy and Economic Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

4 See, for example, Gabriele Schwab, "Transgenerational Nuclear Trauma," in *The Routledge Companion to Nuclear Trauma*, ed. Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020); Joseph Masco, *The Nuclear Borderlands: The Manhattan Project in Post-Cold War New Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006/2020); Karen Barad, "After the End of the World: Entangled Nu-

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victorious allies and in other countries; the effects of that have not been fully resolved or fully understood to this day.

One important analysis of that disorientation and uncertainty is captured in the idea of the "nuclear uncanny" – a term referring to the ominous sense of potential annihilation generated by the existence of nuclear weapons – and more usually applied to their victims or potential victims.[5] This chapter examines the work of one thinker in particular, the British scholar and priest Ronald Knox (1888–1957), who was one of the first to grapple, in print, with the extraordinary religious and social challenge represented by the existence of the bombs and their use by the Allied powers. Knox wrote his religious response to the atom bombs in the immediate aftermath of their delivery: *God and the Atom.* Sheridan Gilley summarised the book as a study of "the implications of this Promethean atrocity."[6] The term, "nuclear uncanny," was not coined until fifty years after the publication of *God and the Atom*, nonetheless we begin to see the strands of nuclear uncanny feeling traced in Knox's thought. His analysis indicates a deeper existential dimension to the concept: an implicit negative eschatology within the nuclear uncanny that rebounds potently on those who deploy the weapon.

Observing that the book was not a publishing success, Knox's friend and biographer, Evelyn Waugh, said *God and the Atom* "fell quite flat […] He felt himself charged with an urgent message of consolation to a people who did not then know that they had been hurt."[7] Knox, Alan Hepburn suggests, "understands the airman who dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima as 'the symbol of a catastrophic leap in the history of human achievement'" because "the leap itself entails catastrophe. Instead of a leap forward, the world jumps into a spiritual quag-

clear Colonialisms, Matters of Force, and the Material Force of Justice," *Theory and Event* 22:3 (2019).

5 The term "nuclear uncanny" seems to have first been used in this sense almost simultaneously by Paul Saint-Amour in "Bombing and the Symptom: Traumatic Earliness and the Nuclear Uncanny," *Diacritics* 30:4 (2000) and Joseph Masco in his doctoral dissertation "The Nuclear Borderlands: The Legacy of the Manhattan Project in Post-Cold War New Mexico" (PhD diss., University of California, 1999). Saint Amour draws the term out of the Japanese idea of *bukimi.* This research has not had access to Masco's dissertation, however his (2006/2020) book with a similar title (*The Nuclear Borderlands: The Manhattan Project in Post-Cold War New Mexico*) links the term to Freud's *Unheimlich.*

6 Sheridan Gilley, "Knox, Ronald Arbuthnott (1888–1957), Roman Catholic priest and writer," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-34358.

7 Evelyn Waugh, *The Life of Ronald Knox* (London: Penguin Books, 2011[1959]), 403–4.

mire."[8] Writing as a voice from within the British establishment, the nature of the disorientation for a great world power in its imperial twilight comes through in the text. The message of the book was that "the atom bomb had done more than hit Hiroshima," said Robert Speaight, "[i]t had hit our sense of cosmic discipline, our complacent optimism, and our trust in the validity of our own moral judgements."[9] While the profundity of the physical and moral injury caused to those affected by the atom bombs – especially civilians and non-combatants – is to some extent self-evident, the nature of the injury for the putatively victorious powers deploying the bomb is less clear. In Knox we have one of the first diagnoses of the moral significance of the use of the bombs. In his account, that is presented as a novel and terrifying form of apocalypse because it is an apocalypse imaginatively removed from the province of divine action: a godless apocalypse becomes available to human imagination for the first time.

As a deeply religious man who had lived through two world wars, Ronald Knox reacted to the atom bombs in 1945 with horror, not just at the tragic loss of life but because he detected the release of something like a social and cultural atom bomb that had the capacity to cause a collapse: an apocalypse of meaning. Knox's work is striking because it implicitly foresees the bleak apocalyptic imagination that would be diagnosed fifty years later, sketches the ways in which societies or individuals without frameworks of existential meaning around their concepts or imaginings of apocalypse become unmoored, and begins to decompose the origins of important strands of late-modern ideas about apocalypse. Knox is not preoccupied by the reality or facticity of the apocalypse, that is a given in one form or another in "ten days […] or a thousand years;"[10] he is, however, preoccupied with the ways in which human imagination of apocalypse affects behaviour, belief, and parley with spiritual things. The affliction he diagnosed in 1945 informs the way the world is presented today in popular culture, and indeed in the way the idea of world ending is imagined.

8 Alan Hepburn, "The Future and the End: Imagining Catastrophe in Mid-Century British Fiction," in *British Literature in Transition, 1940–1960: Postwar*, ed. G. Plain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 373. Including an extract from Ronald Knox, *God and the Atom* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1945), 12.

9 Robert Speaight, *Ronald Knox The Writer* (London and Melbourne: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 148.

10 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 104.

Understanding Nuclear Apocalypse

A useful starting point to understand contemporary thinking about the nature of nuclear apocalypse is Paul Boyer's book, *By the Bomb's Early Light* (1985, re-issued 1994), which examined the first phase of the cultural reaction to nuclear bombs in America. As Boyer observed in 1985, there is a case to be made for the atomic bombs marking a fundamental transition in conceptions of how the world is constituted, and of existential or eschatological matters more generally: "the bomb's corrosive impact on the externals of life pales in comparison to its effect on the interior realm of consciousness and memory," and he speculates that, perhaps, "the Bomb has become one of those categories of Being, like Space and Time, that, according to Kant, are built into the very structure of our minds, giving shape and meaning to all our perceptions."[11] While Boyer's focus was very much on the American context, the principles at play in the United States were also at play elsewhere in the world; imaginatively, we are all affected by the revelation of the immense power of nuclear weapons, and not least in the US's closest partner in atomic bomb-making, the United Kingdom.

By the Bomb's Early Light touches on the early integration of biblical passages and interpretations of eschaton with nuclear conflagration, a theme developed in more detail by Boyer in his *When Time Shall Be No More* (1992). As Boyer observes in the later book, up to 1945, the cataclysm at the end of time was "typically envisioned [...] in naturalistic terms –earthquakes, comets, volcanic eruptions," but after the first use of the bombs "everything changed" and a "chorus of preachers, Bible scholars, and paperback writers insisted that Scriptures not only foretold atomic weapons, but also their eventual cataclysmic use."[12] This is something that can be detected in the earliest phases of the atomic age. Winston Churchill was not known for his personal religious devotion, nonetheless he is reported to have said after the first successful atomic bomb test: "[W]hat was gunpowder? Trivial. What was electricity? Meaningless. This atomic bomb is the Second Coming in Wrath."[13]

11 Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994[1985]), xviii-xix, xx.
12 Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), 115.
13 US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers: The Conference of Berlin (the Potsdam Conference), 1945, Volume II* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1960), 225. Quoting Harvey H. Bundy, "Remembered Words," *The Atlantic*, March 1957, 57.

While the expression of ideas about nuclear cataclysm using religious language and scriptural reference reflects an attempt to place it within a framework of meaning, that process also appears to work alongside a persisting note of meaninglessness, even nihilism. Boyer alludes to an early emergence of this in the work of historian Perry Miller in the 1950s. Linking the rhetoric of the era of the atomic bombs with that of late seventeenth century prophecy writers, Miller identified a superficial similarity but with "profound eschatological meaning" excised after 1945: "the very concept of a future becomes meaningless."[14] Thus, amid the religious and biblical framing of the processing of nuclear consciousness, a parallel aspect of vitiation takes place, culminating in what Daniel Wojcik refers to as "widespread beliefs about a meaningless apocalypse" which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century – in contrast to traditional views of "the end of the world […] interpreted as a meaningful and supernatural event."[15]

These strands coalesce in recent studies on the apocalyptic in film. John Walliss and James Aston draw attention to the ways in which apocalyptic science-fiction movies – usually with a primary or implicit focus on the USA – "'transcoded' a variety of fears, paranoias and socio-cultural transformations" into cinematic narratives.[16] A distinctive element of this is representing destructive forces obliquely or allegorically; for example, monsters and Martians in place of nuclear war or Communism in the 1950s, or to stand in for aspects of the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers.[17] One of the key trends Walliss and Aston discuss in late twentieth century apocalypse films (citing examples from the 1990s in particular) is a "desacralization of the apocalypse," by which they mean the removal of overt references to the Bible, and a movement from supernatural causes of destruction towards natural phenomena and human causes. Where religion persists in these kinds of accounts, they suggest, it is sentimentalized. Though, as Walliss and Aston discuss later in the article, in the 1990s some biblical and religious referents are retained albeit in allusive or formulaic ways. For example, the "Messiah mission" to destroy an approaching asteroid and reference to a secure cave complex as

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14 Boyer *When Time Shall*, 120-121. Boyer takes the extracts from Perry Miller's *Errand into the Wilderness* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1956), 217.

15 Daniel Wojcik, "Embracing Doomsday: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalyptic Beliefs in the Nuclear Age," *Western Folklore*, 55:4 (1996): 298.

16 John Walliss and James Aston, "Doomsday America: The Pessimistic Turn of Post-9/11 Apocalyptic Cinema," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 23:1 (2011), http://dx.doi.org/10.3138/jrpc.23.1.53. Citing Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, *Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

17 Walliss and Aston, "Doomsday America," citing Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster," in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967).

a new "Noah's Ark" in *Deep Impact* (1998). Walliss and Aston identify two further leitmotifs linked to 9/11 in particular, namely a rise in apocalyptic pessimism, and doubt about the value of the old order that was being overwhelmed.[18]

Analyses of the aftermath of World War Two, and the use of the atom bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in particular, suggest that something significant if indistinct changed in the public conception of human cataclysms because of that conflict and the use of those bombs. Hebatalla Taha has said that "the future became a 'hollowed out category' after the Second World War, creating myriad new forms of speculation and prediction."[19] Perhaps more prosaically, Hauke Riesch has said that by separating the capacity for mass destruction from strictly religious or political discourse, nuclear war became "something that everybody could worry about."[20] Furthermore, it is a truism perhaps not recognized enough that, so far at least, nuclear weapons have received a disproportionate amount of attention compared to the amount of immediate physical death and suffering they have inflicted during wartime.[21] In immediate terms, the Nazi Holocaust, the Allied firebombing of Dresden, trench warfare in the Great War, and a plethora of other tragedies of wartime "dwarf the death and suffering caused by the bomb at the end of the Second World War."[22]

Unpacking the Japanese experience, Paul Saint-Amour has examined a documented sense amongst people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki *before* the bombs were dropped that they were experiencing an unaccountable period of calm that would culminate in some terrible catastrophic event.[23] This sense was, it transpired, more than pure retrospection or benefit of hindsight because it reflected the reality that American conventional bombing raids that were devastating Japa-

18 Walliss and Aston, "Doomsday America".

19 Hebatalla Taha, "Hiroshima in Egypt: Interpretations and Imaginations of the Atomic Age," *Third World Quarterly*, 43:6 (2022): 1460–1477, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2022.2059461, quoting Jenny Andersson, *The Future of the World: Futurology, Futurists, and the Struggle for the Post-Cold War Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1–5.

20 Hauke Riesch, *Apocalyptic Narratives: Science, Risk and Prophecy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 109.

21 A number of theorists have referred to forms of *psychological* "death" specially linked to nuclear weapons (see, for example, Schwab, "Transgenerational Nuclear Trauma," and R.J. Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (Cape Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1991 [1968])) and examine the extent of physical and cultural suffering generated by the nuclear complex during war and afterwards (see, for example, Schwab, "Transgenerational Nuclear Trauma"; Masco, *Nuclear Borderlands*; Barad, *After the End*).

22 Riesch, *Apocalyptic Narratives*, 109.

23 Saint-Amour, "Bombing and the Symptom". See also, Paul K. Saint-Amour, *Tense Future: Modernism, Total War, Encyclopedic Form* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1–3.

nese cities *were* deliberately avoiding cities that had been earmarked as possible atomic bomb targets (in order to better evaluate the performance of the new bombs when they were deployed).[24] To the extent that people did have an eerie sense that their presently peaceful city was destined for "something big" – the sense that Saint-Amour calls the "nuclear uncanny" – they were right. This has become, Saint-Amour suggests, something permanent in the imaginative life of people living in the nuclear age:

> [I]n the period of eerie suspension before the explosion, those who registered the nuclear uncanny in Hiroshima were also the first to experience a condition that, in a far more explicit incarnation, would become familiar to everyone living in a targeted city during the Cold War: the sense that the present survival and flourishing of the city were simultaneously underwritten and radically threatened by its identity as a nuclear target.[25]

A study by Claire Langhamer of ordinary people's responses to the bombs in Britain in September 1945 notes that whatever their moral and ethical feelings about the bombs, people "believed that the world had changed decisively."[26] The emotional experience of the new atomic world amongst the British public described by Langhamer is a shadow of that of the Japanese people who experienced the bombs in their kinetic immediacy. The broad tone of Langhamer's study of Mass Observation records suggests that the British public's response was one of despair at the moral failing, or at least the uncertainty, entailed by the use of the bombs: "[T]he majority of correspondents," Langhamer concludes, "were less optimistic about the future, providing a first glimpse of the nuclear anxiety that would haunt British lives over subsequent decades."[27]

A correlated disorientation can be identified within the institutional churches in Britain at the time. The bishops, it seems, were inundated with calls for explicit condemnation of the bombs and the new technology. Dianne Kirby has examined the bishops' attempts to avoid taking a public stance on a complex dilemma and the controversy linked to it. The Church of England hierarchy found itself in a difficult public position following the bombs, with Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, wishing to avoid the condemnation of nuclear bombs and their use in Japan given the context of six years of war and the Church's alignment with

24 Saint-Amour, "Bombing and the Symptom", 59–60.
25 Saint-Amour, "Bombing and the Symptom", 60.
26 Claire Langhamer, "Mass Observing the Atom Bomb: The Emotional Politics of August 1945," *Contemporary British History*, 33:2 (2019), 209.
27 Langhamer, "Mass Observing", 220. Mass Observation was a social research organization that collected insights into everyday life in Britain from 1937 to the 1950s, it was archived and reactivated in the 1980s. See, http://www.massobs.org.uk/.

the national effort. He suggested, instead, using "the shock and revulsion aroused to attack the general evil of war rather than the particular evil of nuclear weapons."[28] A commission set up following the 1946 Church Assembly concluded (1948) that "[w]e have no solution to offer. If the final test were to come in another war the members of the Commission would almost certainly find themselves divided in their choice; and the division is only a reflection of the present divided mind of the Church."[29]

The Church of England's dilemma is perhaps expressive of a general sense of confusion and complexity induced by the bombs. Kirk Willis refers to the response of a senior Foreign Office official – "it is [either] the dawn of Utopia or the end of the world" – as representative of the "ambiguity […] polarity, and […] fear" generated by the new world, leading to a nation "that had – at least temporarily – lost its moral and intellectual equilibrium and thus lurched uncertainly into the future."[30] What we seem to be seeing in the immediate aftermath of the bombs – and it is something that is carried over into the rest of the century – is an anxiety response, less to the fact of the bombs, than in the way the bombs were imagined. There was a severe disruption or realignment of the human apocalyptic imaginative system – what I refer to as a "new concept of world ending" in my title.

Ronald Knox

The Church of England's predicament was not unique to them amongst the denominations, and the ambiguity in their position was reflected in silence from the Catholic hierarchy and other religious groups in Britain.[31] This was, indeed, part of the motivation for Ronald Knox's *God and the Atom* – a book which was,

28 Dianne Kirby, "Responses Within the Anglican Church to Nuclear Weapons: 1945–1961," *Journal of Church and State*, 1995, 37(3), 600. Citing Fisher to Rogers, 18 Aug 1945, Fisher Papers 2: 1–75, [Lambeth Palace Library Archives].

29 Kirby, "Responses within the Anglican", 606. Citing Church Assembly, *The Church and the Atom: A Study of the Moral and Theological Aspects of Peace and War* (London: Press and Publications Board of the Church Assembly, 1948), 30.

30 Kirk Willis, "'God and the Atom': British Churchmen and the Challenge of Nuclear Power 1945–1950," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 29:3 (1997): 423. Including quotation from Piers Dixon, *Double Diploma: The Life of Sir Pierson Dixon, Don and Diplomat* (London: Hutchinson, 1968), 177.

31 Willis, "'God and the Atom'," 442; Ashley Beck, "Was Ronald Knox a Theologian?" in *Ronald Knox: A Man for All Seasons: Essays on His Life and Works with Selections from his Published and Unpublished Writings*, ed. Francesca Bugliani Knox (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2016), 282–283.

in Kirk Willis's words, "a polished, if stinging, indictment of the reticence of all of Britain's church leaders to confront on any level the immense spiritual as well as political challenges atomic power presented."[32] An insistent lament following the use of the bombs, written in a great hurry after they were reported in the British press, there is some justification for Willis's assertion that Knox's book was "the only book of its kind,"[33] and it remains, in Ashley Beck's words, "one of the most original critiques of the bombing and the intention to use nuclear weapons"; even if it has been overlooked by scholars.[34] The book was a dynamic and unexpected articulation from Knox: "his voice," Robert Speaight said, "had acquired an unfamiliar, a prophetic accent."[35]

Ronald Knox (1888-1957) was born into a Protestant family in the English Midlands in 1888. His mother died when he was small, and his father, an Anglican vicar and Oxford don, would be appointed bishop of Manchester in 1903. Ronald was intellectually precocious, a gifted writer, Classical scholar, and author of humorous and satirical verse. His gift for good-humoured and intellectually incisive writing would mark his publishing career; the *Daily Mail* newspaper would refer to him as "the wittiest young man in England" in 1924.[36] He followed an archetypal educational pathway for the British social and intellectual elite of his time: Eton followed by Oxford University, where he graduated in 1910 having collected a number of scholarships and prizes. One biographer observed that "his career at both Eton and Oxford was triumphant almost beyond description" and that he achieved this "without developing the slightest air of self-importance is a remarkable indication of his unfailing modesty."[37] After his graduation he was appointed a fellow at Trinity College, Oxford, and he would be ordained in the Church of England in 1912.

Knox was a profoundly religious and reputedly agreeable man who inspired deep affection and loyalty in his students; Harold Macmillan – the future British Prime Minister – to whom Knox was at one time private tutor – referred to Knox as "a humorous saint."[38] Knox converted to Roman Catholicism in 1917,

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32 Willis, "'God and the Atom'," 442.

33 Willis, "'God and the Atom'," 442.

34 Beck, "Was Ronald Knox a Theologian?" 283.

35 Speaight, *Ronald Knox*, 146.

36 Penelope Fitzgerald, *The Knox Brothers: Edmund ("Evoe") 1881–1971; Dillwyn 1883–1943; Wilfred 1886–1950; Ronald 1888–1957* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 173. Quoted by Gilley, "Knox, Ronald".

37 Thomas Corbishley, *Ronald Knox The Priest* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 9.

38 Alistair Horne, *Macmillan, 1894–1956* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 18. Gilley, "Knox, Ronald" refers to this comment.

was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1919, and would be appointed Monsignor in 1936. He developed a profile as a public intellectual with a humorous inflection through articles in popular newspapers, a reputation as a writer of crime fiction, and, especially following his appointment as Catholic chaplain to students at the University of Oxford in 1926, the author of works of popular Catholic devotion and apologetics. Knox would retire in 1939 when he was commissioned to write a new English translation of the Vulgate Bible essentially single-handed;[39] the New Testament was published in 1945, and the Old Testament ten years later. He would continue to have a high profile as a popular writer and speaker on religious and social matters until his death in 1957.

The Destruction of Personal Worlds

God and the Atom is a short but detailed book that covers a wide area of ground related to the atomic bombs and their social and spiritual significance. Aside from the sheer moral danger of using such an awful device against so many non-combatants, the book laments the existential implications of the new picture of nature that such devices imply. At the centre of the account is a new image of the constitution of reality implied by the new model of the atom: "a kind of anarchy seems to reign in the very heart of nature."[40] The old idea of regularity in nature, reflected, Knox says, by the skill of birds in building nests or beavers building dams, created an image of "Nature as a mother wisely protecting her favoured children."[41] While that was disrupted by the cultural ascent of natural selection, where nature became a "conscientious examiner, ruthlessly eliminating the candidates who [did] not come up to scratch," the process continued, at least, to imply laws and regularities in the structure of reality: "Our eighteenth-century mind-conditioning, based on machinery, was not successfully obliterated by our nineteenth-century mind-conditioning, based on the struggle for existence."[42] Even amid the trenches of World War One – where so many of Knox's friends and students had been killed – "when the world of humanity seemed to have gone hopelessly adrift," the physical world continued to follow its laws.[43] The atom bomb, however, was something different. It suggested that even that deepest consistency in the formation of the physical world was uncertain: "The moment at which a radium atom will explode

39 Waugh, *Life of Ronald Knox*, 375.
40 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 48.
41 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 46.
42 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 46.
43 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 47.

is a moment we cannot predict […] if you had all the knowledge of men and angels, you would not be able to predict it, because it seems to lie at the discretion of mere chance."[44] Thus, the old image of the divine as guarantor of creation, and a reasoning mind behind reality, is undermined. Knox suggests that this has its corollary in the image humans have of themselves; that the atomic model becomes "the symbol of our release from every principle of self-control" and humans are induced to see self-restraint as a restriction on their natural personality, as if the un-exploded atom is a form of restraint on the power of nature.[45] The image of the unpredictable atom, then, undermines the human sense of their own integrated personalities, which jeopardises the social and moral order of society.

The Destruction of Imperial Worlds

In an account of British millennialism in World War One, Eric Reisenauer suggests that an extraordinary "surge in millennial expectation" in Britain in that war was no mere response to the carnage of the conflict, but "a rather careful and thoughtful attempt to read God's plan into history and the future of nations" born out of a long-standing and stable tradition of biblical interpretation.[46] What was distinctive about the fulfilment of the scriptural "signs of the times" in this tradition was their somewhat algorithmic nature that restrained emotionality: "[u]nlike the natural omens (i.e., comets, eclipses, earthquakes), social, political or technological transformations, or religious upheavals which often sparked millenarian responses, these signs had a specificity of agent, time, and place which required a more sober analysis."[47] Amid the turgid tangle of imperial and geopolitical politics before 1914, the carnage of 1914-18, the opening up of the Near East as a theatre of war in 1916, and – most portentously – the British taking of Jerusalem in 1917, some British observers began to calculate that apocalyptic processes were underway with Britain at their centre. Such was the consistency and scale of the match between the prophetic tradition and world events, that Reisenauer concludes his review of the period by saying that those "who expected the imminent coming

44 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 47–48.
45 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 87, 86.
46 Eric M. Reisenauer, "'Tidings Out of the East': World War I, the Eastern Question and British Millennialism," in *End of Days: Essays on the Apocalypse from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Karolyn Kinane and Michael A. Ryan (London: McFarland and Company, 2009), 142, 144.
47 Reisenauer, "Tidings Out of the East", 144.

of Christ during this period […] can be fairly labelled wrong, but they should not be counted as crazy."[48]

While decidedly resistant to the millennialism of the tradition identified by Reisenauer, Knox identifies a softer cultural form of the harder bible-inspired tradition described by Reisenauer. Knox traces a steady transformation of a popular idea that God would have a special oversight for the British nation overall into a more reductive natural selection framing of the Victorian era: that the global prominence, wealth, and prestige of the British Empire reflected either their divine favour, or their fitness to survive.[49] As he put it, there was an almost unconscious sense within the British that "[t]he British type seemed to have the marks of a dominant type, qualified for a great Darwinian destiny," and a "half-scientific way of looking at things was fused, easily enough, with a half-religious way of looking at things […] the notion of a favoured people bound to its ancestral God by reciprocal obligations, was in the Old Testament manner."[50] However, the atom bombs were not dropped by the British; while some might "hold it defiantly, in the teeth of objections," "as a kind of religious creed," the unconscious logic of British superiority was undermined: "The glory has passed, and we are not the sole patentees of the Atomic Bomb."[51] The fear of lost status identified by Knox is echoed in later thinking in the British establishment as well. Gabrielle Hecht refers to the comments of the chief scientific advisor to Churchill in 1951:

> If we have to rely entirely on the United States […] for this vital weapon, we shall sink to the rank of a second-class nation, […] like the native levies who were allowed small arms but no artillery.[52]

While the appearance of nuclear weapons was discomfiting for the old imperial powers who did not (yet) possess them, it was a cause of fear and even of new forms of trauma for others. And, of course, for the Japanese Empire the new weapons were the precursor to its collapse and dismemberment alongside the direct damage of the detonations. Karen Barad has explored the long-term damage to the natural environment, human health, and cultural integrity of the Marshall Islands as the site of multiple bomb tests during the 1940s and 1950s.[53] Gabriele

48 Reisenauer, "Tidings Out of the East", 159.
49 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 49–52.
50 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 52.
51 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 54.
52 Alice Cawte, *Atomic Australia, 1944–1990* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1991), 41. This extract is taken from Gabrielle Hecht, "Rupture-Talk in the Nuclear Age: Conjugating Colonial Power in Africa," *Social Studies of Science* 35:5/6 (2022): 692. Hecht's ellipses.
53 Barad, "After the End of the World".

Schwab has investigated the ways in which uranium mining and the wider industry in the southwest of the United States had and continues to have a devastating impact on the Indigenous people of the territory and elsewhere; for whom, in the long story of colonialism, "nuclear colonialism is but a continuation of this history, albeit with a more lethal force."[54] Jim Green has reviewed the impact of the British nuclear programme in Australia on Aboriginal people, including "long-standing, multifaceted problems associated with the atomic testing program and its aftermath," though others have identified more positive resolutions in recent times.[55]

A sense of the complex dislocation caused by the bomb from the other side of the British imperial coin can be discerned in Egypt – at the time recognized as independent by the United Kingdom, but under its economic domination with thousands of British troops stationed there – where, Taha says, "thinkers perceived the atomic age as posing threats to the emerging postcolonial nation, heralding a new era of Western violence and racism, but they simultaneously regarded it as offering opportunities through the potential and promise of atomic technology and science to shape the nation."[56] The new technology was understood as a new potent weapon in the "de-humanisation of certain groups of people" and as the "onset of a new technology of racialised colonial violence."[57] This impression was widespread, Taha says, amongst reactions to the bombs in colonised countries.[58] Despite an overwhelming sense of dejection at the nuclear age amongst Indigenous and colonised people in the work of many analysts, Taha identifies a strand of enthusiasm and techno-utopianism in the Egyptian case. She refers to the way in which investment in nuclear energy and science more broadly were envisaged as indicators of modernisation and had potential to be "an indigenous endeavour of national self-strengthening […] inextricably intertwined with the process of de-colonisation."[59] The mere fact of potential new atomic, utopic futures, even alongside the danger and destruction represented in the bombs, indicated the possibility of positive

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54 Gabriele Schwab, *Radioactive Ghosts* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 63. Schwab refers to Simon Ortiz, *Woven Stone* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992). See also, Masco, *Nuclear Borderlands.*

55 Jim Green, "Radioactive Waste and Australia's Aboriginal People," *Angelaki* 22:3 (2017): 37; Stephen Long, Megan Cook, Fiona Charalambous and Julia Carpenter, "Rehabilitation of the Former Nuclear Test Site at Maralinga," *Journal of Radiological Protection*, 41:2 (2021).

56 Taha, "Hiroshima in Egypt," 2.

57 Taha, "Hiroshima in Egypt," 6.

58 Taha, "Hiroshima in Egypt," 7.

59 Taha, "Hiroshima in Egypt," 10 and *passim.* See also, Hecht's account of the conjugation of "colonial power relations, creating real and imagined technological futures in which nuclearity and decolonization confronted and shaped one another" (in "Rupture-Talk" from the abstract) for an example from the French colonial contexts of Madagascar and Gabon.

change amongst colonised nations – just as it could function as a marker of negative change (the loss of imperial leadership) in the colonising nations. The Egyptian surrealist artist Georges Henein (1914-1973), writing at the same time Knox was writing *God and the Atom*, shared the underlying fear of Knox's lament. Taha summarises Henein's case: "by using the atomic bomb, the Allies had become no different than their enemies."[60]

Thus, Knox could see the use of the bombs as emblematic of the overthrow of the imperial hegemony from within, even if the other members of the hegemon did not realise it yet, just as others in the colonised world could see them as emblems of a post-imperial future. We can see here a double-aspect of apocalyptic thinking illuminated: that it is the potential for the imaginative destruction of old worlds and the potential for the imaginative creation of new worlds; from the inside (as it were) you see collapse, from the outside you see the overthrow of a repressive order.

The Destruction of Worlds of Meaning

In Knox's account, the destruction goes beyond exploding the idea of constancy in individual or divine personality, or the destabilisation of the idea of the imperial world order, and extends to the world of meaning within which he understood those to have been formed. For Knox, the dropping of the atom bombs is a very real revelation and an eruption of supernature into nature; albeit that the supernatural that intrudes is not the transcendent divinity made flesh, but the merest reduction of inanimate matter. The increasing abstraction of scientific theory as popularly understood had weakened the cultural importance of scientific theories in general, he says. Referring to new ideas about atomic physics prior to World War Two, Knox says that these ideas were confusing, distant, and appeared irrelevant to everyday experience: "All very well to talk about the atom; but had it any real importance, except for the theorist? Was the atom really going to come into our lives? The answer came, more terrible than thunder, from Hiroshima."[61] So, the "transcendent" erupts, but it seems not to be the animated spirit (good or evil, Christ or Anti-Christ) projected by his religious beliefs, but the inconsistent, unpredictable, and arbitrary decay of the atom.

In Knox's interpretation, while he makes some passing mention of "restricted circles where the Apocalypse is eagerly scanned, and the Pyramids measured"

60 Taha, "Hiroshima in Egypt," 7.
61 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 33.

(counterpart, and prescient, no doubt about the ways in which in some circles we can see the nuclear conflagration read in Christian biblical texts), he does not envisage the atomic conflagration being assumed into a meaningful eschatological schema, but fears instead the vaporisation of religious belief of any kind; the atomic bomb imaginatively removes the apocalypse from the divine.[62] From Knox's perspective, the moral failure of humanity represented by the use of the bombs is itself a form of apocalypse from which there is no clear pathway to recovery: it is a new Fall.[63] The operative effect of post-1945 apocalyptic thinking in his diagnosis is not to remove responsibility for the apocalypse from humanity, nor to place it in the hands of humanity, but to remove it from God. It is in this way that he fears the meaningless apocalypse comes into being as a concept. This is the nature of the transition that occurred in 1945: it became realistic to imagine a godless apocalypse.

Conclusion

What we can see developing in the traditions of late-modern interpretation of apocalyptic thinking examined in the accounts of religious frameworks after Hiroshima, studies of transcoding and apocalyptic representation in film, cultural transitions in popular conceptions of apocalypse, and Ronald Knox's lament for the bombs, is a set of negotiations of pessimistic apocalyptic anxiety. As we have seen, Paul Saint-Amour identified the emergence of a sense he called the "nuclear uncanny." He goes on to say that a "permanent variant of the uncanny frisson" experienced in Hiroshima before the bombs became "a structuring condition of everyday life" for the inhabitants of cities during the Cold War.[64] What Knox's lament points up is that there may be a further, and deeper, existential frisson in the experience. We might call this a "negative eschatology"; the present life in the nuclear age is represented in popular culture and imaginatively experienced in the terms of an unarticulated total ending larded by an absence of meaning or, indeed, of God.

In a general sense, the emergence of this notion, Knox says, is not entirely attributable to the atomic bombs. "Never has the world given thanks for peace with such a deep sense of disillusionment" Knox said of the end of World War One.[65]

62 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 104–105.
63 See, Knox, *God and the Atom*, 116.
64 Saint-Amour, "Bombing and the Symptom," 61.
65 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 57.

Even if the atom bombs had been dropped away from population centres, to serve as displays of power, or not dropped at all:

> we should still be facing the future with misgiving. But its detonation forms a kind of signature-tune after all that orgy of destruction which has been going on in the past five years; it is a symbol which has struck the public imagination and deepened its sense of doom.[66]

Saint-Amour goes on in his article to identify occurrences of "nuclear uncanny" prior to the outbreak of World War Two and earlier in the century; it emerges in effect in response to the mechanisation of war: "mass trauma brought about by the conspicuously increasing vulnerability of civilian populations to incineration in total war since 1900."[67] The bombs are significant for Knox because they are emblems of the long years of war that preceded them, and that goes back, perhaps, to 1914.[68] The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are not a transitional moment in history: they are crystallisations of the worlds of meaning human cultures created – they are, in effect, religious objects.

"Our *imaginations* are threatened," Knox says, "with a break-down of hope, as they are threatened with a break-down of faith."[69] The working through of the imaginative potential of a meaningless apocalypse is, I think, the cultural process that starts to be understood in Knox's work. While Ashley Beck identifies some hopeful spiritual prospects in *God and the Atom*: "Indeterminacy in the world of nature makes the mystery of creation deeper;" "Christians now have a special responsibility to build true hope," and a religious responsibility to bring people together and integrate their lives is renewed,[70] as does Terry Tastard, who suggests that atomic indeterminacy perhaps "reveals a universe more open to providential action,"[71] it is difficult not to interpret the dominant note of *God and the Atom* as one of despair. As a priest, the answers Knox offers are silent prayer, the hope that a new saint will emerge to lead the way, and the speculation that God has dropped humanity into a meaningless moment in history as a kind of test before launching it once again on a divine trajectory.[72] He suggests that, perhaps, God is "making

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66 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 57.

67 Saint-Amour, "Bombing and the Symptom," 80.

68 Compare, for example, Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); David Rudrum, "Slouching Towards Bethlehem: Yeats, Eliot and the Modernist Apocalypse," in *Ecstasy and Understanding: Religious Awareness in English Poetry from the Late Victorian to the Modern Period*, ed. Adrian Grafe (London: Continuum, 2008).

69 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 59. Emphasis added.

70 Beck, "Was Ronald Knox a Theologian?" 284.

71 Terry Tastard, *Ronald Knox and English Catholicism* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2009), 173.

72 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 113, 115–116, 143.

trial of us, to see if we can stand adversity without giving way to despair" which should be borne – as Job bore his sufferings – "to elicit the virtue of hope in us by making everything seem hopeless."[73] His response may be the adequate religious prescription, but he presents it with grim determination more than with prophetic energy; the reader feels his sense of defeat. For Knox, a new apocalyptic sense was created when the bombs were dropped; to that extent, it was not a historical event, it was the fracturing of the ways humans imagine their worlds.

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73 Knox, *God and the Atom*, 113.

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James Crossley

Remembering John Ball: Rethinking the Transformation from Old Worlds to New

Explicit apocalypticism – understood here as involving ideas about the dramatic transformation of the social, political, and economic world – has historically been an integral part of the popular construction of an English and (sometimes) British radical tradition. This can take different, even competing forms. Those feeling threatened by dramatic change (often, but not exclusively, the ruling class) have historically used the language of apocalypticism to condemn opposition from below. Those urging the need for dramatic change have used the language of apocalypticism to convey their hopes for a more egalitarian future, or at least a future that serves their material interests. The most prominent and sustained examples of such competing apocalyptic discourses in English history have involved the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and the various groups that emerged in the English revolution/civil war of the seventeenth century. But that apocalypticism is not something typically foregrounded today. Indeed, what is rarely acknowledged in contemporary scholarship is that such thinking about apocalypticism and the related religious rhetoric played an important role in the emerging labour and socialist movement of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century; that is, the most influential period in the construction of this tradition as a positive force for change.[1] I want to rectify and explain this neglect by showing how English radicalism and socialism of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century inherited and used the radical apocalypticism of the centuries past to think about and promote historical materialism; that is, a Marxist understanding of the transformation from feudalism to capitalism and from capitalism to socialism and communism. But I also want to use this understanding of the history of religion in English political discourse to make a wider point about how we think about the history of apocalypticism today and why its presence has been downplayed, overlooked, or replaced at most with a soft, gentle apocalypticism in English and related political discourses, and how any dangerous otherness (whether anticapitalism or religious fundamentalism) has become domesticated under neoliberal capitalism. To show this, I will focus on the cultural memory of the priest of the 1381 Peasants' Revolt called John Ball, once understood (somewhat anachronistically perhaps) as the originator of English socialist thinking.

1 See, for instance, the important and standard work on emergent British socialism: Mark Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

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John Ball and an English Apocalypse

The Peasants' Revolt was an ultimately unsuccessful uprising among lower orders in England that took place in the summer of 1381. That there were peasants involved and their interests represented among the rebels is clear enough, but the conventional label can be misleading because a range of disenfranchised people were also involved, with occupations and class interests ranging from local officials and lower clergy to urban dwellers.[2] While widespread in the country, the uprisings have become especially associated with south-east England and London, not least because of the execution of leading figures of the realm in the capital, including the Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of England, Simon Sudbury.[3] The rebels were ultimately defeated, and their leading figures executed, including the popular priest John Ball.

Apocalypticism from below was an integral part of Ball's preaching. Ball was long known for his preaching against the existing secular and ecclesiastical hierarchies, and by 1381 it seems he expected the imminent and violent transformation of the social and political order in England. Ball was reported as using the biblical story of Adam and Eve to point to a time when there was no serfdom or exploitation by the lords ("[w]hen Adam dug and Even span, who was then a gentleman?").[4] This turn to the past was, of course, a critique of social structures in the present, and a foreshowing of an expected imminent change. This transforma-

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2 See, further, e.g. Rodney Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (London: Routledge, 1973), 164, 176–213 (cf. 125–26); Rodney Hilton, *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism* (revised edition; London: Verso, 1990), 17–18, 79, 84–91, 143–53; Andrew Prescott, "London in the Peasants' Revolt: A Portrait Gallery," *The London Journal* 7 (1981): 125–143; Christopher Dyer, "The Social and Economic Background to the Rural Revolt of 1381," in Rodney Hilton and T. H. Aston, eds., *The English Rising of 1381* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 9–52; Paul Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 36–39; Herbert Eiden, "Joint Action against 'Bad' Lordship: The Peasants' Revolt in Essex and Norfolk," *History* 83 (1998): 25–27; Alastair Dunn, *The Peasants' Revolt: England's Failed Revolution of 1381* (Stroud: Tempus, 2004), 12–14, 83–85, 143; Ian Cornelius, "Gower and the Peasants' Revolt," *Representations* 131 (2015), 35–39.

3 On the bias toward the South East in scholarship and reception of the revolt, see, e.g. Andrew Prescott, "Great and Horrible Rumour: Shaping the English Revolt of 1381," in *The Routledge History Handbook of Medieval Revolt*, ed. Justine Firnhaber-Baker and Drirk Schoenaers (London: Routledge, 2016), 76–78.

4 Thomas Walsingham, *Chronica maiora* 546–47. This quotation is obviously in modernised English. Otherwise, I have used John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs, and Leslie Watkiss, eds., *The St Albans Chronicle: The* Chronica maiora *of Thomas Walsingham: Volume I 1376–1394* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

tion of England would involve Ball holding the major ecclesiastical role in the future as part of a popular hierarchy that would dispense justice underneath an idealised, just king.[5]

The timing of the rebels' arrival in London is striking. It occurred on the feast of Corpus Christi (Thursday 13 June 1381), a celebration of the Eucharist and the body of Christ and often understood to be a commentary on the breakdown of the social body. Corpus Christi incorporated language about liberation from slavery under the Pharoah which in turn was tied in with Christian ideas about the crucifixion liberating Christians.[6] Ball had a version of this theology "from below." As stories about the beginning of human history were tied in with the labour carried out by Adam and Eve, so too were ideas about Eucharist, community, liberation, etc. related to the labour involved in making the bread. In letters attributed to Ball, for instance, we read about coded or generic figures such as Jack Miller who has "ground small, small, small; The King of Heaven's Son shall ransom all."[7]

It seems that the summer of 1381 was, for Ball, the expected apocalyptic moment when the great change would come about. In the letters attributed to Ball, the cryptic reference to ringing bells looks like a call to arms with an insistence that "now is tyme" to act and to stand together in truth (cf. John 4:23; 5:25; 8:31–32). This thinking was expressed explicitly in a sermon attributed to Ball as the rebels were just outside London. According to this account, the emphasis is more on human action than direct divine intervention. Ball proclaimed that God "had now given them the time during which they could put off the yoke of their long servitude." "If they wished," they could, "rejoice in the liberty they had long desired." According to Ball, if human agency was to bring about the great transformation, then this would entail violence:

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5 See, e.g., Jean Froissart, *Chroniques* 10: 96, 102, 111, 118; *Anonimalle Chronicle* 137–138, 144; Walsingham, *Chronica maiora* 420–423, 490–510. Cf. William Langland's *Piers Plowman* B.3.259–325. For Froissart, I have used Gaston Ray, ed., *Chroniques de J. Froissart: Tome Dixième 1380–1382* (Paris: Mme. ve. J. Renouard, 1869). For the *Anominalle Chronicle*, I have used V. H. Galbraith (ed.), *The Anonimalle Chronicle, 1333 to 1381* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970). On the general apocalyptic myths of a just king or Christian emperor, see e.g. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 31–35, 71–74; Stephen J. Shoemaker, "The *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Last Emperor, and the Early Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition," in *Forbidden Texts on the Western Frontier: The Christian Apocrypha from North American Perspectives* ed. Tony Burke (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 218–44.

6 Margaret Aston, "Corpus Christi and Corpus Regni: Heresy and the Peasants' Revolt," *Past and Present* 143 (1994), 19–21.

7 Walsingham, *Chronica maiora* 548–49. See also Henry Knighton, *Chronicle* 222–23, for which I have used G. H. Martin, ed., *Knighton's Chronicle 1337–1396* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995). For full discussion of the context, see Aston, "Corpus Christi and Corpus Regni, 26–33.

> He therefore urged them to be men of courage, and out of love for their virtuous fathers who had tilled their land, and pulled up and cut down the noxious weeds which usually choke the crops, to make haste themselves at that present time to do the same. They must do this first, by killing the most powerful lords of the realm, then by slaying the lawyers, justiciars, and jurors of the land, and finally, by weeding out from their land any that they knew would in the future be harmful to the commonwealth. Thus they would in the end gain peace for themselves and security for the future, if after removing the magnates, there was equal freedom between them, and they each enjoyed the same nobility, equal dignity, and similar power.[8]

This looks like an allusion to the parable of the Wheat and the Tares in the Gospel of Matthew (13:24–30, 36–43). This parable was used to explain notions of heresy and was likely used against Ball himself when he was constantly in trouble with the church authorities prior to the revolt.[9] It seems that Ball turned the allegation of heresy against the church authorities, picking up on the potential for violent, apocalyptic retribution in the parable. After all, the Gospel parable concludes with a discussion of harvesting at the end of age and the removal of causes of sin as well as evil doers.

For Ball, once the problematic "weeds" had been destroyed, England could then be transformed. It appears that Ball and other rebels looked to a future where the new England would no longer have lords exploiting peasant labour and instead would involve shared possessions and distribution according to need based on the example of the early church according to Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–35).[10] This hope probably involved (among other things) freedom from serfdom and access to the resources of the land. As one account of another rebel leader (Wat Tyler) put it, what the rebels wanted was that "all game, whether in waters or in parks and woods should become common to all, so that everywhere in the realm, in rivers and fishponds, and woods and forests, they might take the wild beasts, and hunt the hare in the fields, and do many other such things without restraint."[11]

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8 Walsingham, *Chronica maiora*, 546–47.

9 David Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae: Volume III* (London, 1737), 152; Walter Waddington Shirley (ed.), *Fasciculi Zizaniorum magistri Johannis Wyclif cum Tritico* (London: Longman et al., 1858), 272–274.

10 Froissart, *Chroniques*, 10.96; cf. *Anonimalle Chronicle* 137.

11 Knighton, *Chronicle*, 218–19.

Contesting an English Apocalypse

After his execution in July 1381, there was a sustained attempt to portray John Ball as a seditious, demonic, religious extremist whose ideas posed a threat to the nation, an interpretation which dominated the reception history of Ball for 400 years.[12] As part of this classification of Ball, he quickly featured as a demonic or satanic figure of evil in what would become a long-standing tradition of apocalypticism *from above.* For instance, shortly after the revolt, John Gower in his Ovidian dream vision (*Visio Anglie*, attached to *Vox Clamantis*) portrays the rebels as wild beasts in addressing the apocalyptic breakdown of the order of the world, with Ball at the heart of the chaos: "The prophet Ball teaches them: a malicious spirit had previously taught him, and he then constituted their deepest learning" (*Visio* 793–794).[13] The examples are numerous over the following four centuries and some picking and choosing will have to suffice to highlight how this apocalypticism from above was employed in different eras. By the time of Reformation England, Ball soon became a warning against an excessive reforming and a means to propagandize for the moderate Church of England. The violence, destruction, and moral degeneracy associated with Ball was seen as an indication of what could happen again in England and akin to what was perceived to have happened in continental Europe with Thomas Müntzer, the Anabaptists, and those proclaiming all things in common.[14] Writing at the end of the sixteenth century, Shakespeare's character of Jack Cade in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part II*, was directly based on Ball and played on fears of uprisings, rebellions, and megalomaniacal religion as the population of London was growing rapidly.[15] This was a figure who preached

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12 James Crossley, *Spectres of John Ball: The Peasants' Revolt in English Political History* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2022).

13 Eric W. Stockton, ed., *The Major Latin Works of John Gower: The Voice of One Crying, and The Tripartite Chronicle* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), 67.

14 E. g. Thomas James, *An apologie for Iohn Wickliffe shewing his conformitie with the now Church of England; with answere to such slaunderous obiections, as haue beene lately vrged against him by Father Parsons, the apologists, and others* (Oxford, 1608), 63–66; Samuel Rowlands' *Hell's Broke Loose* (1605), in Edmund Gosse and Sidney J. H. Herrtage (ed.), *The Complete Works of Samuel Rowlands 1598–1628: Vol. 1* (Glasgow: Hunterian Club, 1880), 1–48.

15 Among many others, see e. g. Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 32–51; Ellen C. Caldwell, "Jack Cade and Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 2*," *Studies in Philology* 92 (1995): 18–79; Geraldo U. de Sousa, "The Peasants' Revolt and the Writing of History in 2 Henry VI," in *Reading and Writing in Shakespeare*, ed. David M. Bergeron (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 178–193; Stephen Longstaffe, "'A Short Report and Not Otherwise': Jack Cade in *2 Henry VI*," in *Shakespeare and Carnival: After Bakhtin*, ed. Ronald Knowles (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998), 13–35; Dominique Goy-Blanquet, *Shakespeare's Early History*

of an England transformed; where all things would be shared in common which, in Shakespeare's presentation, involved extreme drunken debauchery and female sexuality let loose, alongside murder of the elites.[16] And this sort of future was what might be expected of those preachers who menacingly advocated political, economic, and religious reform; as Cade put it, teasing such anxieties: "Your captain is brave, and vows reformation."[17] Upper-case "Reformation" and lower-case "reformation" were not distinguished on stage, of course, and this was a known play-on-words concerning the anxieties surrounding excessive messianic Protestantism.[18]

The representation of Ball in English cultural memory continued as the epitome of sedition and rebellion. In revolutionary England of the mid-seventeenth century, Ball functioned as a warning from the past about the dangers of the present in light of the shock of regicide and parliamentary power. Here we find, arguably, the most polemical treatment of Ball in the history of his reception in a royalist text attributed to anti-puritan satirist John Cleveland: *The Idol of the Clownes, or, Insurrection of Wat the Tyler, with His Priests Baal and Straw* (1654). "Baal" is a wordplay on Ball and the stories of Baal in the Old Testament (cf. Judges 3.7; 6.25–32; 1 Kings 14.15; 15.13; 18–19; 2 Kings 9–11; 33.4–7) and rethought in terms of apocalyptic language common enough in revolutionary England ("Wall" and Ball" were often interchangeable in this period):

> One Baal the most sottish and most unworthy, but most factious of the Clergy is stirred up by the Devill […] the Devill (who, if rebellion be as the sinne of Witchcraft, is the Father of both) to be the Antichrist of this Reign, to blaspheme and cry down God and Cesar his anoynted, the Rights of God and Cesar […] *Of these imaginations* […] *was a foolish Priest in the County* of Kent *called* John Wall (for *Baal*) and to make it plain that he was the Father of the uproar […][19]

Plays: From Chronicle to Stage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 100–106; Chris Fitter, "'Your Captain is Brave and Vows Reformation': Jack Cade, the Hacket Rising, and Shakespeare's Vision of Popular Rebellion in *2 Henry VI*," *Shakespeare Studies* (2004): 173–219; Delphine Lemonnier-Texier, "Staging Sedition despite Censorship: The Representation of the People on the Shakespearean Stage in 2 Henry VI," *Revue LISA* 11 (2013): 1–24, accessed January 22, 2023, doi: 10.4000/lisa.5499.

16 William Shakespeare, *King Henry VI Part 2*, ed. Ronald Knowles (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 4.7.8–9, 15–20, 63–67, 120–25. References are to act, scene, and line. So, e.g. Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 204.

17 Shakespeare, *King Henry VI Part 2*, 4.2.62.

18 Fitter, "Your Captain is Brave and Vows Reformation," 190–92, 194–97; Longstaffe, "Introduction," 74–82.

19 John Cleveland, *The Idol of the Clownes, or, Insurrection of Wat the Tyler with his priests Baal and Straw together with his fellow kings of the commons against the English church, the king, the*

Ball would continue to be a convenient negative foil in English and British political discourse of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, used ominously in debates about absolutism, mixed monarchy, constitutionalism, sedition, rebellions, mobs and riots, and so on.[20]

However, towards the end of the eighteenth century and alongside the emergence of capitalism in Britain, even those who continued to dislike Ball could no longer disagree with his criticisms of serfdom and even agreed with some of the rebel demands. The philosopher and historian David Hume condemned much about the revolt, including the violence, but was prepared to give backhanded compliments, such as this note: "There were two verses at that time in the mouths of all the common people, which, in spite of prejudice, one cannot but regard with some degree of approbation: When Adam delv'd and Eve span, Where was then the gentleman?"[21] But the major change in the history of the reception of Ball came in light of the waves of radicalism in the 1790s when the pros and cons of a dramatic transformation of the social order were being publicly discussed following the American and French revolutions respectively. The 1381 revolt was part of the famous debates about revolution and conservatism between Thomas Paine and Edmund Burke, with Paine commenting that the revolt leader Wat Tyler deserved a memorial.[22] The silversmith and political radical, John Baxter, redirected the standard historical narrative of the revolt in his history of England. Baxter may have plagiarised from more hostile sources, but the value judgment shifted as Ball was now the champion of lost English rights who spoke out against the "tyranny of artificial distinctions" and promoted the "equal right to liberty, and to all the goods of nature."[23] This harking back to an ideal past as a model for the future transformation marked the positive understanding of Ball for much of the nineteenth century.

The most influential treatment and reclaiming of Ball's legacy in this context was from a young Robert Southey in his initially unpublished dramatic poem, *Wat Tyler* (1794). Despite its title, the work has Ball taking centre stage and is a presen-

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laws, nobility and royal family and gentry, in the fourth year of K. Richard the 2d, an. 1381 (London, 1654), 5.

20 Crossley, *Spectres of John Ball*, 100–155.

21 David Hume, *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688: Volume II* (London, 1778), 290.

22 Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Part the Second. Combining Principle and Practice* (London, 1792), 111. Cf. Edmund Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, in Consequence of Some Late Discussions in Parliament, Relative to the Reflections on the French Revolution* (London, 1791), 132–34.

23 John Baxter, *A New and Impartial History of England, from the Most Early Period of Genuine Historical Evidence to the Present Important and Alarming Crisis* (London, 1796), 196–97

tation of ideas about martyrdom, revolutionary violence, and economic exploitation with allusions to the French Revolution. *Wat Tyler* may have vanished forever had it not re-emerged in mysterious circumstances over twenty years later, in 1817, after Southey had become Poet Laureate, establishment man, and the very opposite of the young radical he once was. *Wat Tyler* was pirated and repeatedly republished by Southey's opponents to the point that it became "the" standard understanding of John Ball for much of the nineteenth century. During the nineteenth century, Ball the apocalyptic priest was quickly and variously seen as a thinker of revolutionary violence, political martyr, supporter of worker's rights and conditions, and accompanied by the language of "socialism" and "communism." Integral to such developments was, also, an English identity grounded not in race and ethnicity but rather in politics, chivalry, cultured interests, and radicalism, as part of a romantic myth of lost Anglo-Saxon rights destroyed by the feudalism of the Norman conquest in 1066.[24] While sometimes parochial, there was a universalising tendency to this sort of interpretation which justified bringing together Irish radicals and former slaves, and Ball's name was even taken up as a pseudonym which helped one journalist discuss revolution with American slaves.[25]

John Ball and Marxist Eschatology

These readings of Ball and the Peasants' Revolt were inherited and transformed by the early English socialists and Marxists in the second half of the nineteenth century, shifting the emphasis from reviving a lost English past to the wholesale transformation of the future. They inherited what was a problem, namely the idea that Ball was a failure whose hope for the transformation of England did not happen and had not happened after 500 years. But this problem was also an opportunity to popularise Marx and Engels's material conception of history and push for the transformation of the imminent future. William Morris – the designer, writer, artist, translator, and in his later life, socialist – was arguably the person most responsible for popularising a historical materialist reading of the past and potential future, and did so with reference to Ball and the language of biblical apocalypticism and eschatology. Morris worked with E. Belfort Bax to produce pamphlets designed to introduce an English and British audience to a Marxist understanding of

24 Crossley, *Spectres of John Ball*, 175–267.

25 E. g. James Redpath, *The Roving Editor: Or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States* (New York: A. B. Burdick, 1859), 299–300. See further John R. McKivigan, *Forgotten Firebrand: James Redpath and the Making of Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 10–18, 26, 27, 41, 44–45, 207 n. 106.

the whole sweep of history, from primitive communism through slave societies and feudalism to capitalism.[26] Nevertheless, their work remained a technical discussion and to popularise historical materialism Morris wrote a fiction, *A Dream of John Ball*, first serialised in the newspaper *Commonweal* in 1886–1887.[27]

A Dream of John Ball focuses on a character called the Man from Essex (effectively Morris himself) who has a dream about being in south-east England in 1381. The Man from Essex meets the rebels and Ball. He hears Ball talking about fellowship, solidarity, revolutionary commitment, the violent fate waiting for the rich lords and oppressors, and the future that awaits peasants once they lose their masters. During this sermon, the Man from Essex contemplates implications of the uprising and an ongoing history of defeats as well as new struggles:

> But while I pondered all these things, and how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name–while I pondered all this, John Ball began to speak again in the same soft and dear voice with which he had left off.[28]

This theme of reinterpreting Ball's message gets taken up in the finale of *A Dream of John Ball.* Before this, though, the first half of the book has Ball taking on the role of prophet, teacher, and eschatological seer. His language is grounded in eschatological and apocalyptic biblical texts. He tells his audience to stay focused and be wary about those who "shall lead you astray" (Ch. VII; cf. Matthew 24:4, 24; Mark 13:5–6, 22; Luke 21:8). Later, Ball and the Man from Essex go to a moonlit church to discuss mortality and ongoing loyalty to the ideal of fellowship when they talk of the "Days to Come" (Ch. X) and the "days that are to be on the earth before the Day of Doom cometh."[29]

Ball and the Man from Essex now change roles. Ball becomes the student, and the Man from Essex becomes the apocalyptic and eschatological seer who explains future history. Ball is prepared to die for the cause and pleased to discover that feudalism and serfdom will indeed end. But Ball is then saddened to discover that exploitation will continue in a new form under capitalism and that feudalism will not be replaced by a world where those who labour would "enjoy the goods of

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26 E. Belfort Bax and William Morris, "Socialism from the Root Up (1886–1888)," in William Morris, *Political Writings: Contributions to Justice and Commonweal 1883–1890*, ed. Nicholas Salmon (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994), 495–622.

27 And later published as a book: William Morris, *A Dream of John Ball; and, A King's Lesson* (Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1892).

28 *Dream of John Ball*, ch. IV.

29 *Dream of John Ball*, ch. IX.

the earth without money and without price."[30] Rather, the conditions in medieval England cannot bring about this socialist future which is many centuries away and will first require a new system of exploitation: capitalism. The Man from Essex provides an explanation of the rise of capitalism when people will sell their labour to the masters and earn enough to live. The Marxist argument Morris and Bax developed in non-fiction is now presented in the language of prophecy and prophetic prediction by the "wondrous seer" (Ch. XI) as the Man from Essex explains what will happen "in the time to come."[31] As morning begins to lighten the church, Ball comes to understand the historical materialist conception of history as The Man from Essex comforts Ball with the knowledge that the "Change beyond the Change" will be realised and that "Fellowship of Men shall endure" despite the "tribulations." The dream may have failed in medieval England, but it still endured in the face of dangers, uncertainties, disputes, fears, violence, and so on. The "time will come" when Ball's dream will be realised, and the name "John Ball" will have inspired hope through the centuries for this future change beyond the change.[32]

Ball's idea of fellowship was Christian but grounded in socio-economic relations and thus adaptable for a secularised context. But the Man from Essex could see "beyond this church" and promise a time of changed socio-economic relations when there would be no religious institutions.[33] This fellowship, then, pointed to the religion of socialism that would replace religion proper. Late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century socialists, including Morris, were keen on this idea of the "religion of socialism," which involved socialism extracting those parts of religion deemed compatible with socialism, and absorbing and secularising them into the socialist agenda, with fellowship and propagandising being deemed chief among the best religious traits.[34] In *A Dream of John Ball*, we likewise get such ideas developed, but I would add that we could equally call it an eschatology of socialism, taking the ideas of eschatological thinking and transforming it into a historical materialist schema.[35]

In this schema, Ball's dreams of fellowship were not going to happen in fourteenth-century England; the material conditions were not ready as the transforma-

30 *Dream of John Ball*, ch. X.
31 *Dream of John Ball*, ch. XI.
32 *Dream of John Ball*, ch. XII.
33 *Dream of John Ball*, chs. X, XIII.
34 See, e.g. Stephen Yeo, "A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883–1896," *History Workshop* 4 (1977): 5–56; Anna Vaninskaya, *William Morris and the Idea of Community: Romance, History and Propaganda, 1880–1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 7, 62, 83–84, 140–146, 156–158, 160–165, 175–186, 198–199.
35 Cf. Crossley, *Spectres of John Ball*, 291–294.

tion to capitalism was only just beginning. Instead, the nineteenth-century readers and hearers of *A Dream of John Ball* might see capitalism give way to a new socialist and then communist order which might still involve medieval paraphernalia of an England lost, as Morris's later novel *News from Nowhere* would suggest. Morris has been popularly criticised for being an incurable romantic when it comes to his Catholicising medievalism, but this ignores what he was doing: for Morris, medieval Catholic England (in contrast to capitalist puritanical Protestantism that followed) was a time when the worker was not as alienated from their work and what they produced, in contrast to the worker under capitalism. And so, this medievalism pointed to what might potentially happen in a socialist future. Bringing about the change beyond the change still had to be done, of course. It was now the task of socialists and revolutionaries under capitalism to fulfil Ball's vision for which there was more "scientific" and historical justification for its time being nigh. The example of Ball was the example of the will, revolutionary attitude, determination, and sacrifices now required in the late nineteenth century in face of inevitable defeats and uncertainties.[36]

Dreams of John Ball

Morris cast a huge influence on English socialism and even liberalism. His version of John Ball was effectively *the* John Ball for decades. Morris's medievalism, reading of religion, and historical materialist reading of Ball was imitated widely. This legacy was taken up enthusiastically among workers and the emerging labour movement who strongly pushed the idea that Ball was effectively the founder of English socialism.[37] This was also employed by the suffragette movement, among whom Morris was a popular figure for his perceived progressive views on women and for whom Ball was a helpful figure for his perceived egalitarianism, as in articles in the newspaper *Votes for Women* on (for instance) 21 June 1912 and 8 August 1913.[38] With occasional exceptions, this thinking was consistently seen as an internationalist tradition paralleling radical traditions among other nations and people. The idea that this homegrown radical tradition was not about race and ethnicity, but rather about politics, behaviour, and socio-economic relations continued. Now the old myth about lost Anglo-Saxon rights ruined by the Norman

36 Cf. Ruth Kinna, *William Morris and the Art of Socialism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 41–42, 114, 97, 98–99, 130, 138, 162–163, 174–177.

37 Crossley, *Spectres of John Ball*, 298–344.

38 See also Carolyn P. Collette, "'Faire Emelye': Medievalism and the Moral Courage of Emily Wilding Davison," *The Chaucer Review* 42 (2008): 238–39.

invasion of 1066 was transformed in the socialist tradition into hopes for the great change in the future rather than overemphasising a mythic past. Nevertheless, retrospectivity remained in ideas about a primitive communist impulse never wholly leaving human societies, as indeed the hardworking Adam and Eve of the frontispiece of the book version of *A Dream of John Ball* indicates.[39]

Ball (via Morris) was emphasised further in the face of fascism, particularly by the Communist Party of Great Britain. In the 1930s, the idea of a Popular Front against fascism involved ensuring that national traditions should be used in the struggle, with Ball being central or foundational for English traditions.[40] But there was also a sense of updating the historical materialist tradition and hopes for the future transformation. Fascism was seen as a block to the development of capitalism – that is, a block on capitalism developing the conditions suitable for the transformation to socialism – and hence Popular Frontism involved opposition to sectarianism and standing alongside liberals and non-Communists. Among the many examples are the popular historical pageants which involved a visual portrayal of historical materialism in English or British history, with the 1381 revolt at its heart, as well as parallels with other internationalist traditions, including antiracism and antislavery represented by songs sung by Paul Robeson.[41] Similarly, Jewish writers were interested in Ball and the uprising, and this phenomenon was emphatically part of the idea that English or British identity was not racialised and certainly not racialised in the face of fascism.[42]

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39 Stephen F. Eisenman, ‘Communism in Furs: A Dream of Prehistory in William Morris’s *John Ball,’ The Art Bulletin* 87 (2005): 92–110.

40 E. g. Hyman Fagan, *Nine Days that Shook England: An Account of the English People’s Uprising in 1381* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938); A. L. Morton, *A People’s History of England* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), 119–20, 124; Jack Lindsay, *England, My England: A Pageant of the English People* (London: Fore Publications, 1939), 7–10; Jack Lindsay, *Who Are the English? Selected Poems: 1935–1981* (Middlesbrough: Smokestack Books, 2014), 9–12.

41 See further e. g. Mick Wallis, “Pageantry and the Popular Front: Ideological Production in the Thirties,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 38 (1994): 132–56; Mick Wallis, “The Popular Front Pageant: Its Emergence and Decline,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 11 (1995): 17–32; Mick Wallis, “Heirs to the Pageant: Mass Spectacle and the Popular Front,” in *Weapon in the Struggle: The Cultural History of the Communist Party in Britain*, edited by Andy Croft (London: Pluto, 1998), 48–67; Raphael Samuel, *The Lost World of British Communism* (London: Verso, 2006), 111; Clare V. J. Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside: The Politics of Rural Britain 1918–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 45; Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alex Hutton, and Paul Readman, “Music for the People,” *The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Britain*, accessed January 22, 2023, https://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1132/.

42 E. g. Fagan, *Nine Days*; Charles Poulsen, *English Episode: A Tale of the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381* (London: Progress, 1946).

Perhaps the most famous pageant was the "March of History" in London, 1936. Ball and the Peasants' Revolt begun a history of "people who have always known when to revolt against tyranny and will always know in the future" and represent the fight for democracy and progress.[43] There was a martyrological purpose associated with Ball and others, as the procession culminated with the Red Flag and the Spanish flag and a portrait of Felicia Browne, an activist who died fighting in Spain. What united much of the history from Ball to Browne was martyrdom at the hands of an oppressive power. This was a tradition that, as Thomas Linehan put it, came into being through a "blood sacrifice," and culminated with Browne's portrait endowing her "sacrifice with eschatological purpose" as "part of a long historical struggle towards arriving at the final liberating goal of freedom from tyranny, whether feudal, Victorian capitalist, or fascist."[44]

The End of Apocalypticism?

After World War II, interest in Ball declined sharply, partly because the generation brought up on Morris's medievalism was dying out. Ball and Morris were of less use for women's and feminist movements because a canon of heroic women was being established. Historical materialism certainly continued with historians like Rodney Hilton,[45] but from the 1980s onwards historical materialism was going out of fashion with the post-1968 fragmentation of the western Left and eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.[46] There were some influential and direct criticisms of such Marxist readings associated with the Communist Party, claiming that there was much greater continuity between medieval peasants and people today. For instance, as the Socialist Workers' Party were in the ascendency as one of the most prominent leftist groups of the late twentieth century, one of its most famous members, Paul Foot, argued against other types of Marxists who divide history into "sealed compartments" and claim that:

> the peasant [that] comes from a different age, is separate from us, has nothing to do with us, and that history moves by stages, scientific stages, and the peasant is one stage, and the work-

43 See *the Daily Worker, 21 September 1936* in London District Committee (CPGB), *The March of English History* (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1936).

44 Thomas Linehan, "Communist Culture and Anti-Fascism in Inter-War Britain," in *Varieties of Anti-Fascism: Britain in the Inter-War Period*, ed. Nigel Copsey and Andrzej Olechnowicz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 45–46.

45 E. g. (among many publications) Hyman Fagan and Rodney H. Hilton, *The English Rising of 1381* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1950); Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free.*

46 Crossley, *Spectres of John Ball*, 402–458.

> ers are in another…nothing therefore to do with us what happened six hundred years ago, in a quite different sort of economy. We can leave it on one side. We're not peasants, we're very advanced people, we've been an industrial working class burrowing away for years and we've got pretty well nowhere, but we're terribly important and we're much more important than any peasant.[47]

This collapsing of the cultural distance between now and then became commonplace from the 1980s onwards, with religion no longer seen in historical materialist understandings of societal evolution and with Ball being a largely secularised and contemporised figure. Consequently, in mainstream liberal or leftist circles, Ball was no longer the prophet of apocalyptic change before his time and now most likely to be a supporter of parliamentary democracy, a solid welfare state, and values of tolerance and inclusion.[48] The most popular reading of Ball in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries was a folk hymn called "Sing John Ball" (1981) by Sydney Carter which has nothing to say about the apocalyptic transformation of the world involving the beheading of the archbishop but instead tells us vaguely of love and the light that is coming in the morning; a soft, gentle apocalypticism at most.

This decaffeinated Ball is also a product of religion in much of Britain today.[49] Church attendance is down, and the explicit public authority of Christianity and the Bible severely weakened. So Ball as the wild preacher of end times has likewise faded in mainstream liberal Left discourses. This is part of the reason why the role of religion in emergent English socialism gets downplayed by historians of the relatively recent past: religion is too strange, too alien, if it is even noticed at all.

But that is only half the story. Ball might not be well known today, but the version of him in his fully caffeinated glory as a violent, even fundamentalist preacher of class war remains in popular TV histories and novels.[50] In one sense, of course he is. Who wants to watch a history of the Peasants' Revolt where the priest just preaches love, and the peasants peacefully protest? No, half the point of an entertaining popular history is the blood, gore, and violence. The idea that the political radicalism associated with Ball flourishes in mainstream culture rather than among the constrained parliamentary or parliamentary-adjacent Left is entirely in keeping with the presentation of violence and class conflict under neoliberal

47 Paul Foot, *"This Bright Day of Summer": The Peasants' Revolt of 1381* (London: Socialists Unlimited, 1981), 18–19.

48 Crossley, *Spectres of John Ball*, 429–435.

49 I take this language of decaffeination from Slavoj Žižek, e.g., *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003), 95–97.

50 Crossley, *Spectres of John Ball*, 447–459.

capitalism. As analyses of neoliberal culture have stressed, radical critique and anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist rhetoric has been absorbed into TV and film, where the performance of anti-capitalism and political radicalism can be done on our behalf at a safe cultural and historical distance. But it has, as Slavoj Žižek put it, "lost its subversive sting."[51]

Conclusion

The story of John Ball's fate tells us something of the history of the rhetoric of apocalypticism in England, Britain, and arguably much of the western world today. When the COVID lockdowns came into force in early 2020, the reactions did not simply include recourse to apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic language, as people commonly joked on social media about survivalism in dressing gowns and pyjamas. Of course, people partaking in this popular discourse, at least in much of the liberal Anglophone world, never *really* thought the "end is nigh" and this was never "really" going to be like the *Walking Dead* or the like because "really believing" in such things is too excessive and alien for such discourses. This use of ironic distance has become a way of updating the inherited and pervasive language of apocalypticism and religion. Nevertheless, the Covid apocalypse replaced another apocalypse which does get associated, less ironically, with global catastrophe in a more traditional sense. The fires burning in Australia as a result of climate change were being reported just days and weeks prior to the Covid lockdown and described as an apocalypse with anything but irony and jokiness.[52] But here again we see the concerns for the wildness and danger of apocalyptic events – this time in the catastrophic sense of transforming the physical world – performed for us and opposition absorbed at a safe distance in a mass media that is at best ineffective in drawing attention to climate change and at worst complicit.

What does this have to do with an apocalyptic priest from 1381 and his reception? Quite a lot, I think. As we have seen, a similar process of domestication is at play with the reception history of John Ball, from wild apocalyptic prophet of social and political transformation, through proto-communist, to social democratic preacher of love, with his apocalyptic otherness now played out in novels and

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51 Slavoj Žižek, "Do We Still Live in a World?" accessed January 22, 2023. http://www.lacan.com/zizrattlesnakeshake.html. See also, e. g., Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009); Ciara Cremin, *Capitalism's New Clothes: Enterprise, Ethics and Enjoyment in Times of Crisis* (London: Pluto Press, 2011).

52 For discussion, see James Crossley, "The Apocalypse and Political Discourse in an Age of COVID," *JSNT* 44:1 (2021): 93–111.

on TV. Apocalypticism in its violent, transformative, dangerous otherness may appeal to a subset of religious believers but, for related reasons, has become almost impossible for liberalism and the liberal Left to handle because of its increasingly alien concepts. Apocalypticism and post-apocalypticism of a figure like Ball or for a global catastrophe works well as a theme for fiction, film, TV, and the mass media but in doing so absorbs and performs anticapitalism and environmentalism for us, resulting in a lack of historical understanding at best and inertia in the face of impending disaster at worst. Nevertheless, with the proliferation of such extensive material on anticapitalism and environmental disaster at our fingertips and before our eyes, it has potential for alternative propagandist purposes in the future. Unless it is already too late, of course.

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Part 2: **World Ending Experiences**

Paolo Vignolo

New World and the End of the World: Apocalyptic Cartographies of the Conquest

We routinely use the term "New World" as a synonym for America during the early conquest and before the appearance of Amerigo Vespucci. During the late fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, however, the term evoked a religious as much as a geographical perspective, drawn from Saint John's Book of Revelation: "Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea."[1] This was the sense Columbus attributed to his own enterprise when he claimed:

> God made me the messenger of the New Heaven and the New Earth of which he spoke through St. John in the Apocalpyse, after having spoken of it through Isaiah; and He showed me to that location.[2]

With a radically different meaning, even *Mundus Novu*s – the title of Amerigo Vespucci's famous letter to Lorenzo De Medici that popularized the expression "New World" as a recently-found continent unknown by the ancients – was, itself, an elusive quote of Saint John's Apocalypse. Carlo Ginzburg reminds us that in the middle of the sixteenth century the metaphor of a truly new world beyond the ocean, "which time has worn away, like a coin passing from hand to hand," was still disconcerting in its boldness.[3] Since then, a well-established western tradition interpreted the new-found continent through the ancient Book of Revelation.[4]

So, what is the connection between the New World and the End of the World? Why has the conquest of the Americas been so often read in apocalyptic terms? We can already draw on an important historiographical field committed to exploring how millenarian imaginaries went along with the great expansion of Christian

1 Holy Bible, New International Version, 2011, Revelation 21–1.

2 Christopher Columbus, "Libro de las profecías," in *Raccolta di documenti e studi publicati dalla Real Commissione pel quarto centenario dalla scoperta dell'America: Scriti di Cristoforo Colombo,* ed. Cesare de Lollis (Rome: Real Commissione Colombina, 1892/94), Part I, vol. 2, 71. English translation in Dijelal Kadir, *Columbus and the Ends of the Earth: Europe's Prophetic Rhetoric as Conquering Ideology (*Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 33.

3 Carlo Ginzburg. *El queso y los gusanos* (Barcelona: Atajos, 1997), 127. For further considerations on the concepts of *Tierra Firme,* New World, and America see: Paolo Vignolo and Virgilio Becerra, *Tierra Firme. El Darién en los imaginarios de los conquistadores* (Universidad Nacional de Colombia: Bogotá, 2011), 15–32.

4 Adriano Prosperi, "América y apocalipsis," *Teología y Vida* 44 (2003): 196.

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kingdoms.[5] Within this broader research program, however, I am particularly interested in the way these imaginaries take a cartographic form, mapping both religious prophecies and geopolitical aspirations. Focusing on the spatial dimension of apocalypse I pursue an interdisciplinary approach connecting the history of art, critical geography, and decolonial studies. This spatial turn aims to achieve a double purpose in relation to both the history of cartography and to history of European colonialism.

On one hand, comparing different cosmologies through cartography, iconography, and maps in the broader sense of the term underscores complex temporalities, nonlinear narratives, and visual anachronisms. As Pauline Moffitt Watts underlines, "European mapmaking maintained a religious framework long after the adoption of a Ptolomaic approach based on latitudes and longitude."[6] Stories inscribed on world maps of the medieval tradition, imbued with Christian elements, are not mere decorative residuals in modern planispheres, but continue to play a structuring role throughout the sixteenth century and beyond.[7]

On the other hand, these apocalyptic cartographies allow for new contemporary interpretations of the conquest of the Americas. Early-modern *mapamundis* reflect millenarian visions, discourses, and practices that acted both as colonial strategies and tactics of resistance, including the proliferation of non-western representations. Accordingly, approaching historical cartography from a decolonial perspective can give us insights to better understand unequal colonial relations, imperialist projects, and local territorial conflicts.

In this chapter, I will focus on three documents: The planisphere of Juan de la Cosa (1500) where a rhetoric of sacrifice and salvation embedded in a millenarian frame prefigures the epistemic and ecological violence that pervades the European imagery of the conquest. The *mappe-monde nouvelle papistique*, published in Geneva in 1566–67, in which a carnavalesque eschatology depicting both the city of

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5 Among the pioneering works in the field I would like to mention: John L. Phelan, *El Reino Milenario de los Franciscanos en el Nuevo Mundo* (Mèxico: UNAM, 1972); Marjorie Reeves, The *Influence* of *Prophecy* in the *Later Middle Ages:* a *Study in Joachimism* (*Oxford:* Clarendon Press, 1969); Wachtel Nathan Wachtel, *La Vision des vaincus. Les Indiens du Pérou devant la Conquête espagnole (1530–1570)* (Paris, 1971); Alain Milhou, "Colón y su mentalidad mesiánica en el ambiente franciscanista español," *Annales 41:2* (1986): 459–462.

6 Pauline Moffitt Watts, "The European Religious Worldview and its Influence on Mapping," in *Cartography in European Renaissance Vol. 3 Part 1*, ed. David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 382–400. See especially 381–382.

7 On the relation between medieval cartography and millenarianism, see Chet Van Duzer and Ilya Dines, *Apocalyptic Cartography: Thematic Maps and the End of the World in a Fifteenth-Century Manuscript* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Alessandro Scafi, "Mapping the End: the Apocalypse in Medieval Cartography," *Literature and Theology*, 26:4 (2012): 400–416.

Rome and the whole globe, traces a bold comparison between the anthropophagic practices of the Catholic Mass and the rituals of the cannibals of Brazil. And finally, the *mapamundi del reino de las Indias* of the *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1615) by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, which depicts a re-elaboration of the prophetic perspective of late medieval Christianity from an Incan perspective. The map offers a unique synthesis between the categories of *pachakuti* and upside-down worlds, Cuzco and the New Jerusalem, Andean messianism and Christian eschatology.

Millenarian Cartographies: The Map of Juan de la Cosa

The map of Juan de la Cosa can be defined as a Map of Revelation, both in a literary as well as a figurative sense.[8] It promises to reveal the "secrets of nature" hidden in the wilderness of the tropical forest; the *selva* represented by the immense green stain at the extreme end of the planisphere. At the same time, the map is a map of revelation in relation to the actual Book of Revelation. A millenarian narrative crosses the parchment from East to West, connecting the demonic peoples of Gog and Magog, Babylonia and the Tower of Babel, as well as Prester John and the expansion of Islam up to the green landmass of an unknown continent.

Why is it, then, that the early exploration of the ocean seas and the conquest of the Western Indies awakened millenarian expectations; while this kind of thinking was lacking in previous European expeditions in Africa and Asia? The answer concerns the expansion of the geographical space to encompass the entire planet; i. e. what some historians now call "first globalization."[9] The steady exploration of the globe as a whole created the shared sensation that the completion of time was also approaching. In Phelan's words:

8 This section extends some of the points already discussed in the following: Paolo Vignolo, "Map of Revelation: Sacrifice and Conversion in the Planisphere of Juan de la Cosa," in *Sacrifice and Conversion between Europe and the New World*, ed. Maria Berbara (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2021) 183–204.

9 Geoffrey C. Gunn, *First Globalization: the Eurasian Exchange, 1500–1800* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "Born Again: Globalization's Sixteenth Century Origins (Asian/Global versus European Dynamics)," *Pacific Economic Review* 13:3 (2008): 373–374; Serge Gruzinski, *The Eagle and the Dragon: Globalization and European Dreams of Conquest in China and America in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).

> Christianity, for the first time, could fulfill its universal claims on a world scale. […] To those of a mystical temperament, this possibility seemed so blinding and radiant a vision that its fulfillment heralded the approaching of the end of the world. They thought that after all the races of humanity were converted, nothing else could happen in this world; anything else would be too much.[10]

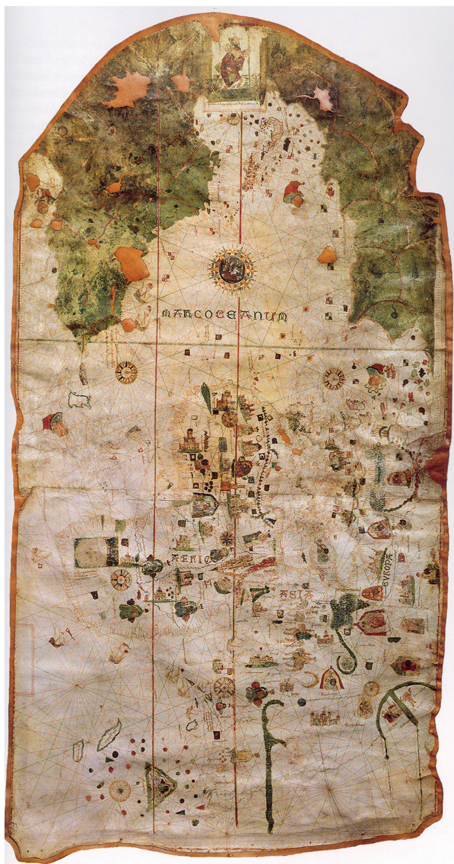

Figure 1: Map of Juan de la Cosa (1500) reproduced by permission of the Naval Museum in Madrid.

In other words, the evangelization process disclosed an eschatological promise. The act of bringing the gospel to the inhabitants on the other side of, what is called in the map, the Ocean Sea became a sign of the imminence of Doomsday. Juan de la Cosa shared the wonder and bewilderment of the first interoceanic voyages with

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10 Phelan, *El Reino Milenario,* 32. The translation from the Spanish version is the author's own translation.

Christopher Columbus. In the last years of their lives, the two seafarers increasingly developed a sense of millenarian urgency: de la Cosa in his map and Columbus in his *Book of Prophecies.* The Genoese Admiral edited said collection of biblical and patristic texts in 1502, in an effort to give a theological justification to his enterprise. Columbus's intense mysticism has been well documented, even though it is still neglected in public debate around him as a public figure.[11] For him, the evangelization of Indigenous people was a tangible realization of the words of Mathew 24–14: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."[12]

Moreover, with the gold of the Indies, Columbus dreamt of financing a crusade for the liberation of the Holy Sepulcher.[13] According to this vision, the triumph of heavenly Jerusalem depended on the re-conquest of earthly Jerusalem, a direct consequence of the expansion of the Spanish empire overseas. As early as 26 December, 1492, Columbus wrote:

> For so, I protested to Your Highnesses that all the gain of this my enterprise should be expended on the conquest of Jerusalem, and Your Highnesses smiled and said that it pleased them, and that without this they had that inclination.[14]

By the time he fell out of favor at court, he insisted on portraying himself as an instrument of the divine providence. In the Book of Prophecies, he claimed that his enterprise, already anticipated by the Holy Scripture, was paving the way to Doomsday:

11 Carol Delaney, *Columbus and the Quest for Jerusalem* (New York: Free Press, 2011); Carol Delaney, "Columbus's Ultimate Goal: Jerusalem," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48:2 (2006): 260–292; Gabriella Moretti, *Gli antipodi. Avventure letterarie di un mito scientifico* (Parma: Pratiche, 1994), 123. See also again: Dijelal Kadir, *Columbus and the Ends of the Earth: Europe's Prophetic Rhetoric as Conquering Ideology (*Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

12 Holy Bible, New International Version, 2011, Mathew 24–11. See also Richard Mize, "Christopher Columbus and Bartolome de Las Casas: Worshipping Christ Versus Following Jesus. Spiritual Roots of their Twin Christian Legacies," in *Where No One Else Has Gone Before: Proceedings of the Ninth Native American Symposium*, ed. Mark B. Spencer (Oklahoma: Southeastern Oklahoma State University, 2012), 73–74. Tony Oguoma et al., "Exegesis of Matthew 24:14: The Meaning of 'the End,'" in *World Wide Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 3:8 (2017): 153–158.

13 Tzvetan Todorov, *La conquête de l'Amérique. La question de l'autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), 18.

14 Christopher Columbus, *The Journal of Christopher Columbus: His Own Account of the Extraordinary Voyage to Discover the New World*, trans. Cecil Jane (New York: Bonanza Books, 1989), 128.

> I said above that much that has been prophesied remains to be fulfilled, and I say that these are the world's great events, and I say that a sign of this is the acceleration of Our Lord's activities in this world. I know this from the recent preaching of the gospel in so many lands.[15]

The identical apocalyptic imaginaries that inspired Juan de la Cosa's map and Cristopher Columbus's *Book of Prophecies* were very popular among the first generation of Franciscan missionaries in Mexico. From there, the belief that the discovery of a new world was announcing the end of the world spread over both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Among the most eloquent defenders of a mystical interpretation of the conquest was Gerónimo de Mendieta, a follower of Joachim of Floris (1135–1202), one of the most influential millenialists of the Middle Ages. Mendieta shared the conviction that the accomplishment of the ecumenical mission of converting all nations on earth was a sign of the eve of the Final Judgment. In his view – directly drawn on liturgical rituals and biblical exegesis – there were three main groups to be converted: the Jewish, the Heretics – mainly represented by Muslims – and the Gentiles.

The main difference relied on the temporal and geographical distance from the Holy Land. Jews had to be considered betrayers because Christ lived and died among them, while Muslims – not sharing such an intimate proximity – were guilty of falsehood while the Gentiles were accused of blindness, since the gospel had only just reached them.[16] This geopolitics of conversion, described by Mendieta, is very similar to the one at work in Juan de la Cosa. The map is a cartographic patchwork, combining a nautical chart with previous maps, each with its own different projection; different place names and perhaps even with different scales.[17] The spatial montage also generates a number of anachronisms; in the

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15 Roberto Rusconi, *The Book of Prophecies Edited by Christopher Columbus* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 76–77.

16 Phelan John L., op. cit. 22–23

17 Paolo Vignolo, "Una inmensa mancha verde. El enigma del mapa de Juan de la Cosa (1500)," in: *Entre Líneas: Una historia de Colombia en mapas*, ed. Lucía Duque Muñoz et al. (Bogotá: Planeta, 2023), 31–40. On the question of the scale there is open debate among specialists. On this point see Joaquim Alves Gaspar, "The Planisphere of Juan de la Cosa (1500): The First Padrón Real or the Last of Its Kind?," *Terrae Incognitae* 49:1 (2017): 68–88; Luis A. Robles Macias, "Juan de la Cosa's Projection: A Fresh Analysis of the Earliest Preserved Map of the Americas," *ALA Map and Geography Roundtable* (2010), http://hdl.handle.net/1969.1/129190; Arthur Davies, "The 'English' Coasts on the Map of Juan de la Cosa," *Imago Mundi* 13:1 (1956): 26–29; Hugo O'Donnell, "El mapamundi denominado Carta de Juan de la Cosa y su verdadera naturaleza," *Revista General de Marina Special Issue* (1991): 161–81.

sense George Didi-Huberman – following Aby Warburg – gives to the term.[18] As a result, we can sketch at least three different time zones in the map.

The first temporality corresponds to the medieval representation of the Old World and shows a visual exegesis of biblical stories from Genesis to the birth of Christ: Babylonia, the Tower of Babel, the queen of Saba, the Red Sea, and Bethlehem among others.[19] It evokes the Age of the Father in Joachim prophetic tradition, widespread among Franciscan circles close to Columbus.

A second time zone can be traced in the wider area outside the Holy Land. Its main narrative is the evangelical mission to spread the gospel into the four corners of the world and the planetary geopolitical struggle among Christian and Islamic powers. Flags claiming new lands and ships sailing new seas worldwide represent the expansion of Portuguese, Spanish, English, and Turkish empires. It is the Renaissance version of what Joaquim called the Age of the Son, where the vicissitudes of the chosen Jewish people of the Old Testament are replaced by the affirmation of the New Testament against heretics and Mohammedans.

Finally, the most surprising temporal dimension is the nameless green landmass at the very west of the map. The presence of the icon of Columbus/Saint Cristopher leaves no doubts about its oncoming destiny: the military colonization of wilderness and the conversion of "wild" people living there. Cristopher Columbus himself interpreted his name as Cristoferens (meaning "Christ-bearer") as well as *columbus*, Latin for the male dove, "because he carried the grace of the Holy Ghost to that New World which he discovered" as his son Ferdinand wrote.[20] If, in Joaquim, the third age was represented by St. Benedict and for the Franciscan missionaries by St. Francis, now Columbus portrayed himself as the fulfiller of prophecy.[21] The green stain preconizes the oncoming age of the Holy Spirit. It is a prophetic space, a cartographic promise, an after-life geography.

18 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps. Histoire de I'art et anachronisme des images* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2000).

19 On the relation between Nativity and Apocalypse see: Ian Boxall "Apocalyptic Sensibility in Renaissance Europe," in *The Cambridge Companion of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. Colin McAllister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 212–230; see specifically page 212.

20 Pauline Moffitt Watts, "Prophecy and Discovery: On the Spiritual Origins of Christopher Columbus's 'Enterprise of the Indies'," *The American Historical Review* 90:1 (1985): 73–102; see specifically pages 99–101.

21 David F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology. The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 24–34.

Mystic Cartographies: Eskrich and Trento's New Papist World Map

Eschatological debates inflaming the spirits of young missionaries in Mexico, Peru, and the West Indies also fed religious struggles back in Europe. Transnational networks of missionary orders and humanist circles played an important role in providing new evidence on the approaching Armageddon. The preacher Serafino da Fermo, for example, published a *Brief Declaration on the Apocalypse* in 1538, announcing that "a few years ago a new world has been found" and that was a sign of the forthcoming of the Antichrist and the End of Times. His influence in Italy and Spain would extend until the beginning of the seventeenth century.[22]

Themes, images, and perceptions from overseas broke into the fierce controversies between Catholics and Reformed in the doomsday atmosphere of the crisis of Christianity. Among them, the cannibal became one of the most iconic instances of cultural imaginaries. Anthropophagy was a real obsession in Renaissance culture, dating back to way before any ethnographic observation of the dietary habits of the inhabitants on the other side of the ocean had been made. In actuality Christopher Columbus is the one who invented the term "cannibal" just a few days after touching land in the Antilles, as a variant of the human-eating monsters of the medieval tradition; its fortune has to do with the creation of a new colonial subject.[23] Anthropophagy acts both in term of blockage and assimilation, according to Stephen Greenblatt. It traces a clear-cut divide between the civilized people of the Old World and the savages of the New, while at the same time wrapping up the "quintessential alien" into some kind of familiarity.[24] In fact, the morbid fascination that the act of eating human flesh and drinking human blood aroused among Europeans has to do with the anthropophagic phantom at the core of the Eucharist, the main Christian sacrament: *Hoc est corpus meum,* "[t]his is my body;" with these words the priest performs the transubstantiation of bread and wine into Christ's flesh and blood, allowing the incarnation of the Word and the sacred communion of the faithful with the Redeemer.

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22 Adriano Prosperi, "América y apocalipsis," 202.

23 Frank Lestringant, *Le cannibale: Grandeur et décadence* (Perrin: Paris, 1994); Giuliano Gliozzi, *Adamo e il nuovo mondo: La nascita dell'antropologia come ideologia coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali (1500–1700)* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1977).

24 Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 157–167.

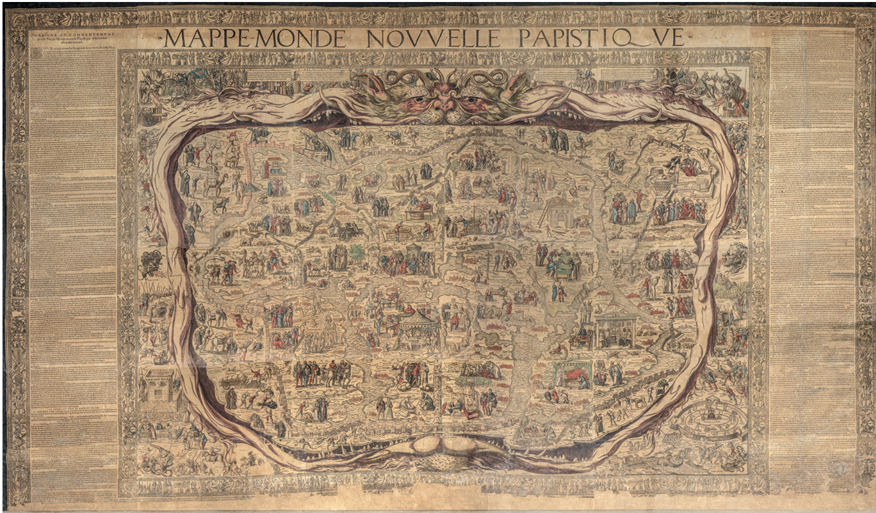

Figure 2: La Mappe-Monde Nouvelle Papistique (1566), reproduced by kind permission of Wroclaw University Library (where the original can be found).

In the sixteenth century, the interpretation of this three-letter word *hoc* became a theological dispute of great importance.[25] Both Luther and Calvin translations of the scriptures stressed on its metaphorical significance, while the Church of Rome maintained its literal interpretation, giving the priest a sacred power. The controversy on the celebration of the mass enlisted the cannibal in the religious wars between Catholics and Protestants.

One of the most striking examples of propaganda heralding the Apocalypse through cannibalism is the *mappe-monde nouvelle papistique* of 1566–67, created and written by the Italian Calvinist Jean-Baptiste Trento and illustrated by the Geneva engraver Pierre Eskrich. The 16-sheet chart, accompanied by a 190-page text, takes full advantage of the satirical association between the New World cannibals and the Catholic god-eaters, in order to describe an upside-down world ruled by the Anti-Christ. In open opposition to the carnivalesque imaginary of the New Papist World Map stands the virtuous old world of the apostles and early Christian martyrs.[26]

25 Lestringant, *Le Cannibale,* 19.

26 Paolo Vignolo, "Chair de notre chair: La représentation du cannibalisme dans la construction d'une identité européenne," in *Anthropologie historique du corps,* ed. Fredéric Duhart (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 187–227.

The text and the image are connected, but do not coincide. They focus on two complementary polemical topics, exploring the specific features of pictorial and scriptural rhetoric. In his writing Jean-Bautiste Trento stresses the connection between the New World and the Roman Church, as a way to denounce the expansion of the Catholic empires of Spain and Portugal. On the other hand, Eskrich's engravings overlap *Urbi et Orbi*, the city of Rome and the Globe, in order to show how the decadence of the Papacy shakes and shocks the whole universe.

The accompanying text read as follows:

> And then [the priests, guests of the province of the Mass] feast and drink their good wine, and eat nothing but meat, like some peoples of Brazil, called Cannibals, who eat human flesh: these must be of the race of such people, and must be their descendants. Because they do not eat anything other than human flesh, and they are very cruel and destructive like the Cannibals. […] These cannibals sent some troops of people to that country, and left their race throughout the papist world, in such a way that there are more cannibals here at this time, and they are more cruel and barbaric than those born in Brazil.[27]

In order to trace the analogy between the "province of the Mass" and the country of Brazil, Trento uses the theory of zones as a satirical device. According to this ancient paradigm, the Earth can be divided into five main regions: two polar circles, too cold to host human life, a torrid equatorial band and two temperate zones, one in the Northern hemisphere and the other in the Southern hemisphere, unknown until recent times. This austral land is known as the *antipodes* ("feet against" in Greek) because people there live with feet up and head down. It is a *Mundus alter et idem:* "another world and the same world;" it has equivalent seasons and weather as the northern hemisphere, but reversed. It is night when up north is day, it is winter when there is summer. Since it is an upside-down world, it is also a *Mundus inversus et perversus:* its inhabitants live in an inverted and supposedly "perverse" way.[28]

Calvinist propaganda exploited these cartographic parallelisms based on latitudes to establish moral analogies between the "totally carnal monarchy" of the popes and their wild allies in the New World. In this view, Catholics are even worse than the cannibals of Brazil at the antipodes of Europe, since they do not just practice anthropophagy, but theophagy: they swallow Christ's body and drink his blood. The conquest of the New World put the old world upside-down

27 Quoted in Frank Lestringant, "Fictions cosmographiques à la Renaissance," in *Ecrire le monde à la Renaissance* (Caen: Paradigme, 1993), 297–299.

28 Paolo Vignolo, "Nuevo Mundo: ¿Un mundo al revés? Las antípodas en el imaginario del Renacimiento," in *El Nuevo Mundo. Problemas y debates*, ed. Diana Bonnett and Felipe Castañeda (Uniandes: Bogotá, 2004), 23–60.

and created an abominable new Papist world where the Antichrist sits on Saint Peter's throne. The engraving reinforces this eschatological view. The walls of the city coincide with the jaws of the Devil. The whole image is a grotesque act of anthropophagy: a monstrous mouth is about to devour the entire world, as in the medieval tradition of Last Judgment paintings.[29] Moreover, the *mappe-monde nouvelle papistique* is modeled on Sebastiano di Re's map of Rome, dated 1557. The detailed representation of each prominent place of the city becomes the metonym of a universal sin. *Urbi et orbi:* the city is, indeed, a mirror of the world, but for its capacity to corrupt it all rather than for its ecumenical aspirations. This cartographic palimpsest not only subverts one of the most eloquent rhetorical strategies of the Catholic Church. It also creates the framework for a complex allegory expressed by the harshest carnivalesque sarcasm.

In the upper right side of the engraving, for example, there is the Papal Court within an accurate representation of the Vatican palaces, with the old Saint Peter's Basilica and the new one still under construction. A bishop, a cardinal, and an abbot receive Dame Verité (Lady Truth). A text at the margin explains: "This is she who has always been (as you see her face and aura) outraged, beaten, tormented, afflicted and despised by the Lord Clergy."[30] Meanwhile *Dame Pécune Nourrice (Lady Money Nurse)* is suckling the Pope surrounded by his courtesans.

Following a very well-established protestant *topos*, Rome is depicted as Babylon and the Pope as the Antichrist. A second definitive fall of Babylon will be the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Book of Revelation 21: the end of the city will announce the End of the World. In this sense, the decision of using Sebastiano di Re's map as a palimpsest is not an innocent one. One of its peculiarities is that it shows the urban reconstruction after the sack of Rome in 1527. As Frank Lestringant points out, the world map can be read as an apocalyptic prophecy of a second, final sack of Rome/Babylon, the great Whore.[31]

Adriano Prosperi underlines how the reformers employed a combination of two temporal models to reinforce their political arguments against the Church: a historical model, (based on periodization) and a prophetic model (based on con-

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29 For more on this see: Pauline Moffitt Watts, "The European Religious Worldview," 391.

30 *"Ceste-ci est celle qui a tousjours esté (comme vous en voyez la figure et le poutrtraict) outragée, battue, tormentée, affligée et mesprisée par le Seigneur Clergé."* See Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Symbolforschung, "Phantastische Landkarten," http://www.symbolforschung.ch, September 15, 2018, http://www.symbolforschung.ch/Phantastische_Landkarten.html.

31 Frank Lestringant, "Une cartographie iconoclaste: 'La mappe-monde nouvelle papistique' de Pierre Eskrich et JeanBaptiste Trento (1566–1567)," in: *Géographie du monde au Moyen Âge et à la* Renaissance, ed. Monique Pelletier (Paris: Éditions du C.T.H.S., 1989), 99–120.

densation).[32] It is possible to see this at work in the New Papist World Map, where the historical periodization organized around far-away geographical places (Rome, Babylon, Brazil etc.) and specific times (Old Testament, Early Christian Rome, the sack of the city of 1527 etc.) eventually condenses into a prophetic time around the images of anthropophagy and apocalypse. The two models collapse in a dizzying mix of temporalities in an act of what I would call a "mystic cartography."

Prophetic Cartographies: Guaman Poma's *Mapamundi del reino de las Indias*

The millenarian yearnings going along with the process of exploration and conquest of the New World also spread among the colonial subjects of a society in gestation, creating new worldviews and new prophetic scenarios. In cartography, the most extraordinary case is the *mapamundi* of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1615). Rolena Adorno suggests that the world map is "the apex of the work, the symbolic culmination that summarizes and condenses the complex vision of its author."[33]

Before approaching the map as such, let me briefly discuss the quechua notion of *pachakuti* in relation with the Christian notion of Apocalypse. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui explains: "*Pacha* = time-space; *kuti* = round, turn, revolution. Like many Andean concepts, *pachakuti* can have two divergent and complementary meanings (although they are also antagonistic in certain circumstances): that of catastrophe or that of renewal. *Pachakuti*, in Qhichwa and Aymara, means "revolt" or "commotion of the universe."[34] Guaman Poma – following a well-established Andean tradition – also uses the term *pachakuti* with this double meaning. On one hand, it means destruction, cataclysm, and calamity. More specifically, however, it is a catastrophic event that marks the end of an age and the beginning of a new one. In this

32 Adriano Prosperi, "América y apocalipsis", 201.

33 Adorno Rolena, "El fin de la historia en la Nueva corónica y buen gobierno de Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala," *Letras (Lima)*, 85:121 (2014): 13–30; 13.

34 Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Violencias (Re)encubiertas en Bolivia* (La Paz: La Mirada Salvaje/Editorial Piedra Rota, 2010). Both the translation from the Spanish version and italics are from the author. Atuq Eusebio Manga Qespi writes: "Pacha is a univocal word that denotes space (length, width, and depth) and time (the fourth dimension). This connection of two conditions – a static one and a dynamic one on the same level – besides connecting the cosmic space or 'sky,' also shows a concept of time in history that reveals the sequence of autonomous and dynamic loops that can generate themselves." Atuq Eusebio Manga Qespi, "Pacha: un concepto andino de espacio y tiempo," *Revista Española de Antropología Americana* 24 (1994): 155–189; 155.

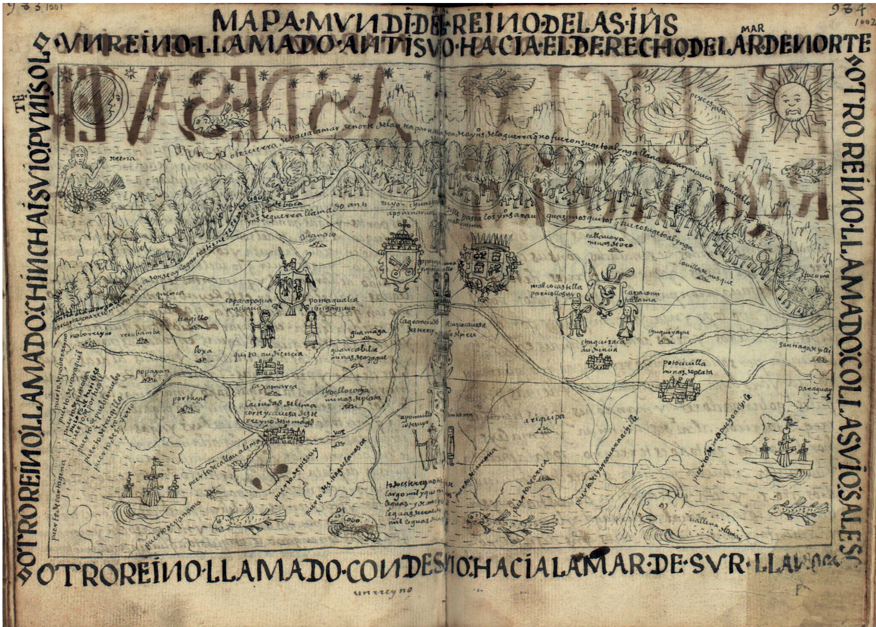

Figure 3: Guaman Poma, Nueva corónica y buen gobierno (1615), reproduced by kind permission of the Royal Danish Library. Royal Danish Library, GKKS 2232 kvart: Guaman Poma, *Nueva Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (c. 1615), 1001–1002.

sense, it can be associated with an apocalyptic view of history. At the same time, *pachakuti* also refers to a subversion, an inversion or an upheaval that turns the world upside-down. Garcilaso de la Vega uses it in the same way.[35] El *mundo al revés* (the world upside down) is one of the most frequent images in Guaman Poma's writing to describe Andean society in his own epoch.

It would be tempting to oppose a linear Christian temporality organized from Genesis to Revelation to an Andean circular temporality characterized by periodical *pachakutis.* In my opinion, however, this dichotomy can be misleading in both cases. Late medieval societies were organized as much on circular as on lineal dimensions of time: the cycle of the seasons, the rotation of cultivations, the wheel of Fortune, the carnivalesque, as well as the liturgical celebrations of life, death, and resurrection. Similarly, the sixteenth century Andean worldview inherited from

35 Sabine MacCormack, "Pachacuti: Miracles, Punishments and Last Judgment: Visionary Past and Prophetic Future in Early Colonial Peru," *The American Historical Review* 93:4 (1988): 960–1006; 966.

Incan civilization a deep sense of historical time organized through dynasties, genealogies, and ages.

Along the same line, Koselleck invites us to overcome the contrast between linear and circular time, to see the layers of historical times "that refer to each other and cannot be separated from the whole."[36] Atuq Eusebio Manga Qespi claims that time in Andean thought can be imagined more as a spiral of overlapping times rather than as a historical line with a final phase of salvations or destiny. He suggests the image of a Möbius strip to grasp the Andean conception of "an evolutionary and non-deterministic time, made explicit in the succession/superposition of convolutions or loops, where conjunctural or consequential futures (in turn) are generated in the immediate-past as base projections, causing another space-time."[37]

It is worth keeping these complex temporalities in mind as a starting point to explore montages, anachronisms, and *survivances* embedded in Guaman Poma's *mappamundi.* At a first glance, it looks like a map representing South America, drawn according to late medieval cartographic codes already obsolete by the time of its making. It is oriented toward the East. It has latitudes and longitudes, even if the continental edges are not accurate for the state of the art of the early seventeenth century. The iconography also suggests it belongs to the medieval Christian tradition: emblems of the papacy and the monarchy, as well as pictures of a siren, a unicorn, a wild man, and a monstrous whale, among others further confirm this suspicion. However, this initial impression is misleading, or, at the very least, biased. As Rolanda Adorno's decades-long research (based on Nathal Wachtel's pioneering work) demonstrates, "Guman Poma's mapamundi relied on symbolic medieval European representations of space as well as on Andean cosmology and cosmography."[38] The map depicts the kingdom of the Indies of Peru, as the title claims, and, at the same time, the Inca Empire, the *Tawantinsuyo.*

As most of the 397 images of the 1200-page missive Guaman Poma sent to King Felipe III, the world map follows diagonal patterns organizing the space into upside/right and downside/left coordinates, based on the *janan* (masculine) and *urin* (feminine) principles. According to Manga Qespi, in Guaman Poma *janan* refers to a more recent time-space associated with the New World and the South Seas, while *urin* is a more ancient time-space, corresponding to the Old World and the Northern (Atlantic) Ocean.[39] An Andean spatial semantics overlaps the car-

36 Reinhart Koselleck, *Los estratos del tiempo: estudios sobre la historia* (Barcelona: Ediciones Paidós, 2001), 35–36.
37 Manga Qespi, "Pacha," 185. The translation from the original Spanish is, again, from the author.
38 Rolena Adorno, "El fin de la historia," 13.
39 Manga Qespi, "Pacha," 168.

tographic European codes. Which is precisely why, at the very center of the map, the city of Cuzco – the ancient capital of *Tawantinsuyo* – can be seen instead of Lima, the Viceroy's residence. Moreover, Saint Peter's keys, the emblem of the Pope, and the coat of arms of the Spanish monarchy praise and protect the city. Cuzco is the *umbilicus mundi*, the world's navel of Gumam Poma's cosmology. It plays the same role Jerusalem plays in medieval *mappamundis* as the terrestrial, messianic, and spiritual center of the world.[40]

From Cuzco, the imperial space is organized into four quadrants, corresponding to the traditional Inca regions of *Chinchaysuyo, Condesuyo, Collasuyo*, and *Antisuyo.* A route connects the most important cities of *Tawantinsuyo*, from Santa Fe de Bogotá up north to Santiago de Chile in the Southern part. The *Corónica* provides a brief description of each city depicted on the map.

From there it is possible to see an anomaly: at the peak of its expansion, the Incan Empire arrived as far as the Pasto region in the north and reached northern Chile in the south. Neither Santa Fe de Bogotá nor Santiago de Chile ever belonged to it. Furthermore, the map shows the harbors of Panama, Cartagena de Indias, and Asunción-Paraguay; the latter incorrectly considered as coastal cities. If Guaman Poma would have referred to the colonial space of the Spanish Empire, he would have, instead, taken into account the administrative hierarchies.

I suggest that this surprising enlargement of the *Tawantinsuyo* is neither a mistake nor a misunderstanding. It rather corresponds to a space-time opening towards wider horizons as well as towards a wider future. A third anomaly may help to better explore this hypothesis. Inca Yupanqui and his wife Mama Collqui, Incan rulers of the mid-fifteenth century, are named next to Cuzco. Why did Guaman Poma decide to put them in the most prominent position at the center of the map? The reason is simple: from Guaman Poma's perspective, Tupac Inca Yupanqui represents Inca's major glory for his good government, even if he was neither the last king nor the first.[41]

As a result, the map acquires an unexpected dynamism. The heritage of an idealized Andean past illuminates an expanding force moving throughout genealogies of pre-Inca and Inca dynasties, marked by nine ages. Thanks to a notable effort of erudition, Guaman Poma tries to match Jerónimo de Chaves's Christian ages with the ages of Andean tradition, in order to inscribe the history of Peru into world history. This rhetorical strategy allows him to maintain a number of facts. First, Indigenous people received the Gospel long before the arrival of the Spaniards,

40 On the role of local and regional versions of Jerusalem in Middle Ages mapamundis see: Marcia Kupfer, "The Jerusalem Effect: Rethinking the Centre in Medieval World Maps," in *Visuals Constructs of Jersualem*, ed. Bianca Kûhnel et al., 353–368 (Belgium: Brepols, 2014).

41 Rolena Adorno, "El fin de la historia," 13

and they kept the memory of the universal Deluge. Second, the last great *pachakuti* was caused by struggles among Incan dynasties before the Conquest: The Crown of Castille and Leon could not claim any decisive military victory. And third, Manco Capac, the main person responsible for turning the Incan society upside-down, had attributes associated with the figure of the Antichrist. He was engendered by a sorceress with Amaru, a serpentine divinity.[42]

Moreover, this idealized past becomes a prophetic call for a colonial society still devastated by civil wars first among the Incas and then among the Spaniards. From there, Guaman Poma envisions the *Inkarri*, the return of the Inca king in the framework of a Christian universal empire.[43] In the chapter of the *Conzederaciones*, Gumam Poma puts into words a prophecy that is also the foretelling of a future *Pachakuti:* in the tenth age – the last one – Felipe III is prophesized to become Monarch of the World. Under his rule – a symbolic monarchy without jurisdiction – the King of Roman Christians, the Black King of Guinea, The King of Moorish Turks, and the King of Western Indies will govern, in peace and justice, their peoples, each one according to their religious beliefs and cultural traditions. Returning to the origins: the longing of a Christian paradise at the End of Times coincides with the restored Inca Empire.

The complex program embedded in the map and its project toward a prophetic future embraces the whole globe. What Guaman Poma is depicting is a dynamic time-space, as a way to inscribe the Indies of Peru on a planetary scale. It is indeed a world map, not just a regional map. But a world map in the making. It is an exercise of prophetic cartography, where the image can envision what the text predicts.

Final Considerations

This chapter insists on the persistence of apocalyptic elements in sixteenth and early seventeenth century cartographies. Each one of the three maps traces an eschatological prospect in which the end of the world is associated with the discovery of the New World. Still, it is important to notice a dramatic change in late medieval *mapamundis*, where apocalypses are inextricably linked with the *Parousia*, the second coming of Christ. In the cases considered here, even if the narrative structure and a number of iconic references imply a Final Judgment, all the emphasis is on what happens before doomsday. This reluctance to stage Christ's re-

42 Sabine MacCormack, "Pachacuti: Miracles, Punishments," 974.
43 Sabine MacCormack, "Pachacuti: Miracles, Punishments," 987 .

turn on earth might be explained with a certain caution in dealing with such a "burning" matter. The Inquisition both in Spain and in Peru watched over the drifts of millenarian movements, always ready to criticize the Church of Rome. The same missionary orders – Franciscan and Dominican in the first place – oversaw cooling down the messianic fervor of the militant church at the beginnings of evangelizing the New World. Guaman Poma himself (when he was the translator and scribe of Cristobal de Albornoz during his campaign of extirpation of idolatries) knew first-hand and approved the persecution against the *Taki Onqoy* messianic movement, which set out to restore the Inca order in *Tawantinsuyo.* [44] Also, on the Protestant side, the more radical groups who announced the imminence of the Final Judgment were considered dangerous. Calvin, for example, wrote no commentary on the Book of Revelation and his interpretation of Daniel's vision excludes any prophetic reference to the future.[45]

Nevertheless, I suggest that there is something more than prudence in privileging the struggle of the final days to the descent of the judgment of Christ. Since the mid-fifteenth century, mapping the world became a strategic exercise rather than a pure theological dissertation. In this way eschatology was put into the service of geopolitics at full scale. Narratives about the end of times started to focus on announcing an ever-lasting *status quo* on earth rather than an imminent theophany in the sky.

In the map of Juan de la Cosa, the age of the Holy Spirit promises to reveal itself to the extent that the expansion of Christian powers is revealing the secrets hidden in the wilderness. Revelation, conquest, and evangelization advance together. The destiny of the great green landmass at the extreme west of the parchment is to get smaller and smaller, until disappearing under the pressure of the sword and the plume of the conquerors.[46] The final battle against the heretics – either Lutherans or Mohammedans – as well as the submission and conversion of Jewish and Gentiles, prepare the triumph of the Universal Empire and eventually the end of history.

In The New Papist word-map, the implicit expectation is, again, the *Dies Iræ*, the Day of Wrath. Still, all the satirical efforts are centered on the very last days of the world under the rule of the Pope/Antichrist; rather than on a second coming of Christ. The Final Judgment works merely as a medieval frame from which to set the scene depicted according to a very peculiar humanist sixteenth century taste for the carnivalesque. Hence, the text evokes the restoration of the early Christian

44 Rocío Quispe-Agnoli, "Prácticas indígenas de la resistencia: sujetos de la escritura y el saber en los Andes coloniales," *Revista Iberoamericana*, 73:220 (2007): 415–436; 423.

45 Ian Boxall, "Apocalyptic Sensibility," 221.

46 Michel De Certeau, *L'ecriture de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), chapter five.

Church, but the image focuses on the grotesque chaos of Rome/Babylon and its monstrous claws extending around the globe.

Finally, in Guaman Poma the space-time horizon expands to embrace a future universal monarchy in which the idealized version of the Peruvian past can find the place it deserves. The map prepares the terrain for heralding the prophecy of a *pachakuti* that will put order in the upside-down world shaken by both Incan and Spaniards' misruling. As a result, a good government will take over the whole globe, without the need of any *Parousia.* Apocalyptic cartography, thus, enters into early modernity with renewed impulses and different temporalities. The New World is actually preconizing the imminence of the end of the world. However, expectations are now focused on earthly Jerusalem, rather than on the heavenly kingdom. In Derrida's words, "[t]he end approaches, but the apocalypse is long-lived."[47] The second coming of Christ can wait.

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47 "La fin approche mais l'apocalypse est de longue durée" as quoted in: Jacques Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptque adoptè naguère en philopophie* (Paris: Galilèe, 1982), 81. Translation by John P. Leavey, Jr.

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Patricia Zalamea

Mapping Space and Time in Apocalyptic Representations in Latin American Colonial Art

Apocalyptic representations in Latin American colonial art developed their own specific iconographies by building on preexisting Christian and pre-Hispanic imagery, expanding it, and accommodating local needs. In this chapter, I trace three types of interconnected apocalyptic imagery that spanned the three centuries of Spanish colonial rule by focusing on how these iconographies went beyond established doctrine and developed specific and uniquely American approaches. These include the expansion of the images associated with Saint Francis and the mendicant orders in general, variations on the Immaculate Conception, and the combination of iconographies associated with the end of life, such as the Last Judgment and purgatory. Soon after their arrival to the Americas, the religious orders played a significant role in global theological debates, especially the question of how to fit America into a pre-existing conception of time. Similarly, the Spanish iconography of the Immaculate Conception and its multiple combinations took on a special relevance throughout the Americas. In images related to the "four last things" – death, judgment, hell, or heaven – purgatories continued to be represented well into the nineteenth century (much later than their European counterparts, which had gradually died out in the seventeenth century) and were conceptually placed, and sometimes combined, with the Last Judgment to provide a specific space for evangelizing and converting transitioning souls. Finally, a general consideration of geopolitical space establishes a backdrop for understanding how such representations responded to the new reality of the American continent and specific local concerns. These include evangelization in unchartered territories as well as disputes amongst the orders that took on non-European forms of representation that, in turn, responded to Indigenous traditions.

To trace the interconnectedness and specificities of this imagery, this chapter concentrates mostly on shared iconographies in the Andean world of the seventeenth-century Viceroyalty of Peru (encompassing modern-day Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile) while making an occasional leap to New Spain (mainly contemporary Mexico). At the same time, I emphasize how spatial features such as depth, composition, distribution, surface, and perspective enhance narratives unfolding in a non-linear fashion that reflect a reconceptualization of time and space in the American context. Exploring how time and space intersect in these visual representations, creating variations and amplifying apocalyptic conceptions,

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ultimately serves as a mirror of the larger theological and political discussions in the context of the continued encounter between Europe and the Americas.

Reading the American Encounter through an Apocalyptic Lens

The encounter between Europe and the Americas may be read through an apocalyptic lens in several ways. On the one hand, the very image of the encounter itself is apocalyptic: the diminution of the population and the inherent violence in the transformation of native lands in the Spanish Americas was denounced by figures such as Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala in his complaints about the mistreatment of the Incas in his *Primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1613–14).[1] Other instances include the Dominican missionary Bartolomé de las Casas, renowned for his defense of the rights of Indigenous peoples and whose *Brevísima relación* (a report to Philip II as heir to the Crown) may be interpreted as partaking in an apocalyptic genre of writing.[2] On the other hand, the image of the apocalypse was used by Catholic theologians to connect American history with sacred history and to interpret the Spanish conquest of the Americas under the light of the recent recovery of Granada.[3] The notion of a predestined prophetic role in the recovery of the Holy Land, in which the Americas played a central part, was already very much present in Christopher Columbus's image of his own self as St. Christopher or Christoferens (the bearer of Christ across waters) and in his writings as part of a planned volume titled the *Book of Prophecies.*[4]

A similar view to that of Columbus was furthered by some of the orders arriving to the new continent. As discussed by scholars such as Ramón Mujica, Constan-

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1 On the apocalyptic nature of Guaman Poma's map, see Paolo Vignolo's contribution to this volume.

2 On the apocalyptic undertones of Bartolomé de las Casas's writings, see Janice A. Jaffe, "Apocalypse Then and Now: Las Casas' 'Brevísima relación' and Cortazar's 'Apocalipsis de Solentiname'," *Chasqui*, 23:1 (1994): 18–28. On "Las Casas's belief that he has been uniquely chosen by God to witness, and, like John of Patmos, divinely ordained to write," see 20–21.

3 On the apocalyptic lens through which Catholicism justified the conquests of the Spanish Crown, but also on how the very notion of the apocalypse was fundamental for the very identity of a Catholic Spain and its global outreach, see R. Alan Covey, *Inca Apocalypse: The Spanish Conquest and the Transformation of the Andean World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

4 See Pauline Moffit Watts, "Prophecy and Discovery: On the Spiritual Origins of Christopher Columbus's 'Enterprise of the Indies'," *The American Historical Review* 90:1 (1985): 73–102. In particular, on Columbus's intended volume and Columbus's sources, see 85; on his own image as St. Christopher and as the fulfiller of the prophecies of St. John the Evangelist, see 99–102.

za Acuña, Jaime Lara, and Antonio Rubial, the comprehension of history derived from the Benedictine monk Joachim of Fiore (d.1202) was particularly influential in the Spanish Americas thanks to the Franciscan order and their reading of Bartolomé de Pisa's *Libro de las Conformidades*, written in the fourteenth century, in which the parallels between Christ and Saint Francis were emphasized through a Joachite lens.[5] The belief that their establishment in the Americas would be the final, peaceful reign preceding the apocalypse was based on Fiore's division of history into three distinctive periods: 1) a first era, moving from Adam to Christ; 2) a second period, that of the Gospels, leading up to 1260 with the arrival of a new Messiah (understood as Saint Francis himself); and 3) a third age, one which would continue until the Last Judgment, this being the missionary age of the monks and the spiritual church. The different orders developed entire new iconographies around this idea in the Andean world, especially the Franciscans for whom a winged St. Francis, sometimes accompanied by Joachim of Fiore, became a point of reference for connecting these different moments in time in one single pictorial plane.[6] In such imagery, Saint Francis became the *Alter Christus* prophesized by Fiore and was connected to Saint John Evangelist's conception of the apocalyptic angel as a Second Christ.

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5 On the ways in which Joachite ideas entered the American continent, see Ramón Mujica Pinilla, "El arte y los sermones," in *El barroco peruano* (Lima: Banco de Crédito del Perú, 2003), 219–269, and Antonio Rubial, "El apocalipsis en Nueva España. Los cambios de una tradición milenaria," in *Conocimiento y cultura. Estudios Modernos de la Facultad de Filosofía*, ed. Adriana Álvarez Sánchez (Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2016), 21–26. On the multiple sources circulating in the Americas such as the *Floreto de San Francisco* (printed in 1492 and sometimes seen as a printed version of Bartolomé de Pisa), Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle* of 1493, and the sixteenth-century Augustinian Venetian editions of Fiore that would have been available in Peru, see Jaime Lara, "Francis Alive and Aloft: Franciscan Apocalypticism in the Colonial Andes," *The Americas* 70:2 (2013): 145. Constanza Acuña, "*Naturae Prodigium Gratiae Portentum:* Pedro de Alva y Astorga y la serie de 54 pinturas sobre la vida de San Francisco del Museo Colonial de Santiago: Milenarismo y visualidad en la cultura cusqueña del siglo XVII," *Eadem Utraque Europa,* año 7, n. 12 (June 2011), 65–67, acknowledges the development of ideas around Saint Francis as Alter Christus from early on in Franciscan writers, while emphasizing their rewriting through figures such as friar Miguel de Purisima (born in Tarpora in the East Indies) and Pedro de Alva y Astorga. By emphasizing the writings of American thinkers in combination with pre-Hispanic Andean traditions, Acuña (62–63) departs from studies which tend to understand Joachite thought in the Americas as edifying but not necessarily doctrinal.

6 The multiple implications of the image of the winged Saint Francis in the Andes, as well as its contemporary afterlife, have been studied in depth by Jaime Lara in his book *Birdman of Assisi: Art and the Apocalyptic in the Colonial Andes* (Tempe: ACMRS and Bilingual Press, Hispanic Research Center, Arizona State University, 2016).

Such ideas were present in the painted cycles of the Franciscan convents in which the traditional scenes of the life of Saint Francis were amplified in unique ways. Most importantly, while the conception of Saint Francis as the apocalyptic angel was already present in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century texts of San Bonaventura and Bartolomé de Pisa, this had not been materialized into physical images until the seventeenth-century in the Spanish Americas. Such is the case of "The Prophecy," a painting by Basilio de Santa Cruz from ca.1667–8, which exists in diverse versions and in which a hovering, winged Saint Francis dominates the composition.[7] Set in the very place where Saint John the Evangelist wrote his Book of the Apocalypse while in exile at the island of Patmos – albeit populated with native American species – the space of this composition is divided into four symmetrical corners and three different planes that reflect a particular intertwining of space and time centered around the vision of the winged Saint Francis. Saint John the Evangelist is placed on the right, while a figure that represents San Bonaventura (the biographer of Saint Francis who had already identified Saint Francis as the Angel of the Apocalypse) occupies the left corner of the lower part of the picture plane; both are in the act of writing and holding onto their prophetic books while gazing at Saint Francis. Placed atop hilly ledges on a second plane are two other figures: to the left stands the Erythraean Sibyl (who prophesized the Last Judgment); on the right, a hut that shelters a seated monk in the act of painting. The monk in the act of painting is in fact Fiore: he appears as a painter depicting Saint Francis as a winged figure with the stigmata, exactly in the same pose as in the main picture. This scene not only confirms the importance of images for Fiore and the Franciscan tradition, but also depicts Saint Francis fulfilling his messianic role.

The text below the image confirms their identities and the conception of prophetic seeing: "many years before Francis was born, he is prophesized, in the form of an Angel with the wounds of Christ by Saint John the Evangelist, Apocalypse chapter 9 this is how Abbott Joachim portrays him as understood by Saint Bonaventura: the Sibyl sees Saint Francis in the form of a star."[8] The special emphasis placed on prophetic writing and seeing is reiterated by the presence of the two

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7 For discussions of this work and its variants, see Jaime Lara, *Birdman of Assisi: Art and the Apocalyptic in the Colonial Andes* (Bilingual Press: Arizona State University, 2016), 121–127. See also Acuña, "*Naturae Prodigium Gratiae Portentum:* Pedro de Alva y Astorga y la serie de 54 pinturas sobre la vida de San Francisco del Museo Colonial de Santiago: Milenarismo y visualidad en la cultura cusqueña del siglo XVII" (2011), 59–61.

8 My translation of the text: "muchos años antes de nacer Francisco es profetizado, en forma de Ángel con las llagas de Cristo por San Juan Evangelista Apocalipsis cap.9. assi lo retrata el abad Joaquín como entendió S.Ba Va a la letra: la Sibila ve a Francisco en forma de estrella."

subsidiary figures who play an important role connecting past and future: while the presence of the Sibyl refers to her prophecy of the Last Judgment, the image of Fiore as painter is a self-reflexive pocket of space, a picture within a picture, that connects his prophecy of Saint Francis both to that of the Sibyl and to the present which takes places in American territory. The diminished size of these two figures turns them into visual reminders or mnemonic devices for the viewer's ability to connect the different moments evoked in this painting and its setting within an American landscape which embodies both present and final times, according to the Joachite vision of history.

This iconography of a prophetic, winged Saint Francis is unique, and was reproduced in different parts of the colonial Andes; in addition to the one in the Convent of San Francisco of Cusco (apparently the original work), others can be found at the Franciscan convents in Santiago de Chile, Lima and Quito but also in sites further north such as Guatemala.[9] As demonstrated by Constanza Acuña, the amplifications of specific scenes of the Andean Franciscan life cycles (in contrast to their European counterparts) can be read in the light of mythical Andean traditions and messianic thinking. One such example is the inclusion of three anthropomorphic suns above the figure of Fiore, an Incaic conceptualization of time where each sun represents a different era, not unlike the Joachite three ages.[10] In this vein, Acuña has also analysed, in detail, the peculiarities of Andean Franciscan iconography that depended on the writings of Pedro de Alva y Astorga (ca.1601–1667), a Franciscan friar who was born in Spain but brought to Cusco by his parents from the age of 8, where he attended the seminary of Saint Anthony, Abbot in Cusco, and later taught in Lima before returning to Spain in around 1641, setting up his own publishing house in Louvain (ca.1661).[11] In his *Naturae prodigium, gratiae potentum* (published in 1651), he built on the Franciscan tradition connecting Saint Francis with Christ, but amplified the traditional parallels of pre-

9 On the different versions, their authorship and attribution, see Acuña, "*Naturae Prodigium Gratiae Portentum:* Pedro de Alva y Astorga y la serie de 54 pinturas sobre la vida de San Francisco del Museo Colonial de Santiago: Milenarismo y visualidad en la cultura cusqueña del siglo XVII" (2011), 58–59; Lara, *Birdman of Assisi: Art and the Apocalyptic in the Colonial Andes* (2016), 124–127. On the Guatemala images, see Rubial, "El apocalipsis en Nueva España. Los cambios de una tradición milenaria," (2016), 27–28.

10 Acuña, "*Naturae Prodigium Gratiae Portentum:* Pedro de Alva y Astorga y la serie de 54 pinturas sobre la vida de San Francisco del Museo Colonial de Santiago: Milenarismo y visualidad en la cultura cusqueña del siglo XVII" (2011), 77–79; Lara, "Francis Alive and Aloft: Franciscan Apocalypticism in the Colonial Andes" (2013), 147–148.

11 Acuña, "*Naturae Prodigium Gratiae Portentum:* Pedro de Alva y Astorga y la serie de 54 pinturas sobre la vida de San Francisco del Museo Colonial de Santiago: Milenarismo y visualidad en la cultura cusqueña del siglo XVII" (2011), 72.

vious Franciscan writers such as Bartolomé de Pisa, multiplying them from 40 to 4000, while comparing Joachim to Saint John the Baptist.[12] The image of the frontispiece synthesizes the contents of the book by showing Saint Francis metamorphosed together with the body of Christ as a crucified flying seraph. Space is again mapped in a mnemonic manner: a parallel is established between Calvary and Mount Alvernia where St Francis received the stigmata, and Nazareth with Assisi, as the respective birthplaces of Christ and Francis. Furthermore, space is depicted from multiple points, where frontal views (the body of the Francis seraph) and bottom-up perspectives (in the landscape) are combined.[13] Although the use of multiple perspectives in a single pictorial space was a common feature of many images, I would add that this reinforces the notion that we are simultaneously viewing the past, present, and future all together.

Indeed, the Franciscans' synthesis of different time periods (subsumed in such images) denotes a deep understanding of renovation as something that is occurring here and now, rather than simply reserved for the future.[14] Likewise, the role of Saint Francis as a combatant in images of the Last Judgment took a turn of its own, whether as yet another winged angel overlapping with Saint Michael or as a defender of the Immaculate Conception defeating the apocalyptic monster.[15] Such is the case of the Last Judgment in the Franciscan convent of Quito (see figure 1). This type of condensing can also be seen in the images that dominate over conventual Franciscan spaces, as in the Vision of John at the Franciscan convent in Cusco, with the Immaculate Conception and a Crucified Christ in full center, and apocalyptic scenes to the right.

For the missionaries coming from Europe, America embodied a Golden age, the "iglesia Indiana" of a New Jerusalem. These were the words invoked by the six-

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12 Lara, "Francis Alive and Aloft: Franciscan Apocalypticism in the Colonial Andes" (2013), 152–153. See also Acuña's analysis and transcription of the text (70). Both *Naturae prodigium* and *Sol Veritatis*, which constituted a defense of the Immaculate Conception, were censored due to their particularities, but also because of the author's violent attacks on the Dominicans.

13 See Acuña, "*Naturae Prodigium Gratiae Portentum:* Pedro de Alva y Astorga y la serie de 54 pinturas sobre la vida de San Francisco del Museo Colonial de Santiago: Milenarismo y visualidad en la cultura cusqueña del siglo XVII" (2011), 75, on the multiple perspectives in the image.

14 On this Franciscan synthesis of time, see Acuña, "*Naturae Prodigium Gratiae Portentum:* Pedro de Alva y Astorga y la serie de 54 pinturas sobre la vida de San Francisco del Museo Colonial de Santiago: Milenarismo y visualidad en la cultura cusqueña del siglo XVII" (2011), 63. Acuña connects this notion of time to an ongoing Andean conception of political liberation as tied to Messianic ideas. I would add that this conception of time may also be understood in a visual sense and is represented as such in the imagery.

15 On this subject, see Lara, *Birdman of Assisi: Art and the Apocalyptic in the Colonial Andes* (2016), 148–151, 178–183.

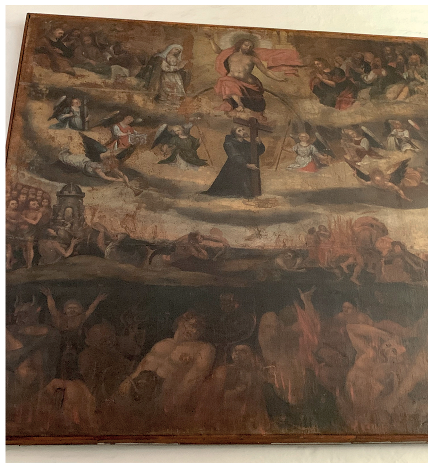

Figure 1: Last Judgment with St. Francis, Oil on Canvas, 17th century, Convent of San Francisco, Quito, author's photograph.

teenth-century Franciscan missionary Fray Jerónimo de Mendieta in his description of the new world as an extensive monastery or New Jerusalem Indiana.[16] Studied by Miguel Ángel Fernández, the concept of an "iglesia Indiana" was shaped through the building of hundreds of convents and churches in an austere, fortress-like style, meant to save thousands of souls in preparation for the arrival of the Messiah.[17] One such example is the Convent of San Miguel of Huejotzingo, Puebla, built between 1526 and 1570, containing grisaille paintings and conceived as a replica of the Temple of Solomon. In one of its mural paintings, we find an early portrait of Duns Scotus, the Scottish Franciscan known as a defender of the Immaculate Conception, placed next to the Immaculate Virgin, who is also flanked on the other side, curiously enough, by Saint Thomas of Aquinas.[18] Some of the earliest imagery of the apocalypse in the Americas can be found in the ex-Franciscan convent of Tecamachalco, also in Puebla, México. Painted in 1562 by the Indigenous

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16 Although only published in the nineteenth century, Mendieta's *Historia eclesiástica Indiana*, on the evangelization in New Spain, was taken up by Fray Juan de Torquemada in his *Monarquia Indiana.* On the Monarquia Indiana with America as a New Jerusalem, see Rubial, "El apocalipsis en Nueva España. Los cambios de una tradición milenaria," (2016), 36. Mendieta also invoked the messianic role of the Spanish Crown. See Watts, 99.

17 Miguel Ángel Fernández, *La Jerusalen Indiana: los conventos-fortaleza mexicanos del siglo XVI* (Smurfit Cartón: Papel de México, 1992).

18 For an analysis of this painting and its juxtaposition of Duns Scotus as defender of the Immaculate Conception with its opposer, Saint Thomas of Aquinas, see Antonio Rubial, "Dos santos sin aureola. Las imágenes de Duns Scoto y la madre Ágreda en la propaganda inmaculista franciscana," in *La imagen sagrada y sacralizada*, ed. Peter Krieger (México: National Autonomous University of Mexico, 2011), 564–565.

artist Juan Gersón, these included texts in *nahuatl*; while the images were based on printed sources such as a Lyonnais Bible of 1558 and inspired by Dürer, the colors were those used in pre-Hispanic painting, essentially ochres, reds, sepia, and blue.[19] Thus, the appearance of apocalyptic imagery in the American continent was connected early on with the Franciscans, understood as a return to a more spiritual age shaped by their vows of poverty. At the same time, these ideas served to emphasize theological debates, such as the Immaculate Conception. Nonetheless, this idealized conception of the orders and their role in the Americas shifted in the seventeenth century when it became clear that the prophesized times would not come. However, these ideas were prolonged into other forms of messianic thinking, which ultimately included liberation from colonial structures.

The Immaculate Conception as an Apocalyptic Battleground

Although the connection between the Virgin of the Apocalypse (Revelation 12) and the Immaculate Conception had been made by medieval theologians, its visual rendering became firmly established by the Kings of Spain in seventeenth-century imagery.[20] In the Spanish Americas, the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception appeared early in the sixteenth century as part of the conquest and evangelization, for whom she symbolized the Church, while the serpent (the dragon now placed under her feet) represented the devil.[21] Some of her visual characteristics, such as the Tota Pulchra, can be traced through various Marian types. Such is the case of the Virgen de Guadalupe, which finds its origins in a multitude of iconographies but whose identity was connected to the Immaculate Conception in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sermons.[22]

19 On the paintings and their relationship to the prints, see: Xavier Moyssén, "Tecamachalco y el pintor indígena Juan Gerson," *Anales Del Instituto De Investigaciones Estéticas* 9:33 (1964): 23-39. See especially 55-56 for an analysis of the differences between the paintings and the printed sources.
20 The apocalyptic vision of Saint Michael and his angels battling the dragon with seven heads and ten horns, dragging the stars from the sky while trying to devour the recently born son of a Virgin – herself dressed as the sun with a moon under her feet and given two wings to flee across the desert – became subsumed into the figure of the Immaculate Conception, whose symbols include the crescent moon and dragon-serpent under her feet, along with a crown of stars.
21 Iraida Rodríguez-Negrón, "Emblem of Victory: The Immaculate Conception in Spanish Colonial Painting of the Viceroyalty of New Spain," *Athanor* XXII (2004): 67–75. See also Rubial (2016), 38–40.
22 Gisela von Wobeser, "Antecedentes iconográficos de la imagen de la Virgen de Guadalupe," *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* XXXVII: 107 (2015), 186.

The questions surrounding the Immaculate Conception were a crucial issue for the Franciscans and their heated debate with the Dominicans that went back to the fifteenth century. In the Americas, the Franciscan defense of the Immaculate Conception became a prominent subject that was closely connected to local traditions through allegory.[23] For example, in both Cusco and Lima, the image of the Immaculate Conception thrived early on and took on specific forms in each context.[24] What appear to be syncretic aspects of the popular celebration of the Immaculate Conception were closely tied to the Franciscan order in Cusco, where she became the patron saint of the city. In Lima, the Immaculate Conception was directly connected to the Spanish King and the University of San Marcos, the earliest university founded in the Americas. Bringing these contexts together were figures such as Bishop Vasco de Contreras Valverde, who was raised in Cusco at the Seminary of Saint Anthony Abbot and fulfilled his degree at the University of San Marcos of Lima; his sermons were offered in both cathedrals, his writings circulated in both contexts, and he was probably the mastermind behind the unusual iconography of the chapel dedicated to the Immaculate Conception in the Cathedral of Lima.[25] Decorated with painted tiles, this chapel displayed a particularly original choice as it mixed classical mythological figures as references to the seasons and cyclic passing of time. The anthropomorphic Sun and Moon facing one another on the side walls of the chapel are a recurring image in the sermons of the Immaculate Conception as well as in other Andean images. These include three-dimensional crucifixions set against a painted background in which a sculpture of the Crucified Christ is framed by painted images of St Mary and St John Evangelist, with the city of Jerusalem in the background and overseen by an anthropomorphized moon and sun as clear markers of beginnings and endings.

While the Immaculate Conception merged with different themes and the long-lasting theological debate continued in the Americas, her iconography was tied to apocalyptic imagery deriving from the Book of Revelation. The twelve stars crowning her head, together with the moon and dragon beneath her feet, which are stan-

23 Together with Andrea Lozano-Vásquez, I have explored this issue in previous publications such as "Alegorización de la Inmaculada Concepción: un ciclo de azulejos limeño y un sermón cusqueño." *Co-herencia* 18:35 (2021): 95–126. https://doi.org/10.17230/co-herencia.18.35.5

24 See for example Constanza Acuña, "Del libro a la imagen: una aproximación a la iconografía de la Inmaculada Concepción a través del estudio de la biblioteca del Convento de San Francisco en Santiago," *Anales de literatura chilena* 17:26 (2016): 193–211.

25 For a detailed analysis of the iconography of this chapel see: Andrea Lozano-Vásquez and Patricia Zalamea, "El ciclo de azulejos con motivos mitológicos en la antigua Capilla de la Inmaculada Concepción de la Catedral de Lima" in *Catedrales. Ecclesia Cum Aedificanda Est. Mundo iberoamericano (siglos XVII-XVIII)*, ed. Laura Illescas et al. (Sevilla: Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Enredars Publicaciones, 2022), 743–772.

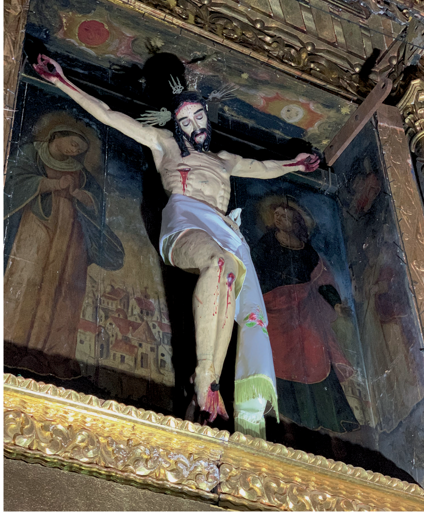

Figure 2: Crucifxion with sun and moon view in the background, 17th century, Doctrinal Church, Cuitiva, Colombia, author's photograph.

dard features of the Immaculate Conception, match St. John's description of the woman who gave birth to a boy who was to lead all nations, while escaping from the dragon. Furthermore, references to the passing of time were synthesized into sun and moon as markers of beginnings and endings, as we have seen in this Chapel, while the figure of the Immaculate Conception often appeared as an onlooker in representations of Saint Michael battling the devil.[26] As such, the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception represented a triumph over idolatry while also becoming subsumed into local traditions.

Navigating Identities in American Representations of the *Last Things*

The conception of different eras and the subsummation of beginnings and endings was also a major theme of the *Last Things*, in particular Purgatory, in a clear visual expansion of church doctrine. Unlike Catholic Europe, where such images had gone out of fashion by the 1630s, the representation of purgatory was greatly emphasized throughout the Latin American colonial territories. In purgatories – which range from early examples to nineteenth-century versions when purgatory be-

26 Rubial (2016), 48.

came a theme with political implications for Inca rebellions – Indigenous bodies found a site of representation.

Beginning in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century territory of Nueva Granada (roughly corresponding to modern day Colombia), for example, purgatories were some of the few representations in which Indigenous bodies were featured. Understood as a temporal state or in-between time leading to salvation through purifying fire, such images could serve a didactic purpose for evangelization and are mainly found in doctrinal churches of the sixteenth centuries. As noted by Natalia Lozada in her study of the representation of purgatories in this region, the composition kept the division used in Last Judgments but turned the lower area, reserved for hell, into purgatory instead of providing the horizontal division between land and sky.[27] At the same time, Indigenous bodies were ascribed and distributed throughout the lower space sparingly; as noted by Lozada, their distribution is not proportional to the numbers of the population in these sites in which Indigenous communities surpassed the Spaniards by a much higher ratio. In any case, the standard format for the purgatory was kept throughout the centuries and combined with other iconographies.

By the seventeenth century, Indigenous elites were shown in the position of commissioners or patrons of such paintings. Placed on the edges in a liminal space, they featured the gestures typical of donors: hands clasped, looking in or out towards the spectator. This can be seen in paintings which combine purgatory scenes with Nicola da Tolentino, itself related to the Mass of Saint Gregory which includes a portrait of the local chieftain and his son, dressed with a recognizable Muisca cloak.[28] Similarly, a portrait of a female Inca patron appears at the edge of a painting with Saint Michael in the Church of San Pedro, Lima (see figure 3). Wills shows that the Christianized Indigenous elite routinely left money for prayers to be said for their souls, some of which combine pre-Hispanic practices.[29] The Indigenous elite also subsidized entire pictorial cycles in which Last Judgments played a prominent role, as can be seen in a dedicatory text in the church of Sutatausa (Co-

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27 Natalia Lozada, *La incorporación del indígena en el Purgatorio cristiano. Estudio de los lienzos de ánimas de la Nueva Granada de los siglos XVI y XVII* (Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes, 2012).

28 See Patricia Zalamea, “Devozione a san Nicola da Tolentino in America centro-meridionale: Organizzazione coloniale e presenza agostiniana nella Nueva Granada,” in *San Nicola da Tolentino nell’arte: Corpus Iconografico, vol. II*, ed. Roberto Tollo (Tolentino: Biblioteca Egidiana, 2006), 137–138; 386–390; 303–309.

29 Lozada, 44: Domingo, the Muisca chiefton of Chicamocha, for example, wrote in his 1609 will that “during his funeral a requiem mass be sung and that his tomb be offered with sheep and corn” while leaving payments for nine masses to be said for his soul.”

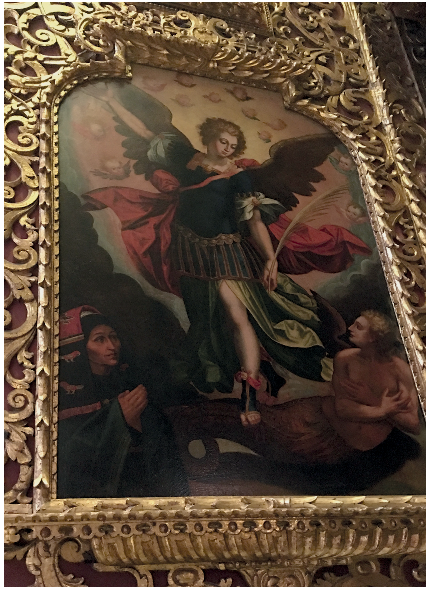

Figure 3: Saint Michael and the Dragon with Donor, oil on canvas, ca. 1635–40, 209 x 143.5 cm, Church of San Pedro, Lima, author's photograph.

lombia).[30] Finally, a Last Judgment in Potosí, Bolivia, in which the artist Melchor Pérez de Holguin includes a reflexive self-portrait in the center of the composition is particularly captivating as a statement of self-inclusion.[31]

Geopolitical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Imagery in the Andes

To connect the way in which the specificities of apocalyptic imagery in the Spanish American territories are interrelated, the geopolitical dimensions of these representations must be addressed, at least briefly. Some of these considerations also serve to exemplify the intersections between the representation of time with regards to three-dimensional space and physical realities. As discussed, the appear-

30 Studied by Alessia Frassani, "El templo doctrinero en Sutatausa y su pintura mural," in *El patrimonio artístico en Cundinamarca. Casos y reflexiones*, ed. Patricia Zalamea (Bogotá: Gobernación de Cundinamarca; Universidad de los Andes, 2014), 72–87.

31 Ramón Mujica connects this self-portrait to the Jesuit tradition of "meditation on the Last Judgment and hell as a form of mental prayer," for which see "Hell in the Andes: The Last Judgment in the Art of Viceregal Peru," in *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World*, ed. Ilona Katzew (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2012), 180–183.

ance of figures such as Saint Francis and the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception in apocalyptic compositions of the Last Judgment and the liminal inclusion of Indigenous bodies in scenes of Purgatory stand out as unique iconographies. A consideration of three-dimensional staging is also revealing, as is the case of the distribution of the toral arch of a doctrinal church in Tópaga, Colombia, in which both dragon and Saint Michael recur at either side together, while a Devilish mask-like face is placed in the center of the arch, facing the congregation (see figure 4a–b). In addition to questions of spatial representation, the possibility of mapping specific geographies in such images has been discussed by Jaime Borja and Constanza Villalobos in their reading of the Last Judgment in the Franciscan church of Bogotá, where the very particular alignment of the orders corresponds to their topographic location in the colonial city.[32] Similarly, Ananda Cohen has shown how Andean geography was incorporated into the iconographies of mural painting in the region around Cusco, where scenes of Baptism are connected to the sacred meanings attached to water in the region's lakes of Urcos and Titicaca.[33]

Indeed, in a region where volcanic eruptions and earthquakes were cyclical events, the spatial rendering of prophetic and apocalyptic imagery seemed to be particularly appropriate, as was the development of specific iconographies such as the "Christ of Tremors" in Cusco.[34] According to Jaime Lara, it is no coincidence that the prophetic images of the winged Saint were painted well into the eighteenth century in a land filled with volcanic eruptions.[35] Moreover, it should be remembered that Joachim had lived as a hermit on Mount Etna, a volcano whose eruption with earthquakes and tsunami had been in prophecy of the Erithraen Sibyl.[36] According to priests writing after the 1600 eruption in Huaynaputina,

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32 See Jaime Borja and Constanza Villalobos, "Interpretación de imágenes en El Juicio Final de Gregorio Vásquez," Banco de la República, accessed April 14, 2023. https://www.flickr.com/photos/banrepcultural/4583820553/. According to these historians, the distribution of the figures (to the right: the Virgin Mary, St. Dominic, St. Francis, Sta. Claire y St. Francis of Paula; to the left: Joseph, Augustine, Ignacio de Loyola, Santa Teresa de Ávila and San Juan de Dios) corresponds to the layout of the churches in the colonial city of Santa Fe (now Bogotá).

33 Ananda Cohen Suarez, *Heaven, Hell and Everything in Between. Murals of the Colonial Andes* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016).

34 On the representations of these natural phenomena and the reactions after these cataclysmic events, see Michael Schreffler, "'To Live in this City is to Die': Death and Architecture in Colonial Cuzco, Peru," *Death and Afterlife in the Early Modern Hispanic World. Hispanic Issues On Line* 7 (2010): 55–67. This was also the time when in addition to reconstructing cities, painters received new commissions for the Franciscan cycles discussed previously. See also Fernando Iwasaki, *¡Aplaca, Señor, tu ira! Lo maravilloso y lo imaginario en Lima colonial* (Lima: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2018).

35 Lara, "Francis Alive and Aloft: Franciscan Apocalypticism in the Colonial Andes" (2013), 149.

36 Lara, "Francis Alive and Aloft: Franciscan Apocalypticism in the Colonial Andes" (2013), 144.

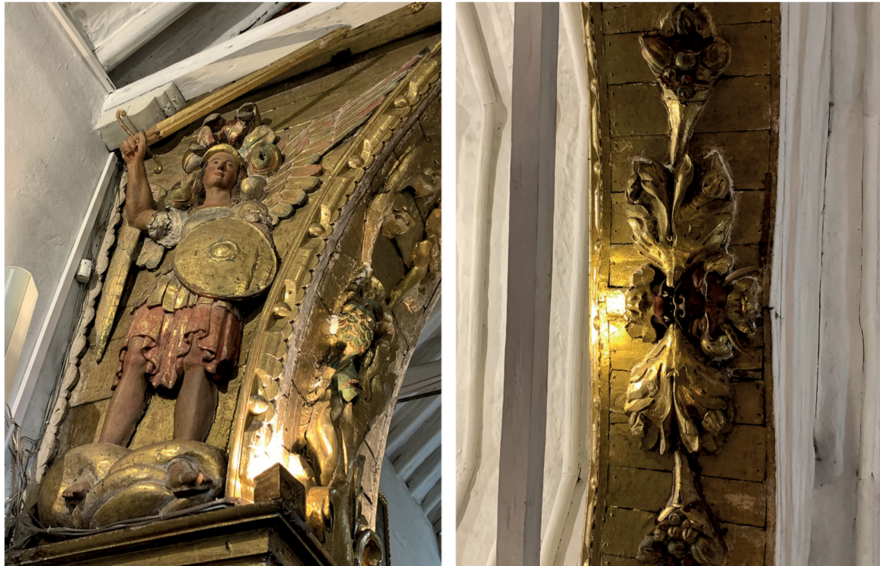

Figure 4 a–b: Toral arch with images of Saint Michael at the sides and a devil at the centre. Polychromed wood, Doctrinal Church, Topaga, Colombia, 17th century, author's photograph.

Southern Peru (the largest recorded in Western history after Vesuvius), the volcano brought back memories of the sixteenth century insurrections and was understood as a being that was fighting on the Inca side against the Christian invaders.[37]

While eruptions and earthquakes may have been read by Spaniards and criollos as apocalyptic revenge, they also represented new opportunities for rebuilding, or even for inverting the system of power from the neo-Christian Inca perspective. After the earthquakes in Cusco (1650) and Lima (1655), there were rumors that a new era would begin in 1666 in which the Spaniards would be dominated.[38] Eventually, the peasant uprisings in eighteenth-century Peru (known as "the wars of

37 Lara, "Francis Alive and Aloft: Franciscan Apocalypticism in the Colonial Andes" (2013), 144. The largest recorded volcanic eruption in the Western hemisphere after Vesuvius took place in the year 1600 in southern Peru (Huaynaputina). Most affected was the city of Arequipa, but ash reached all the way to Mexico, the sky went dark for several days, and the explosion could be heard in Lima. Much to the horror of the inhabitants, wild animals found refuge in the cities, and crops failed throughout the world in a year of particularly cold winters. The event was recorded by Guaman Poma and in a remembrance of the eighteenth century titled "The Floor of Arequipa turned into the sky." Penitential rituals followed, and until the nineteenth century, Franciscans and neo-Christian Indians would go to the rim of the volcano to throw in relics and say mass at its edges.

38 Lara, "Francis Alive and Aloft: Franciscan Apocalypticism in the Colonial Andes" (2013), 149.

prophecy") made use of the Book of Revelation: predicting the return of a Christian Inca emperor to a time of "Inca glory, but as Christian utopia," Tupac Amaru II, shown as a Romantic nineteenth-century hero (claiming to be the descendant of the last Inca king, Tupac Amaru I), led the uprisings and marched in the guise of St. Gabriel, blowing the trumpet on the Last Day. He was also depicted in the guise of Santiago Matamoros, an iconography that had been used to represent conversion of the unfaithful in early colonial times. Imagery proved to be a powerful tool in these "wars of prophecy," and is most likely the reason why most of this imagery does not survive. Nonetheless, the Last Judgment by the artist Tadeo Escalante, who had witnessed the assassination of Tupac Amaru II and his family, has been tentatively linked to these events.[39] Continuities of the three Joachite ages are still found today in contemporary oral tradition, according to which we now live in a second age, but that there will be the third age triggered by a cataclysmic event, a utopian time when human beings will "sprout wings and soar like hummingbirds."[40]

Conclusion

The question of how a Christian apocalyptic mindset could be reconciled with the American encounter was a matter of particular concern for early European missionaries, for this not only justified their presence but was part of a deep conviction on the part of these missionaries about their role in these new "Christian" lands. The general issue was not just the encounter that had taken place by crossing geographic space, but was also a question of how this fit into the narrative of Christian apocalyptic thinking which underlaid the very image of the Catholic Spanish Crown and its new role as a world empire. New and innovative iconographies appeared because of the interactions between the missions and their specific American local contexts. At the same time, these new iconographies served as images that participated in the global theological debates at stake, especially that of the Immaculate Conception in which figures such as Saint Francis took on an active role, or the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception who also participated in scenes of Last Judgment. Similar mixing occurred in images of the *last things*,

39 This concerns the question of collective memory of the political uprisings as seen in Tadeo Escalante's late colonial decorations at San Juan Bautista de Huaro, completed in 1802, where scenes of death are interpreted in the light of the political climate following the Bourbon Reforms and the Tupac Amaru Rebellion, a major uprising that took place in 1780 and that was violently repressed, see Cohen, 145–181.

40 Lara, "Francis Alive and Aloft: Franciscan Apocalypticism in the Colonial Andes" (2013), 162.

where some iconographies, such as the Last Judgment and Purgatory, became unconventionally intertwined.

It is characteristic for images to contain and represent time in a non-linear fashion, but allegorical superposition and iconographic overlapping seems to have been even more accentuated in the Christian apocalyptic imagery conceived in an American context. Although there was no single, unified narrative around apocalyptic thinking, prophetic visions were used in diverse ways by orders, artists, Indigenous donors, and neo-Christian Incas at different stages in time. On the one hand, apocalyptic representations included Indigenous bodies in select spaces, such as the elite Indigenous donors who included themselves as patrons or the self-portraits of artists in eschatological scenarios. On the other hand, these also served an ulterior and opposite purpose of social dissent and rebellions by neo-Christian Inca messiahs. Overall, apocalyptic imagery was constantly used throughout the Colonial period, albeit in different contexts: from its invocation by early missions and images related to Christian conversion, to a form of highlighting Indigenous identities and inspiring political insurrections.

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Alejandra Bottinelli Wolleter

Restitutive Writings of Worlds at the Southern Confine of the World

The End of Worlds at the Southern Confine of the World

The confine, the farthest place of the territory, the most distant domain from the interior, has an ambiguous function in our imaginary: in the first place, it is the space of reclusion, or the conclusion of space and the suspension of time, as well as the production of the exception,[1] where the law is interrupted. However, at the same time, as a figure of the unknown (the unknown of the self as well as the other of the self), it functions as a site for thinking about the beyond itself, as that unknown extreme where we imagine portals to other realities, passages to an elsewhere that is unspeakable (a fantasy portal perhaps).[2] Confine is, therefore, a notion that refers both to the end of space and to its unsuspected expansion; it is the scene of our fantasies of exteriority: a threshold. In this sense, it is invoked as a safeguard of the possibility of transformation, that is to say, of transit to other forms, of mutation – a dispersion of the image or an escape to other worlds. At limits and crossroads, the confine appears, at the same time, as a space-time of path definition.

For this reason, confines concentrate heroic imageries, the most daring enterprises, and the most improbable desires; including those of total domination. In the travel narratives that accompanied Euro-Western capitalist expansion, the confines appear as the privileged subjects of infinite imperial desire, particularly in

1 Giuseppe Campesi calls them "[g]eographies of the exception" (Giuseppe Campesi, "Migraciones, seguridad y confines en la teoría social contemporánea," *Revista Crítica Penal y Poder* 3 (2012): 177). As I have discussed elsewhere, in this direction, life on the confine would be exposed as a bare life reproducing itself in the constant uncertainty and threat of arbitrariness (Alejandra Bottinelli, "Imaginar las Postrimerías: escrituras chilenas de los confines," *Aisthesis* 68 (2020): 277). All quotations have been translated from the original Spanish into English in free translation by the author of this chapter.

2 Etymologically, in fact, it supports both senses: derived from the Latin *confinis* (*cum, finis*) it implies both border and neighbor; similar, close, near; in Spanish *confín* and English *confine* underline the notion of enclosure and reduction. See, for example, Santiago Segura Munguía, *Nuevo diccionario etimológico Latín-Español y de las voces derivadas* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2013), 151.

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their ability to combine control over vast territory with the practice of imperialism, that is, in their capacity to dominate the unknown (*ad-ventura:* the willingness to face the events to come), and to enable the conquest of new spaces for geo-economic expansion.

Due to their distance (imagined and real), the confines have been, likewise, privileged destinations for all those expelled (from space/time) – those, ruined or made fugitive from the territory, who seek, in this beyond a lawless place, a new name and the possibility of inventing another story, while, simultaneously, attempting to make a mockery of history. This is precisely what happened at the southern end of the world; especially during the last third of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century. Southern Patagonia and the island of Tierra del Fuego, in the extreme south of America, became destinations for people from different parts of the world, especially from Central and Eastern Europe. As a consequence the histories of the world crossed this confine and became entangled there for a century, bringing into discussion the synchronic and contemporary intersections between past and present violence.

Until the sixteenth century, what is now southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego had been figured in Euro-Western culture as part of a *Terra Australis Ignota*[3] and as anecumene, that is, as a hypothetical unknown and uninhabited continent in the extreme south of the world. Opened to modern imperialist powers by the Spanish circumnavigation of the globe in 1520, these regions were above all mapped by the fantasies of imperial travelers since the sixteenth century and then, cross-fertilized by those of nineteenth century naturalists, attracting imperial agents and capitalist entrepreneurs, as successive milestones in the fulfillment of a self-designated domination of the *orbis terrarium.* The region was the object of rather timid European expeditions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For example, the exploration of South America by Englishman John Narborough, who, in 1670, walked the Strait of Magellan; and later, the voyage of his compatriot John Byron, in 1764–66;[4] and the French expedition of Louis Antoine de Bougainville, in 1767. In the nineteenth century, from 1826, the various voyages of the Adventure and the Beagle – in some of which Charles Darwin participated – opened a

3 As it appears in: Hartmanno Palthenius, *Deliniatio Freti Magellanici* (Frankfurt am Main, 1626). The map is held at the John Carter Brown Library Collection, Rhode Island (United States), where the strait and the seas are drawn, as well as the figures of the Patagonians.

4 John Byron had already participated in a voyage that passed through the Strait in 1741, led by George Anson; due to the shipwreck of his frigate, the HMS Wager, and after its rescue by natives of the area, he was imprisoned in Chilean jails for several months until returning to his country. After that he wrote *The Narrative of the Honourable John Byron (Account of the Shipwreck of The Wager; and the Subsequent Adventures of Her Crew,* 1768.

period of increasing pressure and aggression on nature and the population of the southern South. Towards the last decades of the century nature and populations would be consummated with the corporate colonial occupation of the territory and the genocide carried out on its original inhabitants by European and national agents of Argentina and Chile, as part of what has been called the "Second Conquest" of the American territory.[5]

The southern confines, that land of excessive climate and frightening nature beyond the boundaries of the Euro-Western imaginary, was inhabited by peoples who had not needed European sciences and powers to thrive in that territory.[6] For thousands of years, human beings had lived in that natural space with different technologies, which allowed them to survive in the adverse environment bordering the Antarctic pole. There, among the southernmost channels of the world, lived the Yámana and Kawésqar canoero peoples, who until recently – the last quarter of the nineteenth century – made the *seatory*[7] their living space and fishing their way of subsistence. On the Isla Grande de Karukinká (Tierra del Fuego) nomadic Selk'nam and Aush peoples distributed the sectors of the known territory to hunt, in order to share the space equitably and peacefully.[8]

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5 Wolfgang Gabbert, "The Second Conquest: Continental and Internal Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century Latin America," in *Shifting Forms of Continental Colonialism: Unfinished Struggles and Tensions*, ed. Dittmar Schorkowitz et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 333–362.

6 In contrast, European testimonies abound about the unlivable climate of the region. One of the most dramatic is the account left by Pringle Stokes, commander of the Beagle, who took his own life in the middle of the Magellanic channels, and – as Cristóbal Marín has pointed out – quoting the poet James Thomson noted in his diary: "The climate was such 'that the soul of man dies in it'." Cited by Cristóbal Marín, *Huesos sin descanso. Fueguinos en Londres* (Santiago: Penguin Random House, 2019), 63.

7 The word "seatory" is a translation into English of a neologism created in Chile in the 1970s: "maritorio." It is used today to designate the geographical maritime area over which the country has sovereignty. It works by analogy with "territorio" (from the Latin "territorium," derived from "terra" and the suffix "-torium"); in English "territory," replaces the lexical root "terra" by "mare" i. e. "sea." In recent times it has gained new strength to refer to the complexity of marine ecosystems, as well as to refer to Indigenous cultures, such as the Kawésqar and the Yámana, which have developed their existence around the sea. The recent Chilean constitutional proposal (2022) recognized the maritorio, as integrated by continental, insular and Antarctic marine and marine-coastal ecosystems, and respected its meaning for Indigenous peoples as an integral space of coexistence between the tangible and the intangible.

8 As Víctor Vargas Filgueira relates in the history of the time of his great-grandfather Asenewensis and his family, who were in contact with Martin Gusinde: "In the middle of the 19th century, *Onashaga* still preserved its natural state[.] […] Our people lived in that environment, concerned only with providing for their daily sustenance. In those times, the *usúanes*, the grandparents, sitting around the fire, told several anecdotes in which they witnessed incursions of strange beings in their beloved *Onashaga*. They were told as something curious, but in general no one took these

All this impressive human vitality which, by itself, already challenges various discourses of "fragile" Indigenous "races" was, however, devastated by corporate/state/imperialist alliance within merely a few decades. Bluntly, there was a genocide raging at the end of the world. At the end of the world, at the southernmost tip of the earth, the peoples who lived there freely, who had roamed the territories and *seatories* since time immemorial, were subjected to a radical contraction of time and space: between 1880 and 1911 they were abused, mutilated, rounded up, trafficked, confined in Catholic and Anglican missions as well as brutally murdered. They saw their territories fenced by wires and trampled down by thousands of sheep, animals which they knew nothing of and which were disembarked one day and deposited to reproduce for the economic purposes of the few rather than the many. And, they saw their territory colonized by men, who, it bears reminding, wired the land and destroyed their bodies.[9]

The end of many worlds has thus been produced at the end of the world. The confine emerges in its most literal and tremendous aspect: prison, concentration camp, and closure of the imaginary space.[10] In this way, the split and broken south-

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stories as a bad omen. Concerns began when sightings of giant canoes became more frequent." See Víctor Vargas Filgueira, *Mi sangre yagán. Ahua Saapa Yagan* (Buenos Aires: La Flor Azul, 2021), 13. On life after the invasion, he notes: "The life of the Yaghan continued with this wandering, having to hide from the incursions of the white man into their territory. On the occasions when they were found, everything always ended badly: violent deaths and kidnapped women." Filgueira, *Mi sangre yagán*, 104.

9 The genocide against the peoples of southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego has been forcefully documented by historiography. As historians explain: "the region was the scene of geopolitical tensions between European powers, but especially of exploitation through the hunting of whales, penguins, seals, sea lions and elephant seals. With the incorporation of North America as an extractive power and the exploration of the Beagle Channel (around 1830), this plundering became more acute, leaving some species on the verge of extinction. This transition mainly impacted the Canoero peoples, through killings, kidnappings, transmission of diseases, and a decrease in nutritional resources." See Romina Casali and Alberto Harambour, "Itinerarios historiográficos: otredades absolutas e imágenes disciplinares sobre Tierra del Fuego," *Revista Española de Antropología Americana* 51 (2021): 205–206. Joaquín Bascopé, for his part, has emphasized how the zoopolitical strategy of producing a "human desert" to favor the pastoral colonization of Tierra del Fuego is a reedition of the forms of what Marx called "original accumulation" which he exemplified with the depopulation of the Scottish countryside by sheep colonization that ended with the expropriated peasant forced to proletarianize. In the case of the southern South, this strategy was developed under the logic of the extermination of the pre-existing Indigenous population. Joaquín Bascopé Julio, "Antes de la ley. Salvajismo y comercio sexual en Tierra del Fuego y Patagonia Austral 1884–1920," in *Capitalismo y pornología la producción de los cuerpos sexuados*, ed. Jorge Pavez and Lilith Kraushaar (Antofagasta: Universidad Católica del Norte, 2011), 108.

10 Víctor Vargas Filgueira explains that among the Yámana, newborns were usually named after the place where they were born. But in the early 1920s, Gusinde noticed that this custom was being

ern confine folds in on itself. Since then, and for many years now, there seemed to be no outside of that confine; the territory where the *imperium* was self-regulated in its unlimited attributions appears as a distant echo of the ominous powers of the world. The southern confine, thus, turned into a land and sea of exception. It acted as a resource to escapees, and it remains an extreme expression of concentrated power.

What world opens up after the end of the southern worlds? Is the world unscathed by the genocide of the Fuegian peoples, by the plundering that was forced upon them, by the alienation of their link with the sea and open nature, by the disappearance of their cultures, by their humiliation and reduction to museum pieces or "remains" for science?[11] And was there "an end to that end," or did it continue to reverberate with other events and histories, like an unquenchable echo of continuous destruction over societies and natures? How do peoples rewrite their histories in the light of the multiple forms of violence to which they are subjected? How does literature respond to these multiple forms of violence, and what outlets does it offer to the "confinement" of plural worlds? How does literature think about this space of crossing worlds and meeting temporalities, where the historical disaster against the peoples of the southern border foreshadows the disasters that occupy the present? In the following pages I will try to address these questions considering that literature, and especially poetry, has a mystagogic function in the disaster: it is a way of bringing out the revelation of those signs that announce the disaster, and those that subsist in subsequent times. I suggest that writ-

lost, and when he asked why children were no longer named after the place where they were born, he was told: "It is because we can no longer walk freely from one place to another. We are so cornered in the few places we have left, that if this custom were to continue, several of us would have the same name." Filguiera, *Mi sangre yagán*, 120.

11 Recent research has shown the routes that some Indigenous subjects from the southern South must have taken to various European human zoos or fairs since the last third of the nineteenth century. Hundreds of bodily remains of Indigenous people trafficked to Europe persist to this day in museums in different countries. Thanks to the efforts of the Social Anthropology Collective GUÏAS, the Museo de la Plata has recently, in 2006, removed the skeletal remains of thousands of Indigenous people belonging to different communities, collected through looting and other forms of body appropriation since its foundation, and which were exhibited in the "Physical Anthropology" room, from its showcases. Regarding the Fuegians, the Museo de la Plata received the Yaghan boy Maish Kenzis in 1886, who was taken captive at the age of 15 and lived in the museum for 8 years, until his death at 23; the young prisoner was subjected to the worst of tasks. The Dutch anthropologist Herman Ten Kate, recalls that the Fuegian Indian "was forced to prepare human skeletons for exhibition and was dressed in a funebrero costume." According to Vallejo "[t]he skeletons he prepared belonged to members of his own community." Gustavo Vallejo, "Museo y derechos humanos: Un templo de la ciencia finisecular en La Plata y aspectos de su relación con los pueblos originarios," *Revista Derecho y Ciencias Sociales* 7 (2012): 146–64.

ings about the southern South, allow us to illuminate, in a protean way, the multiple relationships and effects of meaning that violence has on the existence of persecuted peoples, as they continue to echo in our imaginaries.

Restitutive Writings of the Land of Fires

Through forms of imaginative montage and the collection of pre-disaster traces of Selk'nam and Yamana lives, some recent writings have been re-imagining the history of southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego in ways that contribute to the restitution of peoples' experiences and memories in their broad and limitless potency. Separating themselves from the visions that constructed the Indigenous people of Tierra del Fuego as concluded beings or a remnant "race," condemned to fail in the struggle for existence only to disappear from natural evolution, these writings have shown that Fuegian subjects, in their diverse production of habitation, had achieved an astonishing integrity and an unparalleled integration with their environment, which allowed them to survive in the most hostile climatic and natural conditions. Challenging narratives of the so-called natural extinction of peoples, as well as complicating the question of extermination and its historical end, they have brought to the surface discussions about how various peoples resist the destruction of their worlds with the help of different imaginaries about both end and origin, producing intertemporal links that resignify the memories of the southern South. All this, without ceasing to ask about the multiple relationships between that initial disaster and the successive and simultaneous calamities that the southern confine of the world had to host, ultimately evidences a space of intersecting and refracting forms of violence, that is, a space that exposes crossroads of time and space, as well as the necropolitical flows that cross contemporary time and geopolitical territory.

The confines are marked by a separation, a cut, which was, at the same time, an omen, signifying those cracks on the earth and on the bodies, or the division (*dis* in Latin) which was announced by the *astros* as extreme disaster and stellar cataclysm. In other words, there was disaster in the beginning; precisely because the end was the beginning. Then there were the ends of others – others, who, protected by the children of the ear cutters,[12] lodged in the southern confines and

12 Some owners of sheep ranches paid one pound to their employees for each "ona" (Selk'nam) ear, which these hired killers presented to them as proof of having killed or disabled the subjects. This sinister practice was both an expression of the radical dispossession that the ranchers inflicted on Indigenous bodies, and an ostentation of the total power they wished to have over their humanity.

were presented with all those deaths and the deaths of all those they brought with them. Genocides upon genocides. In this way, spaces and times of death overlap, tragically crossing each other, since that time, on that southern border, which became a crossroads where the paths of horror met and multiplied. But it is also where the paths of resistance unraveled, in that unbridled time, expressed through the multiple linking of memories. After all, the disaster reverberates with life, a quality which is precisely at the core of the desire to suppress it.

In Argentinian author Eduardo Belgrano Rawson's novel *Fuegia* (1991)[13] the world of the southern confine has become the scene of persecution and humiliation, of subjugation, and of the encirclement of nature; but it also works as a shooting and hunting ground for humans. The harassed "parrikens" (fictional name for the Selk'nam) only have the options of withdrawing to the religious missions that turn them into others, or of putting themselves to work at the service of the murderers of their own peoples. This is precisely what happens to Tatesh's father, the protagonist, who gets the Chileans to hire him to raise the wired fence of a sheep ranch, a fence that reaches all the way to the sea, in exchange for a leg of meat to eat. Tatesh sees his father, a once renowned nomadic hunter, increasingly wither away; aggrieved not only by the impossibility to provide for his family, but also by a greater pain: the humiliation and shame of having been mutilated by the "ona hunters" (Selk'nam):

> One morning his father failed to get up. Tatesh went out to gather mussels with his brothers, but a storm was blowing on the coast. They searched the rocks for cormorant eggs and then tracked guanacos. When they came back empty-handed their parents were arguing loudly. It was the usual fight over the sheep in the new pasture. His father wanted to kill some of them. His mother seemed indignant. In those days she had lambed and was very upset. At another time his father would have cut the scene, but a pain had him prostrate. His father's ears were missing. He had only two scars under his hair, which shone sordidly if he shook his head. He was very embarrassed about it and did not want to talk about the paddock.[14]

13 The title of the novel is a tribute to the Kawésqar-Yagán mixed-race girl Yokcushlu, who, at the age of nine, was transported, along with three other people from her village, to England by Robert FitzRoy aboard the Beagle in 1830. Fuegia Basket, as she was renamed by the British, was transported along with El'Leparu, a 26-year-old Kawésqar (renamed York Minster); Orundellico, a 14-year-old Yaghan boy (Jemmy Button to the British) and Boat Memory, who was Kawésqar and whose name is unknown and who died upon arrival in England in November 1830. The others were returned to their homeland a few years later. "FitzRoy," states Marín, "had the project of educating the Fuegians for two or three years and then returning them to Tierra del Fuego so that they could civilize and evangelize their congeners and help the English expeditions." Cristóbal Marín, *Huesos sin descanso. Fueguinos en Londres* (Santiago: Penguin Random House, 2019), 58.
14 All quotations from literary texts are free translations from the original Spanish texts by the author. Eduardo Belgrano Rawson, *Fuegia* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1993), 28.

Early on, the sheep breeders begin what they understand to be the task of "cleaning" the territory by eliminating its original inhabitants in an effort to guarantee the uninterrupted growth of the ranching business. Thus, the persecution, reduction, and slaughter of the Indigenous peoples, especially the Selk'nam, who were an obstacle to the growth of the sheep population, takes shape: "The suspicion began to grow that the business would go better with the island unoccupied. [...] [T]he sheepherders asked that the Parrikens be declared a National Calamity,"[15] we are told. With their living space reduced to bare minimum, their companion dogs persecuted, and the guanacos, their main source of food gone, the once hunter-gatherers are condemned to eventual robbery in order to survive: or as Belgrano Rawson puts it, "the island was filled with ghosts."[16]

Those were the times of the "war of the sheep," which fell like a catastrophe, unannounced, on the peoples of the southern South, transforming the land into a hellish space and daily existence into a continuum of terror:

> It was what Tatesh remembered of those days, the time when the barbed wire fences went up and the sheep war broke out. No one could tell how things started or when the reprisals were unleashed. The point was that suddenly terror poured through the North as in the days of the Variolous, when the stinkers roamed the plains and the Parrikens themselves had to stab them at the gates of the villages. It was necessary to flee from the coast, although there were no places left safe from the breeders with dogs.[17]

Note the barbarism that here feeds on contempt for the other as well as radical incomprehension of this other:

> Seven bags of flour were missing under the tent. Everyone bellowed with rage, for the food was sacred. As expected, they proceeded rather quickly: a few hours later, Toribio Fuego and family, hooded with the white bags, hung with a wire around their necks from an old wet oak tree. [...] 'Do you know something?' he said suddenly. The flour was blown away by the wind. Those Parrikens didn't even know what it all meant. For God's sake...You only had to look at Toribio Fuego's face. They had never tasted sugar, or anything like it. Larch looked at him quietly. 'They just wanted to put on their bags,' said the priest.[18]

In that enclosed confine, there is no longer any space for truce, no outside, no place to escape to. The world of the confine closes in on itself, and there is no longer any place-time for worlds. And nature itself, the space *par excellence* of the Fuegian habitation, a vast home that nomads roamed freely, now transforms

15 Belgrano Rawson, *Fuegia*, 6.
16 Belgrano Rawson, *Fuegia*, 6.
17 Belgrano Rawson, *Fuegia*, 32
18 Belgrano Rawson, *Fuegia*, 42.

into a field for the artificial reproduction of mistreated animals and the hunting of human beings. Nature becomes radically alien; intervened with, filled with death, it has ceased to be a place of refuge. Transfigured, the ancient and familiar forest, the space itself, now unfolds daunting and monstrously:

> They had finally left the river and were marching quietly as they were harassed by the rumor of their footsteps. No one was happy anymore. Over their heads hung the horror of the night. Each one interpreted the warnings of the forest in their own way. There were ferns the size of a man and plants full of abscesses and trees with their shape changed. Many cherry trees were stripped of bark up to two meters high, apparently gnawed by angry jaws. The cold was so harsh that the trunks were split from root to fork. But most repulsive of all was the smell of mutton that permeated the air. Tatesh remembered the peeling logs and the huge tufts of wool snagged in the foliage and regretted being in the forest and thought they would never get out alive.[19]

So, with no horizon, harassed, tired, with no way to satisfy their hunger, Tatesh and his family decide to surrender to the invaders. They know that they will never meet again, as the women are sure to be transferred to the North to serve in other people's houses and the men will likely be relegated to a prison or mission. Resigned and defeated, they surrender. They do it, however, in peace without fear; having fought. As they knew how to do all their lives, offering themselves again and again to that nature, they resist to the barbed wiring of their space/time in precisely the same way:

> They were going to fight and they would lose. They would never reach the islet. Now the sun glinted off its highest rock. Tatesh had once told them that they used to sit there with his father and not move until sunset, when the sun went into the sea with the screech of a burning log. Then Camilena promised her children that as soon as they reached the islet, they would station themselves on the rock of the wolves to contemplate the end of the afternoon and feel the sun going down in the water.[20]

What is the ontic and ethical meaning of this crime perpetrated against those who spread widely and freely through that territory that we call inclement and that they, on the contrary, called a place of possibility and hospitality? What is it about that calamity that punctures the present and that, as a condemnation, extends to our days? In the collection of poems *La cacería*, by Pavel Oyarzún (1989), the lyrical speaker asks himself precisely these questions, wondering about everything that persecution has eliminated. The murder, he answers, has been committed by these invaders against themselves, against their and our

19 Belgrano Rawson, *Fuegia*, 38.
20 Belgrano Rawson, *Fuegia*, 55.

very possibility of recognizing an origin, of knowing ourselves and knowing that we are part of a common history of humanity:

> They did not destroy great civilizations as in other parts of this martyred continent. [...] They killed something else. They killed in the great human hunt, the images that are born as an electric magic in the conscience of the species. What they saw when they looked at the stars. What they thought when they saw a birth or a dead person. Everything they believed about the rain, if for them it was something more than music and water falling to the earth, that is, they killed and took from us what is not written nor can be deduced: the universe, the gigantic cosmos that as in any pure man, existed between the eyes and the brain of a guanaco hunter or a solitary canoeist in the night.
>
> No destruyeron grandes civilizaciones como en otros puntos de este continente martirizado. [...] Mataron otra cosa. Mataron en la gran cacería humana, las imágenes que nacen como una magia eléctrica aquí adentro, en la conciencia de la especie. Lo que veían cuando miraban las estrellas. Lo que pensaban al ver un parto o a un muerto. Todo lo que creían de la lluvia, si acaso para ellos era algo más que música y agua cayendo a la tierra, es decir, mataron y nos quitaron lo que no está escrito ni se puede deducir: el universo, el cosmos gigantesco que como en cualquier hombre puro, existió entre los ojos y el cerebro de un cazador de guanacos o de un solitario canoero en la noche.[21]

In an antagonistic register to the archaeology and post-Darwinian evolutionism that had developed on the southern South, with their assumptions about an American origin of man in Patagonia,[22] the “origin” that this poetry articulates does not propose a “preterization” of Fuegian and Patagonian existence, but, on the contrary, suggests a primordial origin, as foundation of the present and also of any future perspective; the Selk’nam and Fuegian existence is transformed here into a noetic power by the extraordinary capacity to formulate a direct link to the experience of the world in its deepest sense, developed and persistently sustained by these southern peoples, in their slow but incessant walk to the rhythm of that hostile

21 Pavel Oyarzún, *La cacería* (Punta Arenas: propio, 1989), 13.

22 As Gustavo Vallejo explains, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the agents of the Argentine state, in an operation intended to affirm the importance of these “national” lands in the long march of the world and their interest for European sciences, produced an archaization of Patagonia and its surroundings through the affirmation of the existence of “living human fossils,” samples of the prehistory of the world, which were available for the study of European and enlightened sciences. Thus, Francisco (Perito) Moreno, founder of the Museum of La Plata, treated the skeletal remains of a Tehuelche man that he called “ancient Patagonian” and sent the remains to the Société d’Anthropologie de Paris directed by Paul Broca; supported by scientists: “Moreno stated that the ‘ancient Patagonian’ discovered was comparable in antiquity to Neanderthal man and thus opened the door to the possibility of speaking of an American origin of man [...]. Possibility that would later give rise to a certainty proclaimed by Moreno and reinforced by Ameghino: Patagonia had been the cradle of mankind.” Vallejo, “Museo y derechos humanos,” 151.

climate; such as the rain under which they walked through the ages. What the hunt – which needed to reduce subjects to hunting pieces – wanted to erase was precisely that sensory experience that had turned these peoples into a nomadic body and that announced them as a promise: “the inclination of a people on a rainy day / moving like wet gods / over the homeland / over an open side of the planet / so that there would be no death; la inclinación de un pueblo en un día de lluvia / moviéndose como dioses húmedos / sobre la patria / sobre un costado abierto del planeta / para que no haya Muerte.”[23]As those walkers gathered, in their perpetual wandering, extended in time, all the mystery of the human seemed to have no end; these were not the American primitives belaboured by the discourses of racist evolutionism, but the “bárbaros,”[24] whose bodies speak about all that is impossible to know, the mystery of existence as *conatus*, as the “will to live.”[25] Since the whole of humanity has lost that world, it has lost itself. With it, says the poet, this humanity has lost everything that dazzles in the simplicity of that world, which was a complete experience of existence in/with the world, an ontology; a radically different way of integrating and experiencing space-time:[26]

Time was suspended
Three mysteries were coming out of the forest
The night flew in circles
Nothing was known of paradise
No one was really dying
No one was condemned to live
The wind in the pampa was one of the three mysteries

Instinct was the homeland
The rain fell on its source

---

23 Oyarzún, *La cacería,* 19.

24 Oyarzún, *La cacería,* 21. The light in the night /brings a man inside /brings the barbarian who looks /at the moon /and thinks not of death / the one who opens his eyes /so that all mysteries /come in and out of him /forever /because it has no end./ La luz /en la noche / trae un hombre adentro / trae al bárbaro que mira / a la luna / y no piensa en la muerte / al que abre los ojos / para que todos los misterios / entren y salgan de él / para siempre / porque no tiene fin.

25 On Spinoza’s perspective see: Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2005), 144–46.

26 Díaz Guzmán understands ontology as a “horizon of meaning given to the world itself and to everything that composes, constitutes, complements and forms it.” Diana Díaz Guzmán, “Del giro ontológico a la ontología relacional y política, una mirada a la propuesta de Arturo Escobar,” *Cuadernos de Filosofía Latinoamericana* 41 (2020): 102; Enrique Dussel sees ontology as a “reflection on the everyday world as a totality of practical meaning, that is, as an understanding of ‘being’, ‘being’ being the everyday practical foundation of the world.” Enrique Dussel, *Catorce tesis de ética* (Madrid: Trotta, 2016), 30.

The world had untouched corners
Life was not in danger

El tiempo estaba suspendido
Desde el bosque salían tres misterios
La noche volaba en círculos
No se sabía nada del paraíso
Nadie se moría realmente
Nadie estaba condenado a vivir
El viento en la pampa era uno de los tres misterios

El instinto era la patria
La lluvia caía sobre su origen
El mundo tenía rincones intactos
La vida no corría peligro[27]

After the hunt the whole world has been broken and is threatened by perpetual destruction: "The forest is a Pandoras box / open forever. […] Death is a spell that runs through its / twisted tunnels. […] In the forest / there is a beast crouching. El bosque es una caja de Pandoras / abierta para siempre. […] La muerte es un hechizo que recorre sus túneles /torcidos. […] En el bosque / hay una fiera agazapada."[28] And so it has been since the Indian hunters – who have taken aim at life; not at "some" lives, but at the whole of life – came to gather food. Because in the forest they attacked instinctively, concentrated, for hundreds of years, the rain, the road, the obtaining of food; the whole universe patiently created by these peoples in thousands of days on the surface of these seas and lands. It is there where the destruction unfolds: "Here they came and announced themselves / in the forest and in the pampas / like prophets with marks on their hands. […] Here they paid a pound sterling per corpse. Aquí llegaron y se anunciaron / en el bosque y en la pampa / como profetas con marcas en las manos. […] Aquí pagaban una libra esterlina por cadáver."[29] Accordingly, the time of disaster remains; no longer detached from Tierra del Fuego:

This day grows inward
until it breaks its origin
its first moment. […]
This day has no future
falls under its own weight
it collapses naked
in the vertigo of its fall

27 Oyarzún, *La cacería*, 15.
28 Oyarzún, *La cacería*, 25.
29 Oyarzún, *La cacería*, 32–33.

> that names and kills. [...]
> This day falls from the earth
> and leaves its orbit. [...]
> This day takes away the voice
> and the eyes.
>
> Este día crece hacia adentro
> hasta romper su origen
> su primer momento. [...]
> Este día no tiene futuro
> cae por si propio peso
> se desploma desnudo
> en el vértigo de su caída
> que nombra y mata. [...]
> Este día se descuelga de la tierra
> y se sale de su órbita. [...]
> Este día se quita la voz
> y los ojos.[30]

Hence, this poetry remains still in the most resounding silence, the deepest silence, afraid and cold, without aspiring to movement, insignificant, almost vanished, not even a specter, because here there are not even traces but rather "there are no ghosts / no spirits roam it. [...] It can be said that they are the dead / the most forgotten of the earth; no hay fantasmas / ningún espíritu la recorre [...] Se puede decir que son los muertos / más olvidados de la tierra."[31] To these dead, poetry has taken on the useless task of bidding them farewell, although it does so without expectation of a future, since something larger has ended with them: "I affirm that they no longer return. [...] This story is something like that / like a dead planet; afirmo que ya no vuelven más. [...] Esta historia es algo así / como un planeta muerto."[32] The confine is the place "where the human trace disappears; donde desaparece el rastro humano."[33]

The Revelation

Writing in general has a mystagogic function in the disaster. Poetry emerges as a revelation of those signs that have preceded the disaster and that have announced and subsisted it. The writings on the genocide of Tierra del Fuego traverse the

30 Oyarzún, *La cacería*, 65.
31 Oyarzún, *La cacería*, 73.
32 Oyarzún, *La cacería*, 81.
33 Oyarzún, *La cacería*, 83.

signs and traces of that violence, not to compose a map of causes and effects, but to reveal the complete network *as such a network*, that is, to bring to light the whole complex of strategies that the powers that gathered in the southern South applied to wipe out these Indigenous peoples and, then, to also erase the lives of the peoples who succeeded them.

The southern confine, then, becomes a source of revelatory light which projects the invisible threads that unite the histories of racism and the destructive powers of the world. The poem also recognizes a kind of solidarity in life as well as the destruction of poetry and poets themselves:

> I think of the Indian hunters
> and their 44 caliber carbines
> I think tonight of the murdered poet
> who returned
> in the Selk'nam or in the Aonikenk
> or the Yámanas who did not return
> in García Lorca somehow receiving
> bullets here in the middle of the pampa
> and in the souls of Hitler or Franco
> announcing
> also somehow here in Patagonia.
> here in Patagonia.
>
> Pienso en los cazadores de indios
> y en sus carabinas calibre 44
> pienso en esta noche en el poeta asesinado
> que volvió
> en los Selkman [sic] o en los Aonikenk
> o en los Yámanas que no volvieron
> en García Lorca de algún modo recibiendo
> balazos aquí en plena pampa
> y en las almas de Hitler o de Franco
> anunciándose
> también de algún modo
> aquí en la Patagonia[34]

Thus, *El cementerio más hermoso de Chile* ((*The Most Beautiful Cemetery in Chile*) (2008), by Cristián Formoso, reveals the multiple plots and sites of violence, but also the subtle solidarities that unite the fragile human beings who endure the force: in the southern confine as well as elsewhere. The poem *Albert Pagels recites a poem by Paul Celan*; *Albert Pagels recita un poema de Paul Celan* which rewrites a quotation of "Tenebrae" (Darkness), a composition integrated into the collection of

34 Oyarzún, *La cacería*, 49.

poems *Sprachgitter* (1959) by Paul Celan.[35] It points out, from the beginning, the ominous relations experienced by the "confined" of the southern South and those of the Nazi regime, by integrating the name of this polemic German sailor resident into this "beautiful cemetery," a morbid metaphor for the southern confine.[36] The poem, which I quote here at length, superimposes Celan's writing with the statement of the assaulted subjects of the South. It is relevant to note that, for the second line, which is the one that marks the pulse of the poem, Formoso chose the Spanish version that translates "próximos y apresables" or "close and catchable" by José Ángel Valente, which seems to be a more direct and expressive reference to the persecution experienced by the subjects of the southern confine than other alternatives (for example, the translation by José Luis Reina Palazón that in the *Obras completas* notes "cercanos y aprehensibles; nearby and apprehensible").

> *We are close, Lord*
> *close and apprehensible.*
>
> Already buried, all in you
> upright from the rock
> and the sand, as if the tomb
> that each one of us is
> was your own silent gaze.
>
> *We are near, Lord*
> *close and apprehensible.*
>
> *Tilted by the wind we went*
> and thus inclined we climbed the hills
> and there we left your name hidden
> so that others could not wish us ill
> and we crossed the sea to carry your mystery
> that we wrote for your blood and sewed
> to this shore with the thread of our own.

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35 In the original: "nahe und greifbar." The poem is found in the book *Reja de lenguaje*, (translated into English first as *Speech-Grille* by Joachim Groschel in 1971 and later as *Language Mesh*, by Michael Hamburger in 1988). It is important to remember that Celan's reception in the Hispanic field happened after his death. See, for example, Wögerbauer (2005); Škrabec (2020).

36 Albert Pagels lived in Punta Arenas since 1903. Due to his exploits in the salvage of the German cruiser SMS Dresden during the First World War, he received the Iron Cross in Germany in 1939; he remained there during the whole Second World War and was linked to the Nazi army. He returned to Punta Arenas in 1951. A Nazi propaganda film, *Ein Robinson* (Directed by Arnold Fanck in 1940), includes him as a character. Jorge Camaraba and Carlos Basso Prieto have shown *in extenso* the various financial and espionage networks established by the Nazi party in South America, from the earliest days of its arrival to the height of its power.

We are near, Lord
we are near and near to you.

Because blood is what you have shed
and incarnate is the turning of this shadow
when the bottom of the ships is darkened
before the color of this sea that is the reflection of your sky
of your sky that we have seen empty and hungry.

We are near, Lord
close and apprehensible.

We have drunk, Lord, the blood
give us now in the body to eat and to pray
for in every voyage the cauldrons are thrown out
and this Strait that we know is your offering
accept the throat that we have consecrated to you:
We are near, Lord.

Estamos próximos, Señor
próximos y apresables.

Ya enterrados, todo en ti
enhiestos desde la roca
y la arena, como si la tumba
que somos cada uno de nosotros
fuese tu misma mirada silenciosa.

Estamos próximos, Señor
próximos y apresables.

Ladeados por el viento íbamos
y así inclinados subíamos los cerros
y allí dejamos tu nombre escondido
para que otros no pudieran desearnos mal
y cruzamos el mar para llevar tu misterio
que escribimos por tu sangre y cosimos
a esta orilla con el hilo de la nuestra.

Estamos próximos, Señor
próximos y apresables.

Porque sangre es lo que tú has derramado
y encarnado es el viraje de esta sombra
cuando oscurece el fondo de las naves
ante el color de este mar que es el reflejo
de tu cielo que hemos visto vacío y hambriento.

Estamos próximos, Señor
próximos y apresables.

> Hemos bebido, Señor, la sangre
> danos ahora en el cuerpo de comer y de rezar
> que en toda singladura van echados los calderos
> y este Estrecho que sabemos es tu ofrenda
> acepte la garganta que te hemos consagrado:
> *estamos próximos, Señor.*[37]

Something similar is elaborated in *El Museo de la bruma* (*Museum of the Mist*) (2019), a fictional montage by writer Galo Ghigliotto that can be approached as a continuity of those and other writings that precede it in its reflection on the history of the Fuegian and Magellanic confine. The collection contemplates the mechanisms of temporal and spatial superpositions of violence and engages with metaforms of constructing memory and recognition out of those peoples' experiences.

The work proposes the narration of a museum space founded in memory of another museum razed by fire after almost a century in southern Patagonia. The work begins, thus, with an end: a museum, a Patagonian archive, subjected to its unnatural conclusion. In the beginning there was destruction: the disaster. An allegory of the history of that confine, the text is explicitly assumed to assemble the remains recovered from the old collection and "images" that were saved from the fire, together with fragments of information and explanatory notes for the visitor (reader). In the text, the images of the museum pieces are, however, with very few exceptions, elided, erased, or completely empty. What we have, then, for the most part, are blank pictures with associated descriptions or, in some cases the exhibition materials correspond to texts or transcriptions of the content. The *El Museo de la Bruma* possessed a diversity of materials intended to "illustrate" Patagonian history, characters, and everyday life from the end of the nineteenth century to the present. This recreated museum, however, contravenes the "representational" aspiration of the original museum. First of all, the pieces, which are numbered, are shown in disarray. Secondly, the images are empty: the description that accompanies them orchestrates what should be our view on the images, composing a collection of images subtracted from all their referentiality. These ghostly images point us precisely to their own "not being there," to their being hollowed out of history, producing only indications of transformation and manipulation. They point to hundreds of subtractions that have occurred in the curatorial work of the museum. This emptiness is, of course, a call from someone who demands to imagine, concentrate, and create connections between these signs in order to recompose a story. But what story is that?

37 Christian Formoso, *El cementerio más hermoso de Chile* (Santiago: Cuarto Propio, 2008), 81–82.

The *El Museo de la Bruma* gathers the traces of an indiscernible, infinite multiplicity of facts of human destruction. Of violence perpetrated by the most diverse agents in distinctive times and latitudes, all of which converge in the southern territory of Patagonia. Thus, without implying a conflation of these events, expressions of human atrocity ranging from the genocide in Nazi concentration camps, to the human rights violations by Latin American dictatorships and their political internment camps, such as the one in Austral Dawson Island, through to the genocide of the southern Patagonian and Fuegian ethnic groups since the nineteenth century, and the horrors of the German fascist enclave of Colonia Dignidad in the south of Chile, all these constellations of violence configured by thousands of actions and decisions collapse at the historical crossroads in this corner of the world.

"The novel has the capacity to absorb everything," says Ghigliotto.[38] *El Museo de la Bruma* is composed of fragments that correspond, for the most part, to documents and facts of a historical nature (from segments of the Nuremberg trials to declassified CIA documents) and others that consist of fictionalized testimonies and interfictional crossings (the most notable is a segment where Morel and Faustine are "historicized" in the fantastic world of the desert island – which also has a museum – in Bioy Casares's novel). The connection of these fragments produced through the experience of Patagonia, has the double effect of, on the one hand, resignifying this place as one of dreadful human horror, and on the other hand, of sending us directly, without mediation, to the extreme light of the evil of the world as an interconnected whole. As if time and space had lost their grip, the museum pieces have shed light on the unsettling connections between evil and human violence: in their global, worldwide, and contemporary dimensions.

The German mechanic Walter Rauff, a member of the SS who was accused of the murder of hundreds of thousands of people,[39] is exemplary of this dynamic. The novel does not reveal what everyone knows and always knew: such as the fact that Rauff had escaped after the genocide in 1946, assisting other Nazi criminals who fled to Latin America, while working for various intelligence agencies,

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38 Ghigliotto, Galo. "Decidí borrarme totalmente, optar por la desaparición del autor." *Eterna Cadencia*, January 27, 2020, accessed February 28, 2020. https://www.eternacadencia.com.ar/blog/contenidos-originales/entrevistas/item/decidi-borrarme-totalmente-optar-por-la-desaparicion-del-autor-2.html

39 Walter Rauff was head of the Gestapo for northern Italy. He was the inventor of the extermination weapon of the gas trucks, with which tens of thousands of people were murdered: "During the Nuremberg trials, the court came to prove that, between October 1941 and June 1942 alone, ninety-seven thousand people had been murdered in this way." He arrived in South America in 1949; he stayed in different countries until he settled, since 1958, in Magallanes, in the extreme south of Chile. Jorge Camarasa and José Basso Prieto, *América nazi. El último refugio de los hombres de Hitler* (Santiago: Aguilar, 2011), 124.

including Europeans. Similarly, it is well known that Rauff had then settled in Latin America where he thrived as a businessman linked to German companies such as Mercedes Benz, and then, from the sixties onwards, resided without hiding his name, in Punta Arenas and Porvenir, Tierra del Fuego, where he lived as a prosperous entrepreneur until his death in 1984, advising on repressive techniques, torture, and military intelligence to various dictatorial regimes in the region and notably to the fascist enclave Colonia Dignidad. These facts are well known and are not what the *El Museo de la Bruma* reveals; at least these are not the only facts. Above all, the museum exposes how the various threads of this ominous trajectory disseminate in thousands of other threads, all tethered to silences and concealments which unite and entangle the pain and violence experienced by countless human beings, as well as connecting them with the networks of other horrors. Take, for example, the Spanish businessman José Menéndez, who came to control millions of hectares of land in the Chilean and Argentinean Patagonia, building an economic empire based on livestock, control of land and trade. Menéndez forged his fortune based on the genocide of the Selk'nam people who were murdered, expelled from their lands and seas, sold, and enslaved. The novel remembers that in 1975, in the midst of the Pinochet dictatorship, the authorities of the time erected a bust in Menéndez's honor. Similarly, recollections of another businessman, Romanian Julio Popper, who exterminated Indigenous people and exploited workers in his Patagonian gold mines are also prominent. More broadly, the novel reflects on the Salesian and Anglican evangelization, which imprisoned hundreds of Indigenous children in their missions, dozens of whom, as the order recognizes (or possibly hundreds, there is no precise data), died of various diseases.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, southern Patagonia was subjected to a permanent occupation, characterized by the "combination of foreign, capitalist and religious agents from supranational entities, with state forces."[40] The Indigenous peoples of Patagonia and the southern South were thus subjected to multiple forms of violence: they were kidnapped and forced to pose in various fairs and "universal" exhibitions and human zoos in the capitals of Europe; forced to an evangelizing acculturation by the Catholic and Anglican "missions" that were installed in the region since the nineteenth century, subjected to forced labor, exterminated in various persecutions and "hunts" for Indians, as they called them; enslaved by authorities for work in domestic service and mining; and kidnapped as children by Western families for a myriad of reasons.

Alongside these atrocities, racist discourses had doubted their very quality as humans altogether, producing – and this is taken to the extreme in the case of the

40 Casali and Harambour, "Itinerarios historiográficos," 205.

peoples of the southern South – a radical "preterization" of the subjects: The Aonikenk, Selk'nam, Aush, Kawésqar, and Yámanas were considered, at the end of the nineteenth century, a living expression of human prehistory. Thus, if the Mapuche were considered the degraded remains of a warrior people, the southern Patagonian peoples were considered the extraordinary and pure survivors of humanity's past (extraordinary, because of their impressive capacity to overcome the extremely hostile environment of southern Patagonian nature) or the most faithful expression of the prehistoric age, that is, subjects ambiguously affiliated with the human or with the beasts. Thus, while to ethnographic sciences they constituted the ideal scene to recreate and manipulate "empirically" the theories on "origins," to religious missions they perfected *tabula rasa* to demonstrate the universality of God. To capitalist entrepreneurs they further appeared as the most bestialized beings and, were therefore, easily dehumanized. All this authorized (and naturalized) discourses, about the southern Patagonian peoples' "extinction," which was commonly considered to be simply "hurried" by the agents of modernization, when, in actuality, these agents carried out a genocide against Patagonian natives as part of a colonizing dynamic of total destruction. As historians point out:

> The joint establishment of the sovereignties of the State and capital, with political business vertices in London, Buenos Aires, Malvinas and Santiago, was expressed in the protagonism of the colonizing companies, especially the Sociedad Explotadora de Tierra del Fuego (SETF) and the Sociedad Anónima Importadora y Exportadora de la Patagonia (SAIEP). The triangulation between the technological-financial capitalist advance, the geographical quality of space and the type of societies (hunter-gatherer), turned colonization into a 'total fact' […] and made of coloniality a completion and refoundation of the world, typical of settlement capitalism or supplanting societies.[41]

Each of these contingent acts appear so intertwined in this territory that, after "touring" the exhibition of the *El Museo de la Bruma*, readers feel they have witnessed a frightening revelation: Behind the mist that hides the dendrites of everyday violence, a great disaster has occurred in the world, perpetrated by thousands of small, misty, and only apparently isolated acts of destruction.

This southern South confine is thus revealed as the crossroads where the network becomes visible, from where the parts of a whole are swallowed up and then cannot but be expelled. The result is the whole of the horror: the darkest of evil has always been weaving and interweaving here in plain sight, before the undaunted eye, the history of the destruction of the human, as a tangled web of lacerating actions on the being of the human, to produce the disqualification of the weak and

41 Casali and Harambour, "Itinerarios historiográficos," 205.

dispossessed. The apocalyptic revelation proposed by these writings, however, does not end there.

The connection that the revelation proposes between those primordial scenes of human beings and the remembrance of the Fuegian, Selk'nam, Yamana, and Kawésqar peoples helps us to weigh the immense losses invoked by the world-ending practice of cataclystic colonial violence, but also stipulates the power that knowledge of these worlds can have for the present and a common future. In this sense, the confine appears illuminated both as a desire to transform the limits of successive and progressive space-time as we know it, and, in a fundamental sense, as a noetic demand for an "intuitive" opening of consciousness to the understanding of other ways of inhabiting the world.

Excurso

In its transformative power, the imagination of the confines may share the desire for an opening of time, its expansion, and/or its dislocation. We imagine in the confine a concentrated or strangely anachronistic time in the chaotic temporalities of poetry and montage, where the survivals and phantasmatic latencies of history operate. The confine propels fantasies of mutability and reversibility; however, as an imaginary setting it does not only emerge as the point where intersecting histories of violent persecution are made visible but it also produces opportunities to highlight the multiple vital acts lodged in memory which refuse the unique and unidirectional inevitability of the disaster.

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Part 3: **Apocalyptic Imaginaries**

Christian Long

The Infrastructure of the Planets of the Apes

Despite building an intricate human-like world run by chimpanzees, there is no evidence of running water in Tim Burton's 2001 version of *Planet of the Apes*. This is surprising given that the premise of the film inspires us to think of the apes as masters of a developing infrastructure at the crux of an advanced civilization. Yet, the film features a number of scenes which, in fact, seem to sidestep registering any form of communal water provision in Ape City. Early in the film, after Leo Davidson (Mark Wahlberg) crash-lands on a mysterious planet, he is captured alongside a number of "primitive" humans. They are carted into a city, and as they are brought down the streets, some of the city's ape street life appears. As a mobile camera takes in the riot of urban activity, it passes by an orangutan pulling a smock over a chimpanzee. A spiralling wooden column identifies the space as a barbershop. If we can accept that a chimpanzee would need a shave and/or a haircut, then it stands to reason that there would be some water to create the lather with which to wash the hair. There is not.

Similarly, soon after this brief moment, the cart full of imprisoned humans arrives at the orangutan Limbo's (Paul Giamatti) slave-trading business. As gorillas pull the humans out of the cart, Limbo yells, "Get 'em out and get 'em clean!" The humans are hustled into small cages, but no baths are forthcoming, only cages.[1] And to push this point further, during a human escape scene Burton introduces Limbo's bathroom in a shot that begins with a close-up of Limbo's face which then pulls back into a wider shot as pink petals appear to float upward. The shot slowly rotates, showing that Limbo has been hanging upside down, rubbing the petals on himself. More pink petals remain in a basin – recognizably a sink to a 2001 audience – in front of Limbo. He's finally washing off the stink of humans, although no bathtub, or even a full wash basin that can be filled with running water, assists him in this effort.

On the one hand, my analysis sounds like a pedantic killjoy making too much out of wondering how a chimpanzee gets a shave or how an orangutan slave trader bathes to get the smell of humans off himself. On the other hand, I hope that these moments, more or less inessential to the film's conflict and plot, also demonstrate that it might be equally interesting to pay attention to what happens at

1 This scene resembles the jail in which Taylor (Charlton Heston) is kept in the original *Planet of the Apes* (1968). I will consider the 1968 version's much different water infrastructure later.

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the edge of the frame, the sorts of things that production designers create to establish the reality of fictional post-apocalyptic worlds. A fictional world is largely incomplete, but infrastructure provides one method to indicate a world beyond the boundaries of the film narrative; much like the metal frame of Limbo's bathroom mirror implies the existence of a forge and ape blacksmith. *Planet of the Apes*' Ape City is a world lit only by fire, without running water. Seen in this light, *Planet of the Apes* imagines a particular kind of dystopian space that simultaneously roots potential salvation in some forms of infrastructure, intergalactic transportation, and communication, while glossing over the practical matters of infrastructure construction and provision: i.e. running water and energy provision. For the humans who encounter the ape planets, the world is slightly out of joint, both in its population and in its material basis. The films' narratives explain how the apes came to be in charge, but are less explicit about how and why the worlds' infrastructure broke and then was rebuilt to support ape life. To pursue this idea of post-apocalyptic infrastructure, I want to investigate ways in which various forms of infrastructure operate as concrete objects and processes in the various *Planet of the Apes* films.[2] In other words, how do *Planet of the Apes* films, and by extension post-apocalyptic films, imagine life going on from day to day, not so much to resolve the films' plot-driven conflicts but to make possible a credible, coherent world in which more quotidian problems might be solved?

In drawing attention to water, energy, and transport, I hope to do more than create a catalogue that details "representations of infrastructure in post-apocalyptic films like the *Planet of the Apes*." After all, as Adam Rothstein argues, "There is always a danger of myopia in infrastructural work. In the bright light of a revealed world we are dazzled by the mystery of scale, the techno-capitalist sublime, and we might forget the lived realities we are dealing with."[3] Rather, in treating the nearly invisible infrastructure of the *Planet of the Apes* films as a background that speaks, we can begin to see how fictional worlds support everyday life at the edge of the frame so that the extraordinary can be foregrounded, front and

2 Though I do not cite them directly, Sophia Beal, Michael Rubenstein, and Bruce Robbins are essential to my understanding of the infrastructuralist approach. See, for example, Sophia Beal, *Brazil Under Construction: Fiction and Public Works* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013); Michael Rubenstein, *Public Works: Infrastructure, Irish Modernism, and the Postcolonial* (South Bend: Notre Dame University Press, 2010); Bruce Robbins, "The Smell of Infrastructure," *Boundary 2* 34:1 (2007): 25–33; and Michael Rubenstein, Bruce Robbins and Sophia Beal, "Infrastructuralism: An Introduction," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 61:4 (2015): 575–586, doi: 10.1353/mfs.2015.0049.
3 Adam Rothstein, "How to See Infrastructure: A Guide for Seven Billion Primates," *Rhizome*, (2015), accessed July 7, 2022, https://rhizome.org/editorial/2015/jul/2/how-see-infrastructure-guide-seven-billion-primate/.

center. Understanding how fictional post-apocalyptic worlds might begin rebuilding their infrastructure diagnoses the essential functions for communal life and can show us how heading off the apocalypse might take infrastructural form. Taking this path should make it possible to use infrastructure as a diagnostic, as the key to the political contestations in post-apocalyptic worlds, and as one of the primary means to understand what Charles Taylor would call the social imaginary in how Hollywood/American culture imagines the boundaries and contours of the future.[4]

My analysis of the infrastructure in the *Planet of the Apes* films looks at the ways in which infrastructure peeks through the *mise-en-scène* and provides a starting point for considering where and how re-building after the apocalypse might begin according to the logic of late-twentieth and early twenty-first century cinema. This raises questions about filmic imaginings of post-apocalyptic infrastructure and the way cinema organizes "better worlds" and "improved visions." In examining the look and feel of these structures I want to foreground the expressive capacity of those elements of the structural set up of the *mise-en-scene*, which are essential but often overlooked in their formal and ideological significance.

My concern here is two-fold: Firstly, I am interested in what I call the edge of the frame as both a literal and more metaphorical concept, as the essential location for infrastructural film analysis. In some cases, infrastructure drives the narrative, as in *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014); in others it occupies the edge or background of the image. In "*Far from the Gulf Coast, but near It, Too": Art, Attachment, and Deepwater Horizon* Thomas Davis joins Brian Larkin and Graeme Macdonald in arguing "visibility and defamiliarization in and of themselves may not be sufficient […] we need not only make infrastructure visible, but to enact ways of seeing it better."[5] Seeing better – consciously avoiding a dampened perception as Caroline Levine would say[6] – can be as simple a matter as looking at the edge of the frame, searching in establishing shots and long shots for evidence of the fictional world's infrastructure and its role in making post-apocalyptic life pos-

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4 Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 23. See also Phillip Wegner, "Where the Prospective Horizon is Omitted: Naturalism and Dystopia in *Fight Club* and *Ghost Dog*," in *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, ed. Rafaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 167–185.

5 Thomas Davis, "Far from the Gulf Coast, but near It, Too: Art, Attachment, and *Deepwater Horizon*," *Resilience* 8:3 (2021): 73, accessed January 4, 2023, doi:10.1353/res.2021.0000. See also Jessica Hurley and Jeffrey Insko, "Introduction: The Infrastructure of Emergency," *American Literature* 93:3 (2021): 351, doi: 10.1215/00029831–9361209.

6 Caroline Levine argues that "to accept the status quo requires a dampening of perception" in "The Strange Familiar": Structure, Infrastructure, and Adichie's *Americanah*," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 61:4 (2015): 590, accessed July 7, 2022, doi: 10.1353/mfs.2015.0051.

sible. To see more of the frame, including the nearly invisible infrastructure in it, serves not only the aims of film studies but also those of cultural criticism. We can only find a clear and full articulation of the film worlds as practical, infrastructurally supported places if we include the edge of the frame. This formal concern informs my ideological concern, which then seeks to understand the social imaginary of the infrastructure that makes post-apocalyptic life possible. As J. D. Connor puts it, "[f]iguring out Hollywood amounts to figuring out culture as a whole—not because culture begins and ends with Hollywood, but because the *whole* of the equation of pictures prompts us to investigate both culture's capacities and its limits."[7] Hollywood films create images, stories, and legends for ordinary people. They address a large group of people (if for no other reason than to give themselves a chance to recoup their production costs, as dystopian and post-apocalyptic films tend to require sizable budgets), and in so doing form a common basis for understanding possible common practices in changing our post-apocalyptic futures into ordinary dystopias.

In their introduction to the *Infrastructure of Emergency* special issue of *American Literature* Jessica Hurley and Jeffrey Insko argue that reports like those from Princeton and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change fail "to imagine new social arrangements" and risk "reproducing the ill effects of what the Potawatomi scholar Kyle Powys Whyte calls "crisis epistemology," that which accentuates "*unprecedentedness* and *urgency*."[8] While I would not categorise the *Planet of the Apes* films as anything other than Hollywood settler-colonial in their provenance, and that their visions of the post-apocalypse depend on unprecedented situations, their infrastructures offer a hint of what Whyte calls the "epistemology of coordination."[9] The *Planet of the Apes* movies mask their crises by moving directly to the rebuilding/rebuilt post-apocalyptic world via unprecedented events. In the 1968 and 2001 versions, after some space travel, we drop onto a planet that is already of the apes. Only in retrospect does the earth's crisis, from the point of view of the space colonizers, appear: the Statue of Liberty buried up to the neck, Abe Lincoln replaced by General Thade. The 2011–2017 series' crisis begins in the end credits of the first film in the series *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* (Rupert Wyatt, 2011): a pilot carrying the simian virus gets on a plane in San Francisco and an animated map of the world lights up, tracing the spread of the virus worldwide. A two-mi-

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7 J. D. Connor, *Hollywood Math and Aftermath: The Economic Image and the Digital Recession* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 10.

8 Hurley and Insko, "Introduction," 349; Kyle Whyte, "Against Crisis Epistemology," in *Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies*, ed. Brendan Hokowhitu et al. (New York: Routledge, 2020), 53, accessed January 4, 2023, doi: 10.4324/9780429440229.

9 Whyte, "Against," 53.

nute montage mixes repurposed actual news clips with fictional news broadcasts as the crisis spreads, this time with cities and transportation corridors going dark. The jump from early-twenty-first century American life to post-apocalyptic life occurs between the rise and the dawn of the planet of the apes. By the time the opening credits to *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (Matt Reeves, 2014) end, immiseration and near-extinction are the status quo, and something other than the approach that led to such a moment is necessary. For Whyte, epistemologies of coordination are "conducive to responding to mundane and expected change without validating harm or violence."[10] Infrastructure makes up one facet of a community's response to change, and the *Planet of the Apes* films show how coordination and cooperation can take not only the form of validated harm and violence – the fight and battle sequences so familiar to big budget Hollywood films – but also rebuilding a community differently and better together. That is to say, the three separate *Planet of the Apes* series engage with the roles infrastructure plays in creating a liveable post-apocalyptic world. Any changes to infrastructure, both in the key way it functions narratively and in its ambient presence at the edge of the frame, allow us to see imagined worlds better, to understand how they retain desirable and essential infrastructure, imagine changes to imperfect infrastructure, and lose sight of what might be essential infrastructure on which to build, or sometimes to undo, the new communities that rebuild after the apocalypse.

Infrastructure, the Post-Apocalypse, and Happy Endings

While infrastructure is ubiquitous in film, this omnipresence can also render it invisible as an essential driver of everyday life in the post-apocalypse. The shape of everyday life is very much determined by infrastructure, and what Pierre Belanger calls, "*the basic system of essential services that support a city, a region, or a nation.*"[11] But infrastructure tends only to be visible when it ceases to work – the lights go out, the pothole gives you a flat, the water comes out of the tap brown – which in film tends to mean that infrastructure registers as important only in how it advances the narrative. In his book *Eaarth*, environmental activist Bill McKibben writes, "[b]egin with the most boring word in the political lexicon: *infrastructure* [...] infrastructure – our physical stuff, our housing stock and our roads and our rail lines and our ports and our fibre-optic cables and our pipelines – is

10 Whyte, "Against," 53.

11 Pierre Belanger, *Landscape as Architecture: A Base Primer* (London: Routledge, 2016), 96.

what defines us as an advanced economy."[12] The litany of what constitutes infrastructure appears throughout the literature in anthropology, geography, history, and urbanism, as well as in film and literary studies. In an early article on the anthropology of infrastructure, Susan Leigh Star offers an accessible list with which to start thinking about what infrastructure includes: "People commonly envision infrastructure as a system of substrates – railroad lines, pipes and plumbing, electrical power plants, and wires."[13] Michael Neuman notes that infrastructure is not always the roads and rails and ports we can see, as it "first referred to facilities built below the earth's surface: water, sewer, steam, and drainage systems installed under streets."[14] This sense of the hidden facilities undergirding life above also appears in Patricia Yaeger's *Dreaming of Infrastructure*, in which she writes, "*Infra* means beneath, below, or inferior to, while *infrastructure* represents the equipment, facilities, services, and supporting structures needed for a city's or region's functioning. Airports; communication systems; computer grids; highways; gas, electric, and water systems; sewers; streets; waste management."[15] Recognizing infrastructure, which is sometimes above ground, visible, and familiar, but at other times underground and hidden, or unfamiliar and opaque, requires some experience or training. Brian Hayes describes infrastructures as "places that most of us never see close up; many of us would go out of our way to *avoid* seeing them."[16] Hayes closes the introduction with, "[m]y hope is that this book will cultivate greater awareness of all the miscellaneous hardware that goes into making a civilization."[17] It seems that it would be difficult to miss infrastructure, yet as many of these writers on infrastructure note, the only time it enters the public consciousness is when it breaks. Training our eyes to see what we frequently pass over – the miscellaneous hardware of our surroundings – will better equip us to notice what undergirds everyday life in an imagined post-apocalyptic world, and thereby point us to the social imaginary of contemporary life.

Making visible the "post" in post-apocalyptic life, infrastructure does not necessarily strictly uphold but also unsettles the status quo. As *Planet of the Apes* films

12 Bill McKibben, *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt and Company, 2010), 59.

13 Susan Leigh Star, "The Ethnography of Infrastructure," *American Behavioral Scientist* 43:3 (1999): 380.

14 Michael Neuman, "Infiltrating Infrastructure: On the Nature of Networked Infrastructure," *Journal of Urban Technology* 13:1 (2006): 10–11, accessed July 7, 2022, doi: 10.1080/10630730600752728.

15 Patricia Yaeger, "Introduction: Dreaming of Infrastructure," *PMLA* 122:1 (2007): 15.

16 Brian Hayes, *Infrastructure: A Field Guide to the Industrial Landscape* (New York: Norton, 2005), 1.

17 Hayes, *Infrastructure*, 5.

all show, infrastructure supports not just exciting, spectacular action, but also some of the basic functions of everyday life; ape and human alike. In other words, the *Planet of the Apes* films offer extensive evidence for visions of the settlement and establishment of new communities, especially in terms of how humans interact with newly constructed ape infrastructure and the near ruins of human infrastructure. The multi-level, multi-modal transportation infrastructure in the 1968 *Planet of the Apes* makes possible not just an exciting escape attempt, but also the vision of a small urban settlement integrated both on the local level – street space for apes and horses, second-story walkways for apes, paths up to the hillside buildings – and, further afield, the many rowboats which imply other settlements along the river.[18] The apes in *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* show a similar multi-level approach to transport, using both the old walking paths of the John Muir woods as well as the trees as a further way to get from point A to point B. The one road/path the apes have clearly built in shows the hierarchical nature of their society: the spiralling walkway to the top of the tree at the center of their settlement takes travellers to Caesar's space, placing his leadership at the highest level, not just socially, but also of their multi-level transport options.

Infrastructure as a real thing gives form to dreams. It works both materially and metaphorically. As literal locations, the imagined post-apocalyptic settlements in *Planet of the Apes* give material shape to social imaginaries, showing how communities are constructed from the ground (and even the underground) up. However, as Brian Larkin writes, "Roads and railways are not just technical objects then but also operate on the level of fantasy and desire. They encode the dreams of individuals and societies and are the vehicles whereby those fantasies are transmitted and made emotionally real."[19] The technical problem of getting the hydro dam back on line in *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, which I will analyse in some detail below, makes the physical dam the locus for the human survivors' dreams of not just electricity, but also a *post*-apocalyptic life. As Akhil Gupta further notes in the case of the global South, large infrastructural projects represent modernity and promise for the future.[20] Gupta singles out Jawaharlal Nehru's well-

18 For more on the role of multi-level infrastructure enabling new and innovative chase sequences, see my "Chase Sequences and Transport Infrastructure in Global Hollywood Spy Films," in *Global Cinematic Cities*, ed. Johan Andersson and Lawrence Webb (New York: Wallflower/Columbia University Press, 2016), 235–51.

19 Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42:3 (2013): 333.

20 Akhil Gupta, "The Future in Ruins: Thoughts on the Temporality of Infrastructure," in *The Promise of Infrastructure.* ed. Hanna Appel et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 62–79. See 64–75 in particular.

known description of massive works like the Bhakra Nangal as "[t]he temples of modern India," linking dreams, infrastructure, and nation. Ensuring a liveable today, but also promising a liveable tomorrow depends on the forward-looking nature of infrastructure: continuing to build, develop, and maintain public services in energy, transportation, water, sewer, communications, among others, presumes a public in the future.

Ape Infrastructures

Three broad categories of infrastructure in *The Planet of the Apes* (1968), *The Planet of the Apes* (2001), *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* (2011), and *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014) – namely transportation, water-sewer, and energy-electricity – show how infrastructure appears, solves practical problems in their post-apocalyptic worlds, and points to how we might organize life *before* the apocalypse with these post-apocalyptic imaginaries as our guide. The creation of connections between urban space and locations beyond the city, a system for water provision, and a means to generate and distribute electricity all reveal the potential for infrastructure to make a durable settlement possible. Who controls the infrastructure moves the various planets of the apes around the edges or deep into the heart of what we can recognize as the minimum conditions for a happy ending in the post-apocalypse: a liveable world for the majority of residents.

All three *Planet of the Apes* film series show a similar, predominantly non-mechanized transportation infrastructure which prioritizes pedestrian-centric rather than car-centric design that is used to clear room for food production while bringing post-apocalyptic survivors closer together. The 1968 film's ape city shows urban streets of packed dirt with adobe flyover pedestrian bridges, with non-urban dirt roads travelled by pedestrians and apes on horseback. The 2001 film has similar urban streets of packed dirt/cut out stone and non-urban roads travelled by apes as pedestrians and on horses as well as carts pulled by people. The most car-reliant film series, the 2011–2017 trilogy shows a clear preference for the non-mechanized as the preferred transportation choice. Set early on in the post-apocalypse, *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* takes place on the streets of the San Francisco Bay Area as well as roads near the John Muir Woods and its dirt walking paths as well as the vertical streets of trees. The paved streets around San Francisco have been rapidly retaken by plant life; even in the city, showing that the streets have not seen a great deal of vehicular traffic. All three films show a distinct preference for pedestrian-oriented urban space with some connection to the agricultural surroundings as the sort of post-apocalyptic settlement that can support life, whether for ape or human: one close to food sources that can be

transported by muscle power rather than mechanical power, a choice informed by the reduced energy options post-apocalyptic survivors have (this will be explored in greater detail shortly). The familiar glass and concrete world as seen from the road of twentieth and twenty-first century life has been replaced by a transportation infrastructure with a greater connection to plant life rather than artificial construction, the paths themselves made not from asphalt but rather dirt, and overgrown with weeds. In spite of their film-formal love of technology – from extensive makeup to digital effects – the *Planet of the Apes* films register their suspicion of technology and its role in the coming of the apocalypse in the changed form of the transportation infrastructure.

The continuity between *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* and *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* centers on the landmark Golden Gate Bridge and relationship it creates between the city (humans) and the John Muir Woods (apes). In *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*, after Caesar and Koba lead a mission to liberate the apes being held and experimented on at the GenSys headquarters, the apes rampage through San Francisco, heading towards what Caesar understands as their home, the John Muir Woods. To reach the woods, the apes must cross the Golden Gate Bridge. Between GenSys headquarters and the bridge, the apes' use of the transportation infrastructure rejects cars: an ape uses a parking meter as a weapon, chimpanzees use the electric cables that power streetcars as *ersatz* vines. *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*' climactic battle takes place on the bridge, and the apes' ability to use the bridge as more than a single horizontal space – the way drivers perceive and use it – allows them to win the battle. When Caesar sees that the cops have set up a roadblock on the north/wilderness end of the bridge, he calls the apes to a halt and most of them leave the roadway deck of the bridge, taking to the vertical cables and to a secondary horizontal level under the street. Such a reorientation of the bridge space plays off the frequent overhead shots of the apes moving through the city, surveilling humans by seeing the city not just from street level, but from a second "street" level of rooftops. The second stage of the battle plays against the predominantly horizontal shots of the first stage of the battle on the bridge by following the apes as they jump from their fog cover down onto the cops. The rest of the battle alternates the horizontal – the gun battle with cops – with the vertical: disposing of the evil GenSys executive in the helicopter above. The apes, by using the transportation infrastructure as pedestrians rather than car-bound drivers, win the battle and reach the sanctuary of John Muir Woods.

I dwell on this battle because it is mirrored in the opening of the sequel, *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes.* In *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes,* humans searching for a hydro dam encounter the Muir Woods apes, and one man accidentally shoots an ape. The humans flee back into the city over the Golden Gate Bridge; the trip over the bridge is shot in extreme long shots from above the bridge, following

the one moving utility vehicle on the road. The last shot of the bridge appears as a high angle shot of apes watching from one of the bridge towers. Then the scene shifts to an interior, with the film's widescreen composition squeezed by a doorway, the double frame creating a sense of waiting for the party to return. The street level of the bridge features a massive unfilled gap, with rusted-out cars resting in huge weed clumps, a sign of the destruction caused by the battle in *Rise of the Planet of the Apes,* left unaddressed in favour of more pressing survival needs. A human figure walks out of this double-framed image of the street, the camera movement from inside a building to the exterior creates a POV shot for the human settlement leader Dreyfus (Gary Oldman); not the people arriving.[21] Now, the bridge offers some protection, but also a significant boundary to the perpetuation of human settlement: the apes control the bridge from its towers and at the ground level the street is broken and in need of repair. The destruction of both everyday transportation sights like city streets as well as recognizable monuments shows that great engineering achievements can quite easily crumble and hamstring the future whereas the pedestrian-oriented transportation infrastructure seems to promise a longer, lower-maintenance future of relative, if circumscribed, comfort. The smaller scale and slower pace of dirt roads and broken streets means that the settlements are more densely populated out of necessity, creating a vision of post-apocalyptic life that imagines an urban settlement amidst a sizeable agricultural, or at least food-generating, landscape, and using the transportation infrastructure to create both the means to traverse and the boundaries to the community.

The indispensability of water as something to drink makes its provision essential to any potential settlement, but the water infrastructure can both support and suppress life. The 1968 *Planet of the Apes* finds the ape jailers using a high-pressure water hose on their human prisoners multiple times, drawing on the news photos of Bull Conor's Birmingham police using water cannons as weapons against Civil Rights activists and the city's Black people throughout the decade to show how the water infrastructure can be used violently to place people outside of community belonging. As I noted above, the 2001 *Planet of the Apes* with no running water means the ape world's hierarchy must be policed in a different manner. By the time *Planet of the Apes* was released in 2001, the more up-close gang beating approach predominated in the public imaginary of police violence, especially against

21 The image references the opening of *The Searchers* (Ford, 1956) which moves from within the Jorgensen house to reveal Monument Valley and Ethan Edwards's arrival. I'll leave possible readings of hydro power-seeking White Americans, Ethan Edwards, and the Western genre for another day.

racial minority groups.[22] The film's gorilla police force metes out said violence on their human prisoners more than once, no water provision required.

The difficulty of sustaining life appears in the form of limited water provision in *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes.* There's a hint of running water when the humans infiltrate the city with Caesar and the anti-war apes, in the form of the clear sounds of running water audible as they pass through an underground portion of the old BART system. However, the preponderance of storage jugs that appear at the edges of the frame in the key space of human settlement – San Francisco in general, Malcolm's place especially – indicates that access to drinking water is at best patchy. In addition to drinking water, a similarly life-sustaining and -saving use of water also applies to washing. The human residents of San Francisco look dirty and dishevelled, indicating the absence of running water for bathing. In a post-apocalyptic world, staying clean would be an essential preventative action to avoid infections, which *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* registers in terms of the limited supply of antibiotics the people of San Francisco retain and that Ellie (Keri Russell) shares with the apes as a goodwill gesture. Without water a settlement cannot survive. In the 1968 *Planet of the Apes*, water infrastructure supports the ape city and also violently represses an outsider, echoing not only the late-1960s Civil Rights context of the film's release, but also the continuing nature of US life, as seen in, for example, the Flint water crisis. The twenty-first century *Planet of the Apes* trilogy builds on the importance of water provision to reveal the importance of water's sanitary role in a post-pandemic world in building a settlement that can provide a baseline of support as survivors seek to rebuild.

Solving the problem of the energy-electricity infrastructure has formal, narrative, and ideological significance across the three *Planet of the Apes* movies: power as in electricity; power as in dominion. The Ape City set and its interiors in the earliest *Planet* shows how production design in the form of "ape architecture" can make a world without electricity a world with plausible high-key lighting. The solution, visible in nearly every interior, is skylights, even in the prison. Beyond this formal flourish, ape city's overhead lighting creates a visual analogue to the world of law that Doctor Zaius, the Defender of the Faith, seeks to perpetuate, an illusion of clarity and direction given from on high by the Lawgiver. Perhaps unsurprisingly the Tim Burton-directed *Planet of the Apes* creates a darker, often low-key lit world that uses the diegetic solution of a world lit only by fire, with torches providing exterior-street lighting as well as interior lights. Ape City resembles less a welcoming city and more a forbidding fortress, and the torches that light it offer

22 The Rodney King tape, almost a decade old by 2001, shows the sort of five-on-one beating that Burton's film places in Ape City.

another clue as to why it sits alone on a plain: years and years of clear-cutting to fuel their streetlight system. In contrast, the 1968 vision of lighting without electricity enables the apes to create a city in much closer proximity to agricultural land, presenting a more "sustainable" model for a durable settlement.

While the 2001 *Planet of the Apes* burns wood, the 2014 *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* uses uranium to produce energy, with similar isolating effects on community and community building. The virus that spreads across the globe in the credits sequence to *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* affects energy production: one piece of voiceover in the sequence features a power plant spokesperson saying: "The reactor is overheating. We can't stop the meltdown." Eliminating people eliminates expertise, and the damage of the monkey virus, when combined with the nuclear fallout and damage of nuclear plant meltdowns hastens the end of human civilization in the 2011–2017 *Planet of the Apes* series. *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*' conflict emerges out of the humans' need for the electricity the local hydro dam might provide; the apes and humans fight what amounts to a resource war. As Malcolm, the human in charge of re-starting the hydro dam explains, "The city used to run off nuclear power but that ran out years ago, so we've been using diesel generators and gasifiers. But if we can just get this dam working then we have a shot at restoring limited power." *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* registers the early twenty-first century debates on renewable energy production, with the secret to continued human settlement the non-fossil fuel, non-nuclear option of hydroelectricity embedded into the narrative. The small band of survivors in northern California need to get the dam back up and running to maintain their civilisation and to make communication with any other survivors who may be out there. Driving through the forest, the apes' territory, the humans find the abandoned dam. It is twice that the importance of electricity generation gets explained. First by Dreyfus, who tells the remaining people of San Francisco: "we're almost out of fuel. Which means no more power. Which means we could slip back to the way things were. That dam up there was the answer…That power, it's not just about keeping the lights on. It's about giving us the tools to reconnect to the rest of the world. To find out who else is out there. So that we can start to rebuild. And reclaim the world we lost."

With generators eventually the region's remaining fossil fuel stores would run out, leaving hydro the best remaining option. The humans agree to a treaty of sorts with the apes to operate the dam on their land. And a hydro generation plant would likely have stopped working because of clogged water pipes and conduits. As the apes destroy the small number of guns the hydro-dam restoring humans brought with them – part of the agreement to work on the dam – Koba tells Caesar: "If they get power, they'll be more dangerous." After Malcolm and his team get the plant working, a massive celebration in the corner of San Francisco where the hu-

mans have made their settlement erupts. But Dreyfus, who prefers war to coexistence with the apes, controls the power, not the more conciliatory Malcolm; Dreyfus sees power as the means to link up with other human survivors to combine forces against the apes. In *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* the return of electricity means the return of oppression. Apes may not need electricity or lights, but Koba nevertheless recognizes that when it comes to the infrastructure of electricity generation, power is power. Whoever controls the energy infrastructure controls a key factor in building their own community and/or disrupting someone else's.

The End is Coming. What Will We Do After?

Pedestrian-oriented urban space with limited connections beyond the city, nearly invisible water provision, and electrical power all reveal the potential for infrastructure to function both as a brake on – and as an enabler of – community. Such a vision makes sense in a post-apocalyptic setting, in films that act as warnings against social ills, starting with the foundational racism that takes infrastructural form in the 1968 *Planet of the Apes*' use of hoses on unruly prisoners. Taylor briefly reclaims the multi-level street system as a means to escape; people collect water and work collaboratively in *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*; even the most militaristically minded agree that locally generated renewable power offers the most likely path to a liveable future for the survivors of the apocalypse. None of the *Planet of the Apes* movies hold out much hope for humanity's future, but they know that the road to avoiding the end or returning from it must address infrastructural needs.

The end of the world has been coming for a long time, and mass audience movies appear to be getting ready for it in terms of infrastructure, often as the source of spectacular imagery in big FX shots and chase sequences. Operating behind the spectacular action, infrastructure offers not only the setting for these films' action, but also the grounds for the future, where the rebuilding might restart. There is consensus around the problems infrastructure can solve and that its neglect creates, as seen in the various forms of Green New Deal across the Global North that use new infrastructural development to address climate change and inequality.[23] There has not been, however, much concrete action to put these proposals into place. Post-apocalyptic movies imagine the potential worlds created by

23 See, for instance, the video Congressperson Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez made for *The Intercept* in 2019 and Kare Aronoff et. al. *A Planet to Win: Why We Need A Green New Deal* (London: Verso, 2019). For a consideration of a Green New Deal beyond the Global North, see Max Ajl, *A People's Green New Deal* (London: Pluto, 2021).

facing up to, or continuing to ignore, or being unable to address these problems. Communal projects of power generation, transportation, and water (among others) appear as the preconditions for happy endings in the *Planet of the Apes* films; and post-apocalyptic films more broadly. Infrastructure makes possible the solutions to the narrative's problems, saves characters' lives, and builds spaces that, as their survivor residents imagine them, replicate a memory of the *status quo ante.*

As my analysis has shown, identifying moments where infrastructure appears as part of the diegesis and also as part of the set dressing/design, both in-use and in the background, then identifying how infrastructure offers post-apocalyptic movies a basis – a grounding if you will – both for imagined bad-worlds and their hoped for regeneration traces the outlines of the thinkable form of a world that has been jerry-rigged to function, to offer a glimmer of something beyond bare life. In recognizing these outlines and filling in the first few lines of shading, I hope to create something akin to what Hans Robert Jauss would call the horizon of expectations for the foundations of practical everyday life in post-apocalyptic worlds on film. In cultural terms, this allows us to develop a clearer understanding of the social imaginary of infrastructure and its roles in practical everyday life. My hope is that attention to infrastructure after the apocalypse can expand our film-derived shorthand vocabulary to make different visions of the future comprehensible, giving us new entry points for where to begin and how to judge the futures we want to live in.

I offer my analysis of the *Planet of the Apes* films not as an exhaustive and definitive answer to conceiving of post-apocalyptic settlements but as a tentative step towards considering what has appeared as thinkable, as likely, in the last fifty years. In a 2017 review of *War for the Planet of the Apes* (Matt Reeves, 2017), Dan Hassler-Forest argues persuasively that:

> As part of the fabric that makes up our pop-cultural vocabulary, we need accessible and appealing tales that reject the utter nihilism of *Game of Thrones*–era neoliberal culture. More specifically: The left needs stories that foreground political organization in the face of exploitation and oppression. It needs popular myths that revive solidarity and compassion as crucial components of progressive political struggle…And it needs grand utopian horizons that don't shy away from the promise of a future that is better – or, at the very least, *different.*[24]

The *Planet of the Apes* films, from 1968 through *War for the Planet of the Apes* in 2017 all offer some measure of what Hassler-Forest argues for. The highly individ-

24 Dan Hassler-Forest, "The Politics of the Planet of the Apes." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, August 26, 2017, accessed July 7, 2022, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-politics-of-the-planet-of-the-apes/.

ualized and privatized neoliberal project gives way to the public provision of essential services like water and electricity as a practice or, in earlier stages, as a clear community goal. The action-movie heroics of Taylor and Davidson find room for collaboration (if not worker-level organization), and Malcolm in *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* organizes not only his fellow human workers, but also hopes to forge bonds with the apes, all mediated by the infrastructure of energy production. Seen in terms of their infrastructure, the *Planet of the Apes* films present worlds that are not utterly nihilistic, in spite of the twist endings. Rather, these worlds are slightly different on the margins of the narrative and the frame; if we look at them differently, we can see the changes. Doing so can prepare us to see our own crumbling infrastructural world, differently, in a new light.

Attending to infrastructure in post-apocalyptic film allows us to connect the idealist – tracing of the boundaries of our collective imagination – with the materialist; the practical concrete foundation of such worlds and lives as we can imagine them. To escape the current escalating apocalypse of our own making, the boundaries of our imagination need to expand beyond the lines of just our fellow humans and to become more fantastic along the lines of what we as humans might organize and produce together. But this will only be possible if our imagination becomes much more mechanically mundane at the same time. In *The German Ideology* Marx places critique next to more prosaic, everyday work in some future communist society "where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he [sic] wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic."[25] A future better world will need much the same combination. To build castles in the sky worth fighting for will require ideas. It will also require infrastructure.

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Jaideep Unudurti

Pralaya: Competing Apocalypses and Dystopias in Contemporary Indian Science-Fiction

> "Perhaps if the future existed, concretely and individually, as something that could be discerned by a better brain, the past would not be so seductive. [...] The future is but a figure of speech, a spectre of thought."
> Vladimir Nabokov, *Transparent Things,* 1972.

> "Numerous peals of thunder were heard; thousands of meteors fell; and all living creatures became inspired with great dread. The entire welkin seemed to be filled with noise and assumed a terrible aspect. The whole earth with her mountains and waters and trees, fields, and people, trembled."
> Sauptik Parva, *The Mahabharata.*[1]

The term closest to apocalypse in Hindu eschatology is *Pralaya*, or dissolution. It is a complex, multimodal operation, involving the collapse of several linked worlds in the cosmic architecture. Folded into this architecture is *Yuganta*, or the end of an aeon as well as a herald of its rebirth. In this cyclical schema, we are presently located in the Kali Yuga, the fourth and most degenerate age, with its terminus fast approaching. This chapter captures a snapshot of dystopian and Pralayic fiction in India, in various forms, ranging from comics to novels. The context of such fiction is a rapid change in the tastes of young Indians, due to various cultural drivers, including American superhero culture, an ever evolving genre mix on popular streaming services such as YouTube, as well as patriotic military-themed films. At the same time, there has been a renewed interest in traditional Hindu epics, now "rebooted" to suit this new audience, blending action and fantasy with traditional Hindu mythology.

All of this is unfolding against the backdrop of a re-configuration of the national project, from the post-independence Nehruvian secular model to the present muscular ethno-nationalism, exemplified by the rise of political Hinduism or Hindutva in the last decade. In this Hindutvan worldview, the apocalypse has already happened, with the downfall of the idyllic Vedic civilization; hence, all aspirational energies must be directed not into the future but backwards, to revive a golden past. By contrast, the Nehruvian viewpoint posits the ongoing fragmentation of

1 Kisari Mohan Ganguli, trans., *The Mahabharata of Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa* (Delhi: Munshilal Manoharlal Publishers Limited, 2012), Sauptik Parva, Book 10, Section 14.

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the post-Independence order as the end of the secular, liberal era, or a Yuganta leading to irreversible dystopian outcomes.

This leads me to the central question of this chapter: how is this Yugantic tension manifested in the contemporary imaginary? In conjunction with this tension, amidst a bewildering pace of economic and social change, there is a propensity in contemporary Indian science-fiction to use imagery from the past to create meaning in the present. These developments contrast with the West, where science-fiction depicts events in a future that is approached mostly through linear time. In the prevailing Hindutvan narrative, Hindus are, or were, living in the post-apocalypse, surrounded by the ruins of a once-great civilization, which is actually a prelude to a new upward cycle of time. As the Nehruvian order unwinds irrevocably, this anticipation is juxtaposed with the gloomy, dystopian fiction mirrored in the perspective of the Anglophone *bhadralok*. I argue that what we are witnessing then, are two competing narrative cycles, negotiating the grim actualities of the political present via the past-future of mythology.

The political changes of the last decade have also gone hand in hand with a shift in India's demographic age structure. Around 47% of the Indian population are below the age of 25, that is an estimated 730 million.[2] In other words, this is a young, restless, and increasingly angry India, comprising the core of the Hindutva project.[3] The desire to cater to this cohort has led to the development of new genres, with the rise of the patriotic techno-military film being a noticeable trend. For example, the film *Uri: The Surgical Strike* (2019), based on the 2016 cross-border conflicts which helped Prime Minister Narendra Modi cement his reputation as a tough leader, has singularly captured the public's imagination through its emphasis on special forces, security aesthetic and drones.

These various developments, combined with the reflexive turn to an earlier cycle of time, can explain the rise of a notable "Vedicpunk" aesthetic, which is a blend of Indian epics retold through the American superhero comic form. Furthermore, there has been a growth in expertise as India emerges as a global backend for VFX and CGI means, producing a large pool of technical talent that makes possible the production of a specifically Indian take on the super hero franchise. For example, *Brahmastra* (2022) features "*astras*," which are super weapons wielded by the Gods, and owes as much of its worldbuilding to Marvel-style spectacles

2 National Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, New Delhi, "Youth in India, 2022," accessed April 21, 2023. https://mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Youth_in_India_2022/Youth_in_India_2022.pdf.

3 Jyoti Mishra and Amrit Negi, "Post-poll Survey: BJP, the Most Preferred Party of Young India," *The Hindu*, May 29, 2019, accessed April, 21, 2023, https://www.thehindu.com/elections/lok-sabha-2019/the-most-preferred-party-of-young-india/article27277454.ece.

as it does to Hindu epics. Meanwhile, Disney is working on a big-budget adaptation of the *Mahabharata*, including the application of extraordinary visuals reminiscent of the *Lord of the Rings* film franchise, but with an Indian twist. There is an indication that these trends will eventually converge into what has been described by Lutgendorf (2021) as an "aesthetic hegemony" that "glorifies hyperbolic musculature, militaristic machismo, techno-weaponry capable of unleashing apocalyptic violence, and the angst-ridden, usually male characters who wield it."[4]

Meanwhile, a comprehensive renegotiation of Indian national identity is notably underway. V. D. Savarkar (1883–1966), who, according to Chaturvedi, "longed for the resurrection of the lost Hindu Empire of centuries past" and, whose programme, "to 'Hinduise politics and militarise Hindudom'"[5] has guided this critical moment replacing the broad-based coalition conceived by Gandhi and Nehru as the dominant national vision. As Levi-Strauss famously put it, national myths are an "everlasting pattern" which is repeated in the anatomy of contemporary society.[6] Hindutva aspires to this politics of timelessness as sacred scenes are repeatedly re-enacted in a loop of curative violence and restorative reconstruction.

India's current moment, in this sense, is marked by dissonance between two visions of the future: two political projects, two senses of time, that flow out of two conflicting narratives of the past, going back to the birth of the modern Indian nation. The Nehruvian project with its inspiration from the Enlightenment, speaks the language of progress, developing a scientific temper grounded in industrialisation as a project of linear time, while the rapidly advancing political project of Hindutva eschews these tenets of modernity embedding itself in a modus of circular time. I am interested in examining the impacts of these two projects on Indian science-fiction: that is, the emergence of dystopic fiction produced by an old liberal order on the verge of denouement, and the arrival of another aesthetic – assertive and muscular – a blend of techno-Hindu mythology recast to fit this new world. Both of these trends simultaneously approach and recede from the future and can be made legible through an account of recent Indian science-fiction. My aim is to capture these generic cycles of temporality and ideology as they loop, entangle, and disentangle again.

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4 Philip Lutgendorf, "A Long Time Ago in a Galaxy Far, Far Away: Mahabharata as a Dystopian Future," in *Many Mahabharatas*, ed. Nell S. Hawley and Sohini S. Pillai (New York: SUNY Press, 2021), 384.

5 Vinayak Chaturvedi, *Hindutva and Violence: V.D. Savarkar and the Politics of History* (New York: SUNY Press, 2022), 3.

6 Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *The Journal of American Folklore* 68:270 (1955): 430, accessed May 11, 2023, doi:10.2307/538768.

The Apocalypse with Indian Characteristics

Apocalyptic imagery suffuses the epics and the Puranas from the outset. The battlefield after *Kurukshetra* with its mountains of corpses, smoke-filled skies, and landscapes ravaged by superweapons would be considered a post-apocalyptic scene by all means. Similarly, the description of *pralaya*, with its extreme weather events, including rains which "start pouring down in streams as thick as the trunk of an elephant"[7] or droughts that make the earth "look like the back of a tortoise"[8] is replete with striking imagery of world-ending catastrophes. However, my argument is that the post-apocalypse as understood in the West cannot be ported into the Indian popular imagination without undergoing significant transformations. Such changes are necessary because of the cultural differences in understanding modes of temporality or "natural" flows of time. In this context Rocher talks about "endlessly successive, smaller and larger world ages, some of them separated by world destructions and world creations"[9] which, according to Gonda, "have been worked out into "a system, which is as typically Indian, as it is unparalleled with other peoples."[10] As Alex Tickell further puts it "to understand history in the context of India one may have to develop an incredulity toward a certain historicism, a 'metanarrative of [secular] progress', and allow for an untranslatable sense of enchantment – what Chakrabarty calls the 'times of gods'[11], which are implicit in locally embedded versions of history."[12]

To understand this time of the gods, a brief explanation of Hindu cosmology might be necessary: In this view the perishable universe is a wheel that revolves on a colossal, unending timescale.[13] The macro unit is an epoch or *Yuga.*[14] The

7 Vettam Mani, "Loka," in *Puranic Encyclopaedia,* ed. Vettam Mani (New Delhi: Motilal Banarassidas Publishing House, 1964), 457.
8 Vettam Mani, "Pralaya," in *Puranic Encyclopaedia,* ed. Vettam Mani (New Delhi: Motilal Banarassidas Publishing House, 1964), 600.
9 Ludo Rocher, "Concepts of Time in Classical India," in *Time and Temporality in the Ancient World,* ed. Ralph M. Rosen (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2003), 91.
10 Jan Gonda, "A Note on Indian Pessimism," in *Studia varia Carolo Guilielmo Volgraff a discipulis oblata Studia Volgraff* (Amsterdam, 1948), 41.
11 Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Time of History and the Times of Gods," in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital,* ed. Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 50.
12 Alex Tickell, "Some Uses of History: Historiography, Politics, and the Indian Novel," in *A History of the Indian Novel in English,* ed. Ulka Anjaria (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 248.
13 The cosmic clock is set to the lifespan of Lord Brahma, the Creator, which is approximately 311.04 trillion years.

four *yugas* that make up a *Chaturyuga* (great epoch) are 1. *Kṛita*; or *Satya*; 2. *Tretā*, 3. *Dvāpara*, and finally 4. *Kali.* These names originate from dice games, and each denotes a dice throw, with *Krita* being the best and *Kali* being the worst (i.e. 4–3–2–1). In each successive *yuga*, humanity's overall moral and physical state degrades by one-fourth. When qualities are at their lowest point in *Kali Yuga*, a cataclysmic event, *pralaya*, takes place,[15] followed by a restoration of *dharma*, heralded by the onset of *Kalki*,[16] the tenth avatar of Lord Vishnu, to usher in the *Satya Yuga*, and the cycle repeats. In other words, each cycle of decay ends with a reset, with the golden dawn of the first age returning after a suitably destructive interlude. This is the cycle of the *Yugas:* epochs endlessly repeating themselves.

The post-apocalypse, in such a scheme, would, similarly, denote the herald of a new golden age. However, such a cyclical approach inhibits the imagining of an apocalypse on purely Western terms. For instance, Stifflemire (2017), drawing on Kermode, says, "an ending is essential for apocalyptic thought to occur; […] broadly speaking, apocalyptic thought belongs to rectilinear rather than cyclical views of the world."[17] By contrast, in India, "historical events occur only to vanish immediately after, vain effervescences of illusory phenomena, diluted and lost in outscaled cycles," as Caillois asserts.[18] While this statement is slightly exaggerated,[19] the influence of circular time has been felt in all aspects of Indian culture. At the end of each *Chaturyuga*, post-pralaya, the new yuga grows out of the old, emerging in a natural cycle, "like grass after the forest fire."[20] The post-Pralayic hence does not quite convey the same meaning as post-apocalypse, with vast implications for a specifically Indian science-fiction genre.

14 Derived from the Sanskrit verb "to yoke" and refers to planetary bodies in conjunction. See: Romila Thapar, "Cyclic and Linear Time in Early India," in *Time*, ed. by Katinka Ridderbos, 27–45 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), doi: 10.1017/CBO9780511541421.003. Several *Yuga*s form a *Kalpa*, of 4.32 billion years, which then form a *mahakalpa* and so on.

15 *Pralaya:* This concept refers to the dissolution and return to nature, and is said to be of four types. For our purpose we are concerned with the pralaya that follows at the end of the Yuga cycle, i.e. the one immediately in our normative future.

16 *Kalki*: In certain traditions, the end of the Kali Yuga is heralded by the tenth avatar of Lord Vishnu, who takes the form of a king. When the earth is wracked by cataclysms, Kalki, the tenth avatar of Lord Vishnu appears on a white horse and with a great sword made from pure knowledge; the avatar destroys the evildoers in terrible wars and reboots the cycle.

17 Brett S. Stifflemire, "Visions of After the End: A History and Theory of the Post-Apocalyptic Genre in Literature and Film" (PhD diss., University of Alabama, 2017).

18 Roger Caillois, "Circular Time, Rectilinear Time," *Diogenes*, 11:42 (1963): 1–13, accessed May 2, 2023, doi: 10.1177/039219216301104201.

19 See criticisms of this view, for instance by Mohanty (1992) and Thapar (2002).

20 See Sudarshan Kumar Sharma, ed. *Vayu Mahapurana* (Delhi: Parimal Publications, 2008), 392.

The Age of Super-Science

While the West draws on science-fiction imaginaries to describe events in a future that is approached through linear time, there is a tendency in India to draw upon images of the past for meaning-making in the present. One could argue that, in this sense, there is no need for science-fiction at all. In fact, sociologist Shiv Viswanathan points out, "[o]ne of the strange absences in the Indian imagination is science fiction (SF). Maybe the fecundity of our myths made the SF imagination unnecessary."[21] On the other hand, according to Joan Gordon, "India's very rich tradition begins not with Mary Shelley or Jules Verne […] but perhaps with the Ramayana[.] […] It has different definitions and aesthetic principles, a different relationship to fantasy[.] […] Its science may be Ayurvedic as well as Newtonian."[22] Viewed from this perspective, the mutability of epics such as the *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*, suggests a capacity to recast Hindu mythology in different forms, including science-fiction stories, which, as Manjula Padmanabhan points out, emerge as "literary chimeras hatched in the nest of ancient belief systems."[23] Instead of looking ahead to a technologically advanced future, Indian speculative fiction situates "science" in a hyper advanced past. In short, Indian science-fiction produced post-Independence is an outgrowth of "a society at once driven by a rapidly growing materialistic industrial economy and by the metaphysical and pastoral traditions that have existed for millennia."[24]

This also means, that unlike the West, which is underpinned by a monolithic account of science and technology, Indian science-fiction tends to apply a multitude of epistemologies and ideologies. As Banerjee puts it, "in Indian SF multiple systems of knowledge stake a claim to this underlying epistemic role,"[25] meaning the appearance of Vedic science, most often championed by the Right, or subaltern/tribal knowledge promoted by the Left are equally thinkable. The resulting tension about preceding systems of knowledge and "modern" scientific temper was present from the start. As Pablo Mukherjee explains, "Nehru's own attitudes towards science, modernity and 'development' showed, the validation of the ancient Indian scientific spirit and technological felicity was hardwired into his proj-

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21 Shiv Viswanathan, "Alternative Futures," *The Times of India*, February 10, 2007, accessed April 21, 2023. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/edit-page/alternative-futures/articleshow/1586903.cms.
22 Joan Gordon, "Introduction," *Science Fiction Studies: Indian SF* 43:3 (2016): 433–434.
23 Manjula Padmanabhan, "Preface," in *The Gollancz Book of South Asian Fiction Vol. 2*, ed. by Tarun K. Saint (New Delhi: Hachette India, 2021), ix.
24 Suparno Banerjee, *Indian Science Fiction: Patterns, History and Hybridity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020), 22.
25 Suparno Banerjee, 61.

ect of developing an independent India from the very beginning."[26] He further maintains that "Saha, Bose and Nehru all spoke repeatedly of the continuity of the scientific spirit between ancient and modern India."[27]

This dynamic, the need to maintain continuity, has always run like a thread through the different iterations of Indian science-fiction. In Mainak Dhar's *Vimana* (2011), for example, the Hindu Gods are recast as aliens who are worshipped as deities after their arrival millennia ago. One of their numbers, Kalki, has gone to the bad side and is involved in nefarious activities, including supplying arms to Al Qaeda. This bizarre juxtaposition of ancient mythology and contemporary politics works because of a narrative bidirectional flow where just as Western science is used to buttress ancient Indian scientific discoveries, the tropes of Western science-fiction are used conversely to reinforce Indian mythology. The sentiment runs closely to the belief that a return to the ancient Hindu golden age, to achieve Hindu self-fulfilment, is possible through the use of science and technology – a motif which plays particularly well with younger audiences who have witnessed India becoming an IT superpower in the last two decades.

Another notable feature of this emerging science fiction genre is that in a circular construction of time, the future has already happened. As a consequence, the notion of change, the engine of western science-fiction, is subverted. As Lutgendorf asserts, "[t]he concept of recurring yugas [...] tended to short circuit any teleology of change-as-progress by asserting that the most utopian epochs lay in the distant past and that subsequent world history was a sordid saga of continuous loss and decline."[28] In other words, while a standard trope in Western science-fiction culture typically features a small band of post-catastrophe survivors who gather to rekindle the flame of science and civilization, from a Hindutvan perspective, this apocalypse or civilization-ending catastrophe, has already happened by way of Islamic invasions and British colonisation. Seen in this light, a post-collapse rebuilding in the Indian context entails a return that reaches far deeper into the past – a past that is neither Mughal nor Islamic.

Most prominently there is a turn towards the Vedic past, which, in the popular imagination, was originally situated around 3,000 years ago but is now continuously extending backwards, from 5,000 to even 12,000 years.[29] Returning to the exam-

26 Pablo Mukherjee, *Final Frontiers: Science Fiction and Techno-science in Non-Aligned India* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 151.

27 Pablo Mukherjee, *Final Frontiers*, 151.

28 Lutgendorf, "A Long Time Ago," 366.

29 According to a written reply given in Parliament, the then Minister of State for Culture and Tourism stated that: "A committee has been set up for conducting a holistic study of origin and evolution of Indian culture since 12,000 years before [the] present and its interface with other cul-

ple of *Vimana*, the story also features a secret war carried out by the Gods with the help of powerful, stealthy flying machines known as Vimanas.[30]In a guided tour the alien being who is known as Lord Shiva flies over the Lonar crater in Maharashtra and casually explains that this was the "first deployment" of nuclear weapons over 13,000 years ago. According to Khan, "Vimana tries to popularize the view that Indian civilisation was at its peak during the Vedic age, and [that] what we witness today is a product of devolution, not evolution."[31] Similarly, the Indian Science Congress of 2015 featured a paper on the *Vaimānika Shāstra*, a purportedly ancient text concerning the science of *vimana*s.[32] The machines were also the subject of a paper on ancient Indian aviation technology which "claimed sages and scientists had written about aircraft-making as early as 7000 B.C."[33] and that this technology was used for inter-planetary travel. The paper went on to dream up opportunities to reverse-engineer these machines for use by the Indian defence establishment. This official sanction, of what reads ostensibly like a science-fiction fantasy, not only exemplifies the porous relationship between myth, science and politics in contemporary India, but also locates all civilisational energies in the past. Progress is defined as a return to what was, rather than an exploration of what will be – a worldview which defies the post-1947 Nehruvian outlook embedded in linear time.

Competing Narratives

Even in the early writings of English speaking Indian authors, the tension between different notions of temporality was already evident. The very first prose fiction in the corpus of Indians writing in English was *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945*, written in 1835 by a teenager named Kylas Chunder Dutt. The short story projects an alternative history, in which an armed rebellion against the Brit-

tures of the world." See: "Formed 16-member committee to study ancient Indian culture: Union Minister Prahlad Patel," *The Week,* September 14 2020, accessed April 24, 2023, https://www.theweek.in/wire-updates/national/2020/09/14/del32-lsq-cul-committee.html.

30 A Vimana plays a key role in the *Ramayana* when deployed by the Asura Emperor, Ravana.

31 Sami A. Khan, "Gods of War Toke while Riding a Vimana: Hindu Gods in Three Indian Science Fiction Novels," *MOSF Journal of Science Fiction* 1:1 (2016): 17–31.

32 Kritika Sharma, "Vedic Plastic Surgery to Test-tube Karna – Non-Science Claims Flowed from Modi Downwards," *The Print,* January 9, 2019, accessed April 24, 2023, https://theprint.in/science/vedic-plastic-surgery-to-test-tube-karna-non-science-claims-flowed-from-modi-downwards/174757/.

33 Vinaya Deshpande, "'Rishi has given guidelines to make planes,'" *The Hindu*, January 4, 2015, accessed April 24, 2023. https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/First-man-to-build-and-fly-an-aircraft-was-Indian/article60333629.ece.

ish takes place. Set against the backdrop of the impossibly distant future of 1945, the narrative signifies a staggering imaginative leap into the unknown, applying a classic trope of the science-fiction genre.[34] Taking up Britain's colonial presence in India and turning its missionary strategy of "civilising" the nation[35] on its head, it also produces these leaps as a vehicle for cultural critique. It is vital to remember that the British claimed to bring the benefits of science, free trade, education, morality, and culture to India. Their presence in the country was meant to be open-ended, moving toward an undefined date in the distant future, when Indians would be able to govern themselves. In the meantime, the British aspired to create an intermediary caste "that would be Indian in 'blood and colour', but English in their education, political complexion and cultural preferences."[36]

Notably, Dutt was a precocious student of the new English-medium Hindu College in Calcutta, and was, as such, part of the wealthy, Anglicized elite of the city. He was part of a cohort influenced by Voltaire, Paine, and the Irish nationalists, who are widely regarded as predecessors of the freedom movement, which was itself based on "the theorising and campaigning of cosmopolitan intellectuals just like them."[37] Despite this background, Dutt's story pointedly undermines the "civilising" mission of the British. Rather, the story follows Bhoobun Mohun, who, after fifty years of colonial rule organises a rebellion attempting to seize Fort William, the seat of British power.[38] The revolt is eventually crushed and Bhoobun is sentenced to death. However, notably, the rebellion originates from the Western-educated "civilised" members of society rather than tribal or peasant communities. Similarly, *The Republic of Orissa: A Page from the Annals of the Twentieth Century* (1845) by Shoshee Chunder Dutt envisages a rebellion in the state of Orissa in 1916, eventually leading to the defeat of the British army and instating "a nation emerging from the chaos of ignorance and slavery, and hastening to occupy its orbit on the grand system of civilisation."[39] Thus, these stories imagine a sub-

34 First written as an entry to a college essay competition, to envisage India a hundred years hence, Kylas Chunder Dutt, "A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945" *Calcutta Literary Gazette* Volume III June (1835): 15–20.

35 For more on the civilizing mission, see Carey A. Watt and Michael Mann, *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia: From Improvement to Development* (New York: Anthem Press, 2011).

36 Alex Tickell, "Midnight's Ancestors," *Wasafiri* 21:3 (2006): 10–14, doi: 10.1080/02690050600918250.

37 Tickell, "Midnight's Ancestors," 13.

38 Excerpted from Paromita Sengupta, "The subaltern voice in Kylas Chunder Dutt's A Journal of Forty-eight Hours of the Year 1945," *Rupkatha Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 9 (2017): 220–234.

39 Tickell, "Midnight's Ancestors," 12.

versive future through a restoration of the India that was, and simultaneously oppose the British colonialism inflecting their present.

To the British colonizers a future without the empire could scarcely be imagined. Such a view is evident in pulp adventures of the time that tell of the "native" quarters of Bombay, meticulously described as "the unchanging East as it had been before British feet trod the Indian shores; as it still would be when – if ever – the white sahibs trod those shores no more."[40] In these accounts, the villains of colonial era fiction were Indians plotting to overthrow the British. For instance, in Talbot Mundy's thriller *The Caves of Terror* (1924), the scheming "Grey Mahatma" warns the British that though currently Indians live in "the *Kaliyug* – an age of darkness in which all Hind should lie at the feet of foreigners. And thus ye lie in the dust […] there is an end of night, and so there is an end to *Kaliyug*. Bide ye the time, and watch!"[41] The nationalist response to the British portrayal of India and Indians as backward and in need of civilising often took on this form of harking back to a golden age. According to Khair (2008) "the Indian English novel largely began as pulp fiction […] and set out to narrate a glorious past and, implicitly or explicitly, contrast it to the inglorious (colonial) present."[42] This narrative would exert an outsized influence on Indian literature, which hasn't abated despite the passing of nearly two centuries.

The Many Flavours of Dystopia

More recently this form of temporal and ideological critique has also appeared in novels, short stories, and graphic novels. While a comprehensive survey is beyond the scope of this chapter, some of these examples also illustrate a take up in dystopian and apocalyptic trends newly inflecting this narrative tradition. Indian science-fiction, in particular, has become a vehicle for the convergence of the temporal, the political, and the apocalyptic, displaying a notable pessimistic outlook on the future that is worth exploring. The lens I am taking here, contemplates wheth-

40 Frank Richards, "Harry Wharton and Co. in India," *The Magnet* 965 (1926): 6.

41 Talbot Mundy, *Caves of Terror: The Grey Mahatma* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1924), Chapter 1.

Mundy, now almost forgotten, popularised the "lost valley" sub-genre, (later made famous by James Hilton's *Lost Horizon*) which was based on real-life expeditions to find the source of the Brahmaputra.

42 Tabish Khair, "Indian Pulp Fiction in English: A Preliminary Overview from Dutt to Dé," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 43:3 (2008): 43, accessed April 24, 2023, doi:10.1177/0021989408095238.

er these dystopian trends are connected to a present darkening of the mood amongst liberal intellectuals, stemming from the unravelling of the post-Independence order in recent years. Since 2014 when the now ruling party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power, with Narendra Modi at its helm, the national project has been comprehensively rebooted and a new operating system, based on political Hinduism is being installed. Subsequent milestones such as the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) arrests of 2016,[43] and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests of 2019 have cemented these developments.

Originally, the national mood in the immediate years after independence was optimistic; it was a moment in history, "when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance," as Nehru put it in his speech to the Constituent Assembly in 1947.[44] There was a strong belief in the successful unfolding of the national project. Despite traumatic wars with China and Pakistan and a host of other crises, "the socio-political experience of India from the second half of the twentieth century is that of a decolonised developing country and hence, a sense of impending doom hardly comfortably sits with its literary sensibility."[45] Since those heady days, however, the mood has palpably darkened. Seventy-five years after Independence, "dystopia is the prevalent mode through which present-day novels from India grapple with the symptoms and conditions of 'millennial capitalism'."[46] The overthrowing of India's post-colonial national identity in favour of an emerging BJP style nationalism is tracked by Suparno Banerjee, who states that "while the futures imagined in the nineteenth century are avowedly anti-colonial and often utopian, postcolonial futures are more sombre, a mix of utopian impulses and dystopian anxieties."[47] He concludes that "since the late

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43 This student protest at the JNU would, eventually, form a kind of *Dolchstoßlegende,* a foundational element in the effort to paint a picture of the enemy within. For more, please see Mohinder Singh and Rajarshi Dasgupta, "Exceptionalising Democratic Dissent: a Study of the JNU Event and its Representations," *Postcolonial Studies* 22 (2019): 59–78.

44 The speech was given by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, at midnight, August 14/15, 1947, as India became independent. See Jawaharlal Nehru "India discovers herself again," full text of speech reproduced in *The Wire* (August 15, 2022), accessed May 16, 2023, https://thewire.in/history/india-at-75-jawaharlal-nehru-tryst-with-destiny-full-text.

45 Sagnik Yadaw and and Rupsa Chowdhury, "Resisting the Apocalypse: Representing the Anthropocene in Indian English Literature," *Post-colonial Interventions* IV (2019): 363, accessed April 24, 2023, https://postcolonialinterventions.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/june-2019-master.pdf.

46 Mrinalini Chakravorty, "Of Dystopias and Deliriums: The Millennial Novel in India," in *A History of the Indian Novel in English*, ed. Ulka Anjaria (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 267.

47 Suparno Banerjee, *Indian Science Fiction*, 110.

1990s dystopian writing becomes a dominant mode in Indian SF."[48] However, while the dystopian trend is quite noticeable, the end itself hasn't been imagined yet, and despite some scattered examples, for instance the recent proliferation of AI generated imagery via social media,[49] the post-apocalyptic/futuristic dystopia sub-genre is not yet fully established. Expressing a popular sentiment Tejaswy Nandury recently put it as follows, "the apocalyptic state of our country makes it very hard to consider that something worse could exist."[50]

Tracing an emerging sense of the apocalyptic in India's Anglophone science-fiction genre nevertheless, Appupen's debut graphic novel *Moonward* (2009) is set in a fictional "ultradystopian" universe called Halahala.[51] The name derives from the primordial poison that Lord Shiva consumes during the Churning of the Ocean of Milk. Since the appearance of *Moonward*, Appupen has published a series of graphic novels, all taking place in the same shared universe, and increasingly reflecting the pessimistic mood of his time. Similarly, there is a notable change in the critique these works propose, with earlier works focusing on consumer culture and media conformity,[52] while later entries in the series take on a more political-allegoric tone. The latest instalment, *The Snake and the Lotus* (2018), dubbed as a "posthuman Gothic" in a collapsed world,[53] is set in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, where "giant towers house machines that keep a diminished, diminutive human race alive on lotus milk."[54] In this batrachian vision, humanity has retreated into a final redoubt: the White City. There, subsisting on the milk of a mutated lotus plant, and divided into the ruling "Godling" and the undercaste

48 Suparno Banerjee, *Indian Science Fiction*, 48. See also Dawson Varughese, "Post-millennial Indian Dystopian Fiction: A Developing Canon of Precarity, (Im)purity and Ideas of Indian(ness), South Asia," *Journal of South Asian Studies* 44 (2021): 1055, doi:10.1080/00856401.2021.1972258.

49 For example, see Disha Bijolai, "Saicharan Shetty's Cyberpunk Indian Cities Explore A Dystopian Future Through AI Art," *Homegrown*, November 21, 2022, accessed May 2, 2023, https://homegrown.co.in/homegrown-creators/saicharan-shettys-cyberpunk-indian-cities-explore-a-dystopian-future-throughaiart.

50 Tejaswy Nandury "Why isn't the Apocalypse Imagined in Indian Popular Culture?" *Madras Courier,* April 28, 2020, accessed April 24, 2023, https://madrascourier.com/opinion/why-isnt-the-apocalypse-imagined-in-indian-popular-culture/.

51 Pen name of George Mathen.

52 See Jaideep Unudurti, "Meme not Found," *The Hindu Business Line*, November 7, 2014, accessed April 24, 2023, https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/blink/read/Meme-not-found/article20904897.ece.

53 Pramod Nayar, "Appupen's Posthuman Gothic: The Snake and the Lotus," *South Asian Review* 39:1–2 (2018): 70–85, doi:10.1080/02759527.2018.1515802.

54 Appupen, *The Snake and the Lotus* (Chennai: Context, 2018), blurb.

of "Greys," humans eke out their final hours as the planet spins into oblivion.[55] Encapsulating the dystopian trends outlined by Banerjee, Appupen's recent work imagines "present India as a place under the sway of various ideologies of domination – Hindu fundamentalism, global capitalist greed, gender oppression, technocracy and so on."[56] Appupen himself likens his political turn to the rise of the BJP, explaining that "since 2014 we've had an atmosphere of control, surveillance and fear in India,"[57] which he increasingly reworks in his fictions.

Similarly, the two anthologies of *The Gollancz Book of South Asian Science Fiction*, released in 2019 and 2021 respectively, comprise 60 short stories that offer a refracted glimpse at this new order and the political passions it stirs. In his introduction to the series, Tarun K. Saint asks whether it is a time for Indian/subcontinental science-fiction to step up and make itself heard, "amidst a climate of fear" and "at a time when there is a perceptible drift towards modes of irrationalism and bigotry, often with tacit state sanction."[58] While well-rehearsed themes of the genre such as natural catastrophes are regaining increasing relevance in a present marked by approaching climate disaster, there is also a noticeable turn to examining authoritarianism and, conjoined with this critique, an exploration of the political ferocity of memory. For instance, several stories feature characters who are in the security services and who are subject to panoptic surveillance, or both.[59] However rebellion asserts itself in the act of remembering. The authoritarian motif continues in *Volume 2*, published in 2021; however, the trend is more pronounced, with the "homogenization of identity," "media-stroked hyper-nationalism," and "religious fundamentalism" operating as fundamental themes driving political response to national developments in the science-fiction genre.

The preoccupation with control is further reflected in the ordering and re-ordering of visual space and architecture. In Arjun Raj Gaind's *The Ministry of Relevance* (2021) for example, a giant black tower called the Locus, "so utterly black

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55 See Jaideep Unudurti, "Dark Metal," *The Open Magazine*, June 14, 2018, accessed April, 21, 2023, https://openthemagazine.com/lounge/books/dark-metal/.

56 Suparno Banerjee, *Indian Science Fiction*, 158.

57 Appupen, in an interview with Debkumar Mitra, "'Rashtrayana: Trouble in Paradesh': Appupen is back with a savage satire on a totalitarian state," *Scroll*, December 23 2018, accessed April 24, 2023, https://scroll.in/article/906026/rashtrayana-trouble-in-paradesh-appupen-is-back-with-a-savage-satire-on-a-totalitarian-state.

58 Tarun K. Saint "Introduction," in *The Gollancz Book of South Asian Fiction Vol. 1*, ed. Tarun K. Saint (New Delhi: Hachette India, 2019), xv.

59 See Jaideep Unudurti, "Basking in a Terrible Light: Book Review of The Gollancz Book of South Asian Science Fiction, Vol. 2.," *The Hindu*, January 15, 2022, accessed April 24, 2023, https://www.thehindu.com/books/basking-in-a-terrible-light-jaideep-unudurti-reviews-the-gollancz-book-of-south-asian-science-fiction-volume-2/article38272826.ece.

that even light seems to bend around it,"[60] is built in Mumbai, replacing the old Mantralaya or government office building. The city is dominated by its 900 storey buildings, which as one of the character says, are "the perfect metaphor for all that has changed in Bombay since my childhood."[61] Summoned to the black tower, the protagonist Bhaskar must undergo a series of surreal tests, administered by robots, in order to prove his continued relevance to this new India. As he ascends and descends, from five floors below the surface to a glass cube at the very top, and finally above the clouds, his bewildering rise and fall mirrors the confusion of the *bhadralok* in this new configuration. At one point Bhaskar protests, "how can you just abrogate everything India stands for? It's unconstitutional." The robot answers, "the Constitution is obsolete. All that matters is our glorious leader's plan. He shall lead us into a golden age, a new satyuga." Contested space is at the centre of making visible these vexed negotiations of India's future.

At the same time, Sami A. Khan's *Biryani Bagh*,[62] introduces the politics of more recent memory to these debates in order to contour contemporary social critiques. Notably, the short story references the anti-CAA protests at Shaheen Bagh, predominantly led by Muslim women. The *bagh* is a locality that sits on a major highway connecting the capital with an industrial peri-urban hub. Starting in December of 2019, hundreds of Muslim women occupied a section of the highway, erected tents, and began a peaceful sit-in, blocking the road. The protests, along with the JNU incident mentioned earlier led to intensely polarised debate, and were foundational to the rise of state sanctioned Hindutva. These microclimates of rebellion are all but snuffed out in *Dimensions of Life under Fascism*[63] (2021) by Jayaprakash Satyamurthy, set in the "twenty-sixth year of MoSha Rajya," (an allusion to the Prime Minister/Home Minister duo of Modi and Amit Shah). As in the previous example, the dystopia is regulated by a system of social credit, and low rankings lead to citizens becoming mysteriously "flattened," rendered into inert two-dimensions, like cardboard cut-outs. The common thread in all these stories is that the plot points are torn out of today's headlines and channels the anxieties and apprehensions that trouble Indian liberal intellectuals.

Finally, *Chosen Spirits* (2020) by Samit Basu is set in Delhi in 2030 and features corporate espionage, feuding oligarchs, illegal medical tech, and hostile takeovers,

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60 Arjun R. Gaind, "Ministry of Relevance," in *The Gollancz Book of South Asian Fiction Vol. 2,* ed. Tarun K. Saint (New Delhi: Hachette India, 2021), 69.

61 Arjun R. Gaind, "Ministry of Relevance," 69.

62 Sami A. Khan, "Biryani Bagh," in *The Gollancz Book of South Asian Fiction Vol. 2,* ed. Tarun K. Saint (New Delhi: Hachette India, 2021), 350.

63 Jayaprakash Satyamurthy, "Dimensions of Life under Fascism," in *The Gollancz Book of South Asian Fiction Vol. 2,* ed. Tarun K. Saint (New Delhi: Hachette India, 2021), 86.

all under the auspices of an authoritarian take over. Firmly, and somewhat uniquely, anchored in the cyberpunk genre, the story follows Bijoyini "Joey" Roy, a 25-year-old "Associate Reality Controller" of something called the Flow, a kind of AR social media influencer. Joey's life choices are shaped by her childhood experiences, i. e. our present and its political climates. For example, as a teenager she attends the anti-CAA protests, recollecting that her "memories of those days are happy and hopeful, full of an energy and a sense of belonging she hasn't felt in years."[64] Joey meets Rudra, the dispossessed scion of a business house and soon they are plunged into a vortex of corruption and repression. Basu's cyberpunk milieu is rooted in Indian culture centring on a middle-class family, complete with domestic help and other comforts, facing the usual problems from aging parents, to a younger brother who isn't "settled"[65] (rather than the lone, usually male, protagonist of its Western counterpart). In any case, the novel makes full use of the temporal vantage point that science-fiction enables, utilising the present as a snapshot of the character's past. Crucially, this temporal junction is referred to as the "years not to be discussed," precisely because Joey's attendance at the Shaheen Bagh protests, "now exists only in memory."[66] The implication is that the country has been taken over by the Hindutva movement, who succeeded in fully implementing their agenda – although this is never explicitly mentioned. Similarly JNU has casually been demolished and replaced by a giant mall. Returning to the apocalyptic moment of present India, Basu explains that he did not actually set out to write a dystopian novel; however, "in India it's very hard to feel the kind of techno-utopian joy writers in the west are still capable of."[67] Notably this change of political mood in post BJP India is also somewhat a symptom of the breaking down of class boundaries. As Basu further puts it, "I think the mood has possibly always been sour, depending on what section of the population you're in, but the sourness has now escalated to the point where it's swallowed up even the most privileged sections of society."[68]

64 Samit Basu, *Chosen Spirits* (New Delhi: Simon & Schuster, 2020), 4.

65 See Jaideep Unudurti, "Joey and the Guardians of the Data Galaxy: Review of *Chosen Spirits*, by Samit Basu," *The Hindu*, June 13, 2020, accessed April 24, 2023, https://www.thehindu.com/books/basking-in-a-terrible-light-jaideep-unudurti-reviews-the-gollancz-book-of-south-asian-science-fiction-volume-2/article38272826.ece.

66 Samit Basu, *Chosen Spirits*, 5.

67 Samit Basu, e-mail message to author, April 21, 2022

68 Samit Basu, e-mail message to author, April 21, 2022

There is a sourness to this insight about the consequences of BJP's populism from above.[69] Post-independence elite were anglophile, liberal, and secular. They had studied in English-speaking schools, their parents were either landowning families, or served the British in the judiciary, military, or bureaucracy. Their grip over the media, or, more precisely, the way official history is written via film and television (through the censor board, and the state television channel) had caused deep resentment within right-wing circles. And now it is this elite, which the BJP derisively lumps as the "Khan Market gang" to refer to the upscale shopping area in Delhi, that is the main target of an emerging nationalist discourse rooted in the past. It is, then, no coincidence that all the writers mentioned here, have gone on record to single out the year 2014 as the focal point shaping their fictional futures and present critiques.

The Serpent of History

Much of the science-fiction culture emerging from this vector of thinking also caters to a remorseful reflexivity about missing initiatives and alternatives that could have prevented the political course of the present. Varun Thomas Mathew's novel *The Black Dwarves of the Good Little Bay* (2019), for example, is set in Mumbai in 2040, on the eve of a momentous election.[70] An unspecified ecological catastrophe has occurred, after which the "earth rebelled," and the monsoons have ceased. A charismatic local politician steps up and puts forward a project that eventually catapults him to power. He masterminds the construction of a giant dome on stilts, raised over the parched ruins of Mumbai – the Bombadrome – creating the ultimate gated community in the sky. The story is told through an insider, with the telling name of "Convent Godse,"[71] a government bureaucrat looking back with regret at what he could have done to change this trajectory, which essentially refers to the replacement of India's pluralistic democracy with a one-party system in the form of an electoral autocracy. In many ways, this aligns with the ongoing soul-searching of liberal intellectuals at the helm of India's current direction, repeatedly contemplating whether or not they could and should have intervened more forcefully.

69 See also Christophe Jaffrelot, *Modi's India: The Rise of Ethnic Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).

70 Varun Thomas Mathew, *Black Dwarves of the Good Little Bay* (Gurugram: Hachette India, 2019). *Bom Bahia* or the "good little bay," was the name of the Portuguese settlement that would later grow into Bombay.

71 Nathuram Godse was the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi, and once vilified, is now the focus of Hindutva attempts to rehabilitate his image.

The story spans from 2005, the beginning of Godse's career as a civil servant, to 2040 when he is on the verge of retirement. Looking back at the elections twenty years earlier, at the time before the building of the "drome," Godse abets the rise of Ankur Lal Shinde, known as Alas, a scion of a political dynasty. The pre-Bombadrome era sees the city racked with a variety of crises, with an anarchic art collective causing havoc, the titular Kala Buana (or Black Dwarves). Alas's party and its founder have some similarities to Bal Thackeray, and his Shiv Sena, which was a major force for Hindu assertion, frequently resorted to street violence, before coming to power electorally. The description of the Bombadrome is visually reminiscent of Parikshit's tower,[72] but, as in the legend, the worm always finds a way. Inside this colossal megastructure, order reigns, as the narrator explains, via an exercise of power that splits the future from its past. "Indians are controlled by their history,"[73] Godse maintains, effectively asserting that the Bombadrome hinges on its ability to divide and conquer along temporal means. Disconnecting its people from their past, it emerges as "a city that was severed from the land and air and environment, a place that had no past, and whose present and future were one and the same."[74] Put simply, the Bombadrome is an attempt to form a kind of stasis, to stop the endless rise and fall, to freeze the ever-turning wheel of the Yugas and to keep the serpent of history away. In this vein, the Bombadrome also removes caste surnames, replacing them with a unique numeric code so each generation begins life without the burden and privilege of lineage.

The mix of high technology and social critique, rooted in Indian mythology is a typical formulation of the genre. It is possible that Indian speculative fiction will continue to follow its own path, with a notable propensity for philosophically speculative and fable-like qualities. Read in this way, the dystopian turn emerges with the rise of the BJP,[75] marking a distinct response to the turbulences that followed. These books thus allude to the last stand of the Nehruvian liberal way of life, and acknowledge a particular kind of "regret for past choices that were made collectively as a people" and which "let terrible things happen in their country without trying to do something about it."[76] The last stand of the old liberal, secular national

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72 After being cursed by a sage, to die by snakebite, King Pariksit looks for a way out. His ministers build a palace high atop a huge pillar with only one entry. However, the colossal cobra Taksaka, assumes the form of a worm in a fruit and gains entry and then growing to his real size, kills the king.

73 Mathew, *Black Dwarves,* 90.

74 Mathew, *Black Dwarves*, 92.

75 Varun Thomas Mathew in an interview with Nidhi Verma, *Platform*, 2023, accessed April 25, 2023, https://www.platform-mag.com/literature/varun-thomas-mathew.html.

76 Mathew and Verma, *Platform.*

order, is consequently overwhelmed by a feeling of creeping dystopia, which has now become pervasive as the next rising cycle comes into view. Entering what the government now calls *Amrit Kaal*,[77] a term from Vedic astrology, which refers to the nectar of immortality obtained and consumed by the Gods after the Churning of the Ocean of Milk, the elixir that has been preceded by Halahala is deemed to be poisonous at a time of auspicious conjunctions, or India's ascendance.

The Years of Immortal Nectar

As dystopias predominate India's science-fiction genre, we also witness the rise of the highly influential imaginary that has been dubbed "techno-Vedic."[78] The progenitor of this development was the proposed graphic novel *18 Days* by writer Grant Morrison and artist Mukesh Singh. An adaptation of the *Mahabharata*, the novel's title refers to the length of the *Kurukshetra* battle. Originally it was envisaged as the beginning of a cinematic universe with comics, animation, and films but in the end, only the concept art book was released. *18 Days* was created by Virgin Comics which was founded in 2006 as the brainchild of new-age guru Deepak Chopra and his son Gotham Chopra, and with investment from Richard Branson as well as creative input from director Shekhar Kapur. The combination of these people is relevant in so far as the ambition of this conspicuous group was almost messianic: For example, Chopra stated that "we will forge new mythologies bringing together East and West," while Kapur said "[c]omic book characters – traditional and digital – are the new cult, the new religion. India's 600 million teenagers are now at the forefront of the creation of these new Gods."[79] The goal was to replicate what anime/manga had done in the American market vis-a-vis Japanese culture by

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77 Prime Minister Modi announced *Amrit Kaal*, on the occasion of the seventy-fifth year of Indian independence, as a period of twenty-five years to "get back what our society has lost in hundreds of years of slavery;" describing it as the "culmination of hard work, sacrifice and austerity." Amrit Kaal, in Vedic astrology, is a critical window of twenty-five years, when the gates of greater pleasure open for both human beings and demi-gods alike. See: "The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi addressed the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 75th Independence Day," *PIB Delhi*, August 15, 2021, accessed April 25, 2023, https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1746070.

78 See Betwa Sharma, "Batman Comics Writer Renovates India's Ancient Epic," *HuffPost India,* August 25, 2010, accessed April 25, 2023, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/batman-comics-writer-reno_b_691429.

79 See Virgin Comics Press Release, in "Virgin partnered for Comics," *Hindustan Times,* January 10, 2006, accessed May 10, 2023. https://www.hindustantimes.com/books/virgin-partnered-for-comics/story-8BFvf6Db4a7u8eXJ1gBHaO.html.

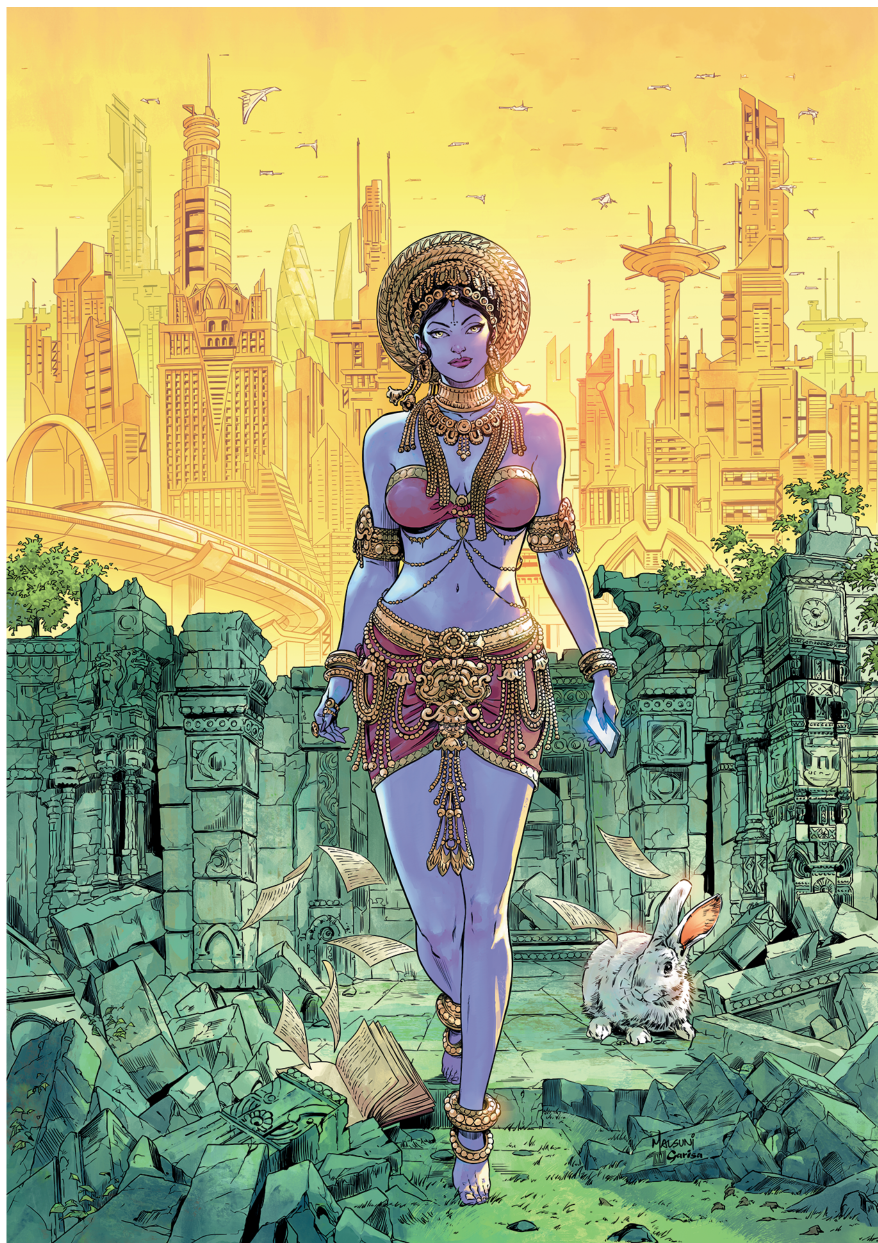

Figure 1: The Lady with the Mirror, cover of *Bangalore: A Graphic Novel*, published by Syenagiri (2017) reproduced by permission of the author and artist: Abhishek Malsuni.

getting American consumers to develop a taste for this fusion of Indian sensibility and western pop culture, with *18 Days* advancing as the keystone to this new universe.

Morrison, a Scottish-born writer, had acquired acclaim in the 1990s with edgy work within the mainstream such as *Doom Patrol* (1987–1993) and *Arkham Asylum* (1989).[80] A long-time interest in Eastern philosophy sparked by a mystical experience in Kathmandu meant he was highly attracted to adapting the Mahabharata.[81] After seeing Singh's work on Shekhar Kapurs's *Devi* (2006), "Grant wanted to work on Mahabharata on a huge scale, on a cosmic scale."[82] The project was billed by Morrison as a "psychedelic *Lord of the Rings* with *Star Wars* technology."[83] Accordingly, the conceptual art is filled with colossal war machines, high energy superweapons, and mechanoid dinosaurs, amongst other wonders. We see fierce women warriors, riding armoured triceratops, charge into battle; *Kaurava* soldiers storming the *Pandava* positions, while hunkering behind protective light shields, with both sides deploying iridescent particle weapons that set the sky ablaze and heroes in bejewelled armour directing the battle through holographic screens. Singh also added his own sensibility, which led Morrison to coin the term "Vedicpunk."

In describing this world, Morrison creates a "mythic poetic realm," where everything exists on a "science-mythic" scale. This "India of science-fiction dreams" is deliberately placed in stark contrast to the epoch of current turbulences:

> Our world of Bharat is a place of incredible art and technology. They live in immense dream palaces on soaring mountaintops. They fly unbelievable vimana flying machines – like flying saucers designed and built by artisans. The armour and vehicles they use look like the kind of thing you'd expect from a culture more glorious than anything we in the degraded Kali Yuga could aspire to.[84]

While the *Kurukshetra* takes place right at the terminus of the *Dvapara Yuga*, the action in the graphic novel jumps backward to a kind of "origin story," familiar to

80 Doom Patrol is an ongoing superhero series, which began in 1963; 1987–1993 were the years of Morrison's run.

81 For more, see: Andrew Tancredi Marrone, "Alien Visions in Kathmandu: Grant Morrison on Drugs, Magic and South Asian Spirituality" (paper presented at the Seventh Biannual ESSWE conference, University of Amsterdam, July 2–4, 2019).

82 Mukesh Singh, Based on e-mail message and Skype interview with author, April 11, 2021.

83 Grant Morrison, "Grant Morrison's 18 Days – An Epic Retelling Of The Mahbharata As CGI Drama," production notes in *Bleeding Cool* August 10, 2009, accessed May 10, 2023, https://bleedingcool.com/comics/recent-updates/grant-morrisons-18-days/.

84 Grant Morrison and Mukesh Singh, *18 Days* (Chennai: Westland/Liquid Comics, 2013), 8.

fans of the superhero genre. However, this prequel reaches back across eons and is largely informed by Singh's overall design philosophy. For example, in the first age, or Satya Yuga, humans could control matter purely through their minds,[85] averting the need for any interface, by tapping into the "unified field energy." Consequently, Singh's art envisions colossal laboratories drawn with the "atmosphere of a temple" and with "Vedic machines" running in the background.[86] But as the ages progress, more and more technological tools are needed to compensate for the gradual degradation of spirit and body. By the eve of *Kurukshetra*, "at end of the First Age;" the artwork takes a decidedly apocalyptic tone, with prevalent images of mass destruction and the implications that post-war, "civilization starts again in the next Yuga" taking centre stage. Singh is clear that the structure was "absolutely" influenced by cyclical time, which is "so much part of our Indian psyche – I think its genetic," as he puts it. For a mechanism to restart the cycle, Singh uses black holes as instruments, controlled by Lord Brahma, who is envisioned as an "infinite scientist in His infinite lab." One of his most striking features is that he is *Svayambhu* or Self-created; he is able to use singularities[87] to reconcile "super-science and religion," and to blur the distinction of "where creation starts and the creator begins."

The mix of science and myth is exemplified by Singh building up a scene that takes place in the Ashram of Sage Markandeya. Ashrams are usually depicted in a pastoral way, with cows and students gathered amidst fields and huts. In Singh's rendering, this delightful setting is instead transformed. Now the sage himself is a colossal machine, a calculator, performing endless Vedic computations. According to the puranas, the sage is the sole survivor of a mahapralaya,[88] the pivotal witness to the end of the earlier age, who captures and stores that knowledge. The episode is a font of apocalyptic imagery or "dystopian futurism, epitomized by the sage Mārkaṇḍeya's account, in [...] the kali-yuga – the fourth and most degraded epoch of cosmic time – although this dismal future, toward which the events of the epic are understood to be inexorably propelling the world, is also simulta-

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85 Singh's premise was that the "Indian approach" would be of, "creating through thought," a kind of telekinesis.

86 Based on personal interviews, which formed the basis for my paper, "Gods and Monsters: Indian Mythological Comics in a Time of Change" (presented online at the Joint Conference of the International Graphic Novel & Comics and the International *Bande Dessinée* Society, University of Cambridge, June 21–25 June, 2021).

87 Based on the theory that the universe was born in a black hole, see for instance Nikodem J. Popławski, "Radial motion into an Einstein–Rosen bridge," *Physics Letters B* 687 (2010): 110–113.

88 A super-dissolution at the end of a Kalpa.

neously the past of an ever-recurring cycle."[89] In Singh's Vedicpunk version, Markandeya becomes "the last engine of prophecy"[90] – an engine from the first age, a machine "with tendrils through space and time." The Sage survives as information, as a transhumanist computation running on a colossal computer. His form itself is made up of gears, much like the cogs of a clock – a deliberate choice – to evoke the idea of the *Kalachakra* as well as the famous opening of the *Mahabharata* televisions serial when Time himself speaks out of the void, pictured as a wheel rotating in the void.

Singh's art marks a radical break with the aesthetic of Raja Ravi Varma[91] which dominates popular Hindu devotional art as well as Indian comics.[92] Singh agrees that Varma brought "realism into mythology" but also reflects on an "unspoken dissatisfaction" with the portrayal of these characters. To Singh this tension grew out of an "aspirational Indian middle-class" milieu, in which he "always felt our gods were too distant, they were kept too distant from us." In other words, Singh's Vedicpunk look captures the spirit of the times, with its combination of high technology imageries joined with scenes from traditional epics. His art thereby forms the visual equivalent of the artistic pattern that Khan describes as follows: "Indian writers [...] often appropriate 'semantic' elements from 'western' SF but rearrange them in a 'syntax' that reads as radically different from SF being produced in the United States."[93] Despite being published as a concept art book format only, the striking images had a profound and long afterlife on the internet. Ultimately, this new grammar of Indian science-fiction became the pillar for a slew of mythological films and graphic novels.[94]

Conclusion

The current political dispensation derives its legitimacy not from the common struggle against the British but from a claim to free Hindus from a thousand

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89 Lutgendorf, "A Long Time Ago," 365.

90 Mukesh Singh, e-mail message and Skype interview with author, April 11, 2021.

91 Raja Ravi Varma, (1848–1906) popularly known as "the man who gave the Gods a face" whose style, blending European and Tanjore art, became definitive due to the technology-driven proliferation of popular art in the nineteenth century, through lithographs and calendars.

92 See Karline McLain, *India's Immortal Comic Books: Gods, Kings, and Other Heroes* (Indiana University Press, 2009).

93 Sami A Khan, *Star Warriors of the Modern Raj: Materiality, Mythology and Technology of Indian Science Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2021), 14.

94 *The Immortal Ashwatthama*, *The Kaurava Empire* graphic novel series Disney's Mahabharata, and the forthcoming big-budget film *Kalki* 2898 AD are all examples of said influence.

years of Islamic rule.[95] In such a worldview, the long dark night of time is coming to an end, and a return to the golden age of Hindu civilisation is at hand – a restoration that will come with an assurance that "the apparent disorder of history will finally affirm order."[96] Rakesh Batabyal explains that: "For the Sangh and its intellectual mentors, India (Bharat) had always existed as a 'Hindu nation', which was vanquished by foreign marauders, mostly Muslims, and the only duty left was to re-establish that Hindu nation once the British left India."[97] These are then hardly dystopic times, but rather exhilarating days when an old order is overthrown, and a new one arises. *Kali Yug* is ending, and a new upward cycle is about to start. This yearning for the future with respect to the past is summed up by the stylistic blends in genres such as Vedicpunk, with its mashup of myth and high-technology. While this will be the grand narrative for the foreseeable future, there will likely also be a renewed interest in dystopian narratives which traditionally grow best on authoritarian soil. The adherents of political Hinduism are elated by the prospect of overcoming humiliation and defeat with the end of the current cycle yearning for the return of the lost Golden Vedic Age. Proponents of the Nehruvian consensus, on the other hand, are gripped by a feeling of creeping dystopia, longing for the secular, modern India that was promised in 1947. On both sides, there is consensus, that this is yuganta, with the years resounding to the death-rattle of the old epoch and the birth cries of the new.

Looking ahead, however, a far more significant trend could well be forming on the horizon: the impact of climate change is bound to dominate cultural production in the coming years and beyond. In one sense the storm is already here. For instance, the great heatwave of May 2022 exposed more than a billion people in the sub-continent to extreme temperatures. According to the IPCC Working Group's 2022 report, Mumbai is at high risk of severe flooding and sea-level rise while several cities including Chennai are approaching dangerous levels of heat and humidity. This is merely the tip of a fast-melting iceberg. The Indian coastal mega-cities will have a population exceeding 850 million by 2050; they are at extreme risk to climate precarity. Similarly, changes in rainfall patterns could lead

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95 "Almost for 1000 to 1200 years we were slaves," from a landmark speech given by Prime Minister Modi, at Madison Square Garden, New York, 2014, https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=136737.

96 Joseph Dewey, "Visions of after the end: A history and theory of the post-apocalyptic genre in literature and film" (PhD diss., University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, 2017).

97 Rakesh Batabyal, "The Spectre of an Ideological State," *Frontline* January 28, 2022, accessed April 25, 2023, https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/hindutva-ugly-face-evokes-the-spectre-of-an-ideological-state/article38195447.ece.

to rice production dropping between 10–30 %, causing mega-famines and triggering refugee movements on a scale unknown in human history.

If the same impulses of drawing on the well of the past persist, we could well see the emergence of a true pralayic imaginary to match this new age. As mentioned before, the epics and Puranas are rife with depictions of extreme weather events, forming an inexhaustible library.[98] There is already a burgeoning interest, of scribbling in the margins;[99] of trying to locate catastrophic nature events in the past, such as the 4.2 Kiloyear Event, and matching them with puranic descriptions of *yuga* transitions.[100] These developments have only progressed into predictions that further try to reconcile climate science and puranic events. Amitav Ghosh has coined the term *Great Derangement* (2016), which McKenzie Wark describes as a "time when art and literature concealed rather than articulated the nature of the times and the time of nature."[101] And yet theorists such as McKenzie Wark have repeatedly proclaimed that "[c]limate change exceeds what the form of the bourgeois novel can express."[102] The question remains then, what new forms could emerge in this wrack of time? In one version of answering this query, India will turn into a sub-continent sized laboratory of ideas, of survival strategies, and of cautionary tales, providing endless resources for narrative and imagination. Combining myth and actuality, Indian science-fiction is apt at witnessing this cosmic deluge unfolding. The sense of vertigo, of seeing our own end, this fractal dissolution, containing ends of the worlds, and worlds without end, where we witness our own ending, even as we write it, shall perhaps define the next circle of time.

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98 *Markandeya Discovers Krishna on the Peepal Leaf,* c. 1770–1780, India, artist unknown, https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/54835.

99 By this I mean everything from WhatsApp forwards to comments on YouTube videos.

100 For example, see Bebhu Dev Misra, "The end of the Kali Yuga in 2025: Unraveling the mysteries of the Yuga Cycle," *Ancient Inquiries*, July 15, 2012, accessed May 17, 2023, https://www.bibhudevmisra.com/2012/07/end-of-kali-yuga-in-2025-unraveling.html.

101 McKenzie Wark, "On the Obsolescence of the Bourgeois Novel in the Anthropocene," *Versobooks Blog,* August 16th 2017. See Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (New Delhi: Penguin Books Limited, 2016).

102 McKenzie Wark, "On the Obsolescence of the Bourgeois Novel in the Anthropocene," *Versobooks Blog,* August 16th 2017, https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3356-on-the-obsolescence-of-the-bourgeois-novel-in-the-anthropocene

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Part 4: **Action, Activism, Advocacy**

Bruna Della Torre

The Cross and the Pink Shotgun: Apocalypse and the Antifeminist Movement in Bolsonaro's Brazil

Someone who is unable to see anything ahead of them and does not want the social foundation to change really has no alternative but, like Richard Wagner's Wotan, to say, 'Do you know what Wotan wants? The end.' This person, from the perspective of their own social situation, longs for demise – though not the demise of their own group, as far as possible, the demise of all.

Theodor W. Adorno, Aspects of the New Right-Wing Extremism

In 2018, Jair Messias Bolsonaro, a low-profile far-right congressman, did the unimaginable. He won the elections with no real party support, little TV coverage, and very modest campaign funding. His secret weapon: social media. As in many other countries where neofascist politicians were elected, this digital infrastructure acted as a mass party by advertising all the products the Right has offered the world in the last few years: violence, resentment, negationism. Misogyny was at the core of this propaganda. The phantasmatic threat of the destruction of the family and gendered structures destabilized the ontological security guaranteed by a society where everyone had their place. Bolsonaro's propaganda operates in a double way: on the one hand, it mobilizes diffuse misogynistic affects already present in the social body; on the other hand, it attributes to feminism the primary responsibility for accelerating the decline of the social order. The disintegration of this given order is not portrayed as the end of a specific order (patriarchal, capitalist, peripheral, authoritarian) but as the end of any possible order.

Bolsonaro was elected in the context of the murder of the Black, lesbian, and left-wing politician Marielle Franco (whose memory was demeaned by several of his supporters) and a series of highly misogynistic and criminal statements that ranged from a homage to the torturer Carlos Brilhante Ustra – eponymously and self-declared "the terror of Dilma Rousseff"[1] – to the disqualification of public policies connected to gender and sexuality.

1 Ustra was a colonel responsible for torturing hundreds of people during the Dictatorship (1964–1985), including Dilma Rousseff, former president of Brazil (2010–2016) and, at the time, a member of the armed struggle. Ustra was famous for applying sexual torture to his victims (he used to insert rats into women's vaginas) and bring in young children to witness the torture of their naked mothers.

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Two of the main social media clips propagated by Bolsonaro's supporters that went viral at the time of the elections contained extremely violent behavior towards women. In the first, he turns to congresswoman Maria do Rosário, who had confronted him about his vicious discourse, and says loud and clear: "I would not rape you because you are too ugly." This video circulated widely on social media, with the chorus of "Turn Down for What" by DJ Snake and American Lil Jon as its soundtrack. In the second video, a reporter asks Bolsonaro about his children, and he replies: "I have four sons. The fifth time, I slipped [dei uma fraquejada] and had a girl."[2] He had gone on record stating that, during his campaign, he would not hire women if he were a businessman because maternity leave is a burden on corporations.

With this history haunting him, it would be easy to imagine that not a single woman would cast her ballot to such a candidate. Nevertheless, 42 % of women constituents voted for him in 2018. Undoubtedly, the propaganda that elected Jair Bolsonaro found resonance in the misogyny, white supremacism, and homophobia already present in the Brazilian population. As has already been stated by the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, democracy is not only at risk due to outside threats.[3] Its "corrosion from within" is far more dangerous and worrisome.

In 2022 I was part of a group of activists that organized nation-wide events in favelas and working-class neighborhoods to convince constituents not to cast their ballots for Bolsonaro. This movement was called Switch a Vote. Bolsonaro's propaganda had mobilized a myriad of preposterous lies, the most widely circulated of which was that the Worker's Party would distribute baby bottles with a penis-shaped tip to spread an alleged "homosexual dictatorship" (memes of which went viral on social media). When I would ask Bolsonaro's supporters why they would vote for him, the first issue was the baby bottle. Any attempt to convince them otherwise was futile. Although arguments regarding Bolsonaro's pro-gun agenda and his supposedly anti-corruption outline were also brought up, "fake news" was always the most prominent subject in our conversations. However, at that moment in Brazil, with the Switch a Vote movement underway in São Paulo, when we questioned women about Bolsonaro's machismo, quoting his speeches about the "weight" of maternity leave for employers, for example, we received both in wealthy and impoverished neighborhoods the same answer: "he is being playful," and "he has no bad intentions, he is just kidding." There was, in this

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2 Translations are the author's

3 Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) 90.

case, no militant antifeminism led by women, although misogyny and the struggle against "gender ideology" were central to the campaign.

After four years, Bolsonaro's popularity among women dropped to around 30 %. At that point, his supporters started to recruit women to take the lead in their propaganda. These women became the protagonists of an antifeminist movement that grows stronger every day in Brazil. For anyone interested in critically understanding this phenomenon, it is impossible not to ask: how can a sector directly and systematically attacked by Bolsonaro support his candidacy? How can women engage in an antifeminist movement? This is certainly nothing new. Marjorie Taylor Green fulfills the same role in the United States. The Brazilian extreme Right has systematically copied the strategies of Trumpism. Nevertheless, this movement imposes many challenges to the critical understanding of social reality in Brazil.

So, instead of denouncing Bolsonaro's misogyny and engaging in the Sisyphus task of denying every single piece of fake news related to Bolsonaro and his administration,[4] this chapter aims to reflect on some changes that the propaganda aimed at women in Brazil has undergone in the last year and develop some exploratory hypotheses about its role in building an antifeminist movement led by women in the country. The apocalypse is omnipresent in this discourse, both socially and religiously precisely because this propaganda appeals to the fear of losing one's place in a constantly changing world and it insufflates the desire for destruction of a social order seen as hypocritical and partial. Resorting to a religious imaginary, Bolsonaro condemns the existing order of Babylon; the evil kingdom of feminism, socialism, gender ideology, and miscegenation. The reference to the apocalypse is so immediate that Bolsonaro frequently wears a bracelet with the inscription "apocalypse 12:11." By announcing the end of a world – a white, heterosexual, religious, and male dominated capitalist order – this discourse creates scape goats (such as gender ideology) and mobilizes, at the same time, in strange dialectics, the conservative desire for the "old" order and the apocalyptic impulse of those betrayed by the promises of democracy and enlightenment. As Wendy Brown states:

> There is a form of nihilism shaped by the waning of a kind of social dominance or the waning social dominance of a historical kind. To the extent that this type finds itself in a world emptied not only of meaning but of its own place, far from going gently into the night, it turns

4 As Joseph Vogl has stressed, social networks and their platform model circumvent the effect the truth was once able to have on politics. Joseph Vogl, *Kapital und Ressentiment: Eine kurze Theorie der Gegenwart* (München: C.H. Beck, 2021), 142.

> toward the apocalypse. If white men cannot own democracy, then there will be no democracy at all. If white men cannot dominate the planet, then there will be no planet.[5]

This Wotanic impulse of self-destruction also has a social aspect in a peripheral country like Brazil where capitalism shows its true war-face against the poor; the apocalypse takes the form of a social uprising. The "good women" of the country, the women of God, then, take it upon themselves to prevent this catastrophe.

Spinmeisters

"Bolsonaro is the 'pinkest' president in Brazil's history." This is just one of the many forms of propaganda aimed at women circulating on right-wing networks in Brazil in 2022. This particular phrase came from Damares Alves, former Minister for Women, Family, and Human Rights who was recently elected for the Senate and has an eight-year mandate ahead of her.[6] In addition to this nonsense,[7] she recently suggested in her Instagram profile that the Left and the Workers' Party spread leaflets encouraging child masturbation and the use of crack cocaine and distributed books advocating for incest between fathers and daughters. Shortly after she was elected, she gave a speech in Goiânia saying that one of the main problems in Brazil was pedophilia and that people were kidnaping children of three or four years old, taking out their teeth (for them to practice oral sex) and feeding them only with liquids (for them to practice anal sex). The public ministry did not find a single case with these characteristics being investigated in Brazil. Alves is the main actor responsible within Bolsonaro's entourage for spreading

5 Wendy Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019) 220.

6 Damares Alves is also an evangelical pastor who has been fighting the implementation of reproductive rights for over a decade. She tried to prevent a ten-year-old girl who was raped from getting an abortion (predicated in this case by Brazilian law) by offering benefits to the family if they kept the fetus and by pressuring local authorities to deny the abortion. Over the years, Alves defended the "Estatuto do Nascituro," a project archived in 2007 that criminalizes abortion in all situations. She also proposed a project known as "the rape pension": an 18-year pension for women who fell pregnant because of rape that would "allow" them to raise their children.

7 The budget to fight violence against women in 2022 is three times smaller compared to 2020. This happened even though, according to the Public Security Forum (Fórum de Segurança Pública), one in every four Brazilian women (24.4 %) over 16 years old claims to have suffered some violence or aggression during the COVID-19 pandemic. That means roughly 17 million women have endured physical, psychological, or sexual violence in this period. Bolsonaro revised and relaxed many gun-control laws in Brazil, which has also, subsequently, increased violence against women.

the conservative concept of family that characterizes Bolsonarism[8] and for transforming religion into a political weapon, whose precedent in the country's history is comparable only, perhaps, to the period of colonization.

Despite her lively and vocal support for Bolsonaro, Alves and Michelle Bolsonaro, the country's First Lady (who is also an evangelical pastor), challenged the president. At least, that is how Bolsonaro's supporters broadcasted the news on their social media. Alves ran for Senate with the support of the president's wife against former minister Flávia Arruda, the candidate chosen by Bolsonaro to run for his party, PL, the Liberal Party (*nota bene:* there is nothing liberal about this party). In 2018, apart from Damares Alves, no woman was prominent in Bolsonaro's campaign, not even Michelle Bolsonaro, who, in 2022, campaigned alongside her husband and was considered a central figure for a possible reelection, because of her importance to evangelical (female) constituents. This new turn of Bolsonaro's propaganda is undoubtedly a reaction to the growth of feminism in Brazilian society, threatening his popularity especially among younger women. In this context, the advertising strategy had to change. Examples abound.

A photo of the First Lady on a stage with the Brazilian flag hanging on her shoulders spread like wildfire on social media. Overhead, the slogan: "feminists do not know, but this woman expresses what empowerment is." Empowerment was not part of this specific form of propaganda until very recently. Unlike any other political group, the far-right masters the art of "spinning," that is, twisting the current meaning of words associated with specific contexts. "Empowerment," a word with a long and complex history in feminism, is now on the far-right's lips. They destroy communication by emptying the content of language, which, thus, becomes powerless from a political perspective.

To try to circumvent Bolsonaro's aforementioned line that his daughter, Laura, was the result of a "slip," a photo of the child (it is not clear if authorized by the president himself) circulated in Bolsonaro support groups on Instagram. Wearing a military uniform, his daughter appears with the caption: "Laurinha Bolsonaro: be sure to attend the celebrations of September 7." On this date, Brazil celebrates its independence from Portugal, and Bolsonaro paraded in Brasília, displaying the army's support for his government.

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8 "Bolsonarism" is how Brazilian and non-Brazilian scholars and members of the press are referring to the reactionary movement connected to Jair Messias Bolsonaro. As with Trumpism, Bolsonarism might not be the best name for the harmful politics that took over Brazil since it personalizes the phenomenon and obliterates its international character. Nevertheless, for the account of this analysis that concentrates on the propaganda of Bolsonaro and his supporters, and for lack of a better name, the chapter will employ it.

However, this is not a nod to feminism on the part of Bolsonaro's campaign, even though this propaganda is aimed at and made by women. The situation is more complex than this. Bolsonaro continues to be truculent with women; especially as the loyalty of part of his electorate depends on it. His son, Eduardo Bolsonaro, a congressman, follows his father's example and has appeared in several posts on his social networks with a t-shirt in which the following transphobic phrase appears: "A Man is not a Woman." The Bolsonarist propaganda does not move in the direction of liberal feminism or what Nancy Fraser termed "progressive neoliberalism."[9] On the contrary, they are enrolling women in the backlash against the growth of feminism in Latin America. That is why "empowered" anti-feminism confronts the very idea of feminism.

The deceit produced by the feminist movement (always presented in a one-dimensional way, without the plurality that characterizes it) has become one of the favorite subjects of the YouTube channel *Brasil Paralelo*, one of the largest far-right platforms in operation in Brazil. Between 2020 and 2021, according to an article published by *Intercept Brasil* on December 18, 2021, the company was the biggest promoter of social and political ads on Facebook. Among them was a post that associated Simone de Beauvoir with pedophilia. The channel is also a champion of political advertisment on Google, according to an article published by *Folha de São Paulo* on June 23, 2022. On this channel, videos and debates denounce "the hidden face of feminism," a movement that allegedly wants to pervert the natural order of things and promote the murder of babies. Women announced as experts on the subject, always surrounded by books, are invited to deny the "myths" linked to the feminist movement.

One of the main targets is the Brazilian educational "system," which, supposedly taken over by the Left, was responsible for ripping young women from their religious roots. Bolsonarism mobilizes the word "system" as National Socialism once did. In the same way that this word invariably referred, according to Victor Klemperer,[10] to the Weimar Republic, also under Bolsonarism, the "system" is everything created under the 14-year government of the Workers' Party. In any case, the thesis is clear: the more you advance in formal education, the more women become feminists and, therefore, the more threatened society is. For them, it would be better to keep people, especially women, away from schools and universities. Like Trumpism, Bolsonarism has made homeschooling one of its banners.

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9 See Nancy Fraser and Johanna Brenner, "What Is Progressive Neoliberalism?: A Debate" *Dissent* 64 (2017): 130–140.

10 Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000), 103.

Far-right propaganda is marked by strong emotional appeal, as we have learned the hard way in recent years. It is not merely fortuitous that so much has been written on irrationality, affect, and the politics of hatred, but these aspects go hand in hand. Although these elements alone do not explain the rise of neofascism, they are fundamental to thinking about the emotional substrate to which it appeals.

In their fascinating study of far-right agitation in the United States, Leo Löwenthal and Norbert Guterman highlight the feelings and emotional complexes mobilized by said propaganda.[11] Firstly, far-right agitators arouse distrust in the population; they promote the feeling that there is manipulation behind everything (the media, vaccines, former governments). As an antidote to these developments, they rise to denounce politics as a fraud. This type of advertising also encourages feelings of dependence, a complex phenomenon that combines a denunciation of the various manipulations to which people are subjected and an appeal to belong to a strong organization with an equally robust leader who will protect his followers from deception. Furthermore, this agitation creates enormous anxiety; it appeals to fear of the catastrophe that will follow if "our enemies win." There is always a "doomsday" and "end of times" scenario in their visions of the future. Far-right propaganda creates, and inflates, a feeling of exclusion of something everyone is enjoying, except for the "good citizens." This mechanism is one of the main generators of the resentment that fuels this type of policy in a feedback loop. All these features are at the center of antifeminist propaganda in Brazil. Feminism has been presented as the primary locus of a "lack of morals" among Bolsonaro's opponents. Feminists "attack the family" and "have a pathological desire for pleasure." The argument that women can have sex with whomever they want but feminism made our lives empty, sad, and value-free is recurrent in this propaganda, and, as such, riddled with the discourse that feminism aims to subvert the established order and start a revolution (it is also often implied that this revolution involves "educating" people to be gay, trans, or bisexual).

In the programs broadcasted by Brasil Paralelo about the supposed dark side of feminism, the recurrence of questions and insinuations such as the following are remarkable: "Is it true that women owe so much to feminism? Was the achievement of universal suffrage the result of the feminist struggle? Do women have to be feminists? Why is feminism so important these days?" These questions, however, usually serve as clickbait. People's distrust is thereby intensely mobilized. Bolsonarism (as other forms of fascism have done in history) was fueled by the

11 Leo Löwenthal and Nobert Guterman, *Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator* (London: Verso, 2021), 13.

feeling that people were deceived by corrupts and thieves, while, ironically, and in actuality, Bolsonaro only won the elections in 2018 because Lula (Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva), his primary opponent, was incarcerated in a corruption trial.[12] This kind of agitation explores the fact that nobody wants to make a fool of themselves. As a reaction, it impels people to ask themselves: "what if feminists are lying to you?" This questioning exercise works as a support mechanism in a chaotic scenario primarily produced by this reactionary movement; it works as a saving boat both from a psychological and a social perspective. People feel "reassured" on the one hand, but also have, on the other hand, a concrete source of knowledge (legitimized by millions of followers). The implantation of doubts also empowers the following response: "now that I ask myself if this is true, they can no longer deceive me." Once again, "spinning" is at work: it is feminism that is a decoy and aims to impose a "gender dictatorship" in the country, feminists are the ones with a "hidden agenda." Feminists are people who have been "brainwashed," and the feminist movement is a movement of "collective stupidity." In one of these videos, a female agitator states: "I was attracted to feminism, but something was not quite right, and I decided to [do] research to find out what it was, but I understand that people who become feminists do not have the same investigative spirit that I do." As such, it is implied that if you are a feminist, you are an ignorant person lacking the necessary curiosity to think for yourself. In these YouTube videos,[13] there is an increasing promotion of an antifeminist negationism that constantly appeals to the fear people have of feeling like idiots in a world so full of (dis)information.

In addition, all topics of feminism are personalized in this propaganda. These agitators post numerous videos with questions such as: "What if I like to shave? Can't I do this anymore because of feminism? What if I like to cook? What if I am against abortion? Am I going to have to live with it or have an abortion because of the feminists?" The significant agendas of feminist movements are mixed, in this discourse, with much less relevant issues so that the person who watches this type of content is completely disoriented with regards to what is on the agenda. "Rare"

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12 The judge who coordinated the operation, Sérgio Moro, was considered biased and the trial was annulled by the Supreme Court after the revelations of the "Vaza-jato." These revelations, published by the *Intercept Brasil* in a series of reports from 2019 to 2021, showed that the operation that arrested Lula – called "Lava-Jato" (based on the *Mani Pulite* operation, in Italy) – committed a series of irregularities and unconstitutionalities. The idea that Bolsonaro only won because Lula was in jail is corroborated by the fact that in 2022, with Lula in the race, Bolsonaro lost the election even though the difference between them was less than one percent of the votes.

13 "O que as feministas realmente querem? – dia 1 | live especial" [What do feminists want?]," Brasil Paralelo, accessed July 25, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fctbkUtNvkE; "O que nunca te contaram sobre o Feminismo [What they never told you about feminism]," Brasil Paralelo, accessed July 25, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DmmPLX10ak8.

and "out of print" books, "which present better theories of the roles of men and women in our society," [14] are quoted by these women who, at the same time, discredit any sympathy for the feminist movement as *naiveté.* This propaganda purposely lowers the intelligence of its audience to later "empower" it with the knowledge it allegedly lacks. As a result, antifeminist "empowerment" propaganda produces its opposite – acquiescence to submission and objectification – while feeding its audience with a sense of astuteness and intelligence. The process has its own dialectics. In other words, the acquiescence with objectification is the very source of their empowerment. By reinforcing patriarchy, they find a comfortable place in the new right-wing order.

Pink Shotguns, Family, and Freedom: Neoliberalism meets Social Conservatism

The "spinning," however, does not stop there. Bolsonarism now recruits more and more women to answer questions related to gender violence. Júlia Zanata, from Santa Catarina, congresswoman for the PL, is in charge of defending guns for women. Zanata interviews shooting instructors and police officers on her social media accounts; they confirm her thesis: owning a gun is the best way for a woman to protect herself against gender violence. Among Zanata's posts, one can find numerous videos of shooting exercises alongside Eduardo Bolsonaro and photos of herself on the couch with a baby on her lap and a rifle in her hand. Following her lead, influencers pose with pink rifles and post videos of themselves practicing their shooting skills in Disney princess outfits. Zanata wears a *folkish* German tiara with flowers to highlight her connections with Europe, whiteness, and femininity. When Brazilian anesthesiologist Giovanni Quintella Bezerra was arrested for raping women during childbirth,[15] Zanata posted a video in which she commented on how easy it was to be shocked by the case but asked herself: "where is the Left when we defend chemical castration for this type of person?"[16] She thus suggests that we, feminists, do not get to the bot-

14 "A história do feminismo [History of feminism]," Brasil Paralelo, accessed July 25, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLi5SiIKYPo&t=2429s.

15 This refers to a very famous case that happened in Brazil in 2022. A group of nurses filmed an anesthesiologist raping a parturient. After this episode, dozens of women came forward to say the same thing happened to them.

16 Júlia Zanatta, Instagram video, *Instagram*, July 12, 2022, accessed July 25, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cf68HMBNKrK/?igshid=MDJmNzVkMjY=.

tom of the problem. Conservative women, on the other hand, do. They are the truly empowered ones: they carry guns and demand maximum punishment from sex offenders. Guns, here, also relate to the far-right apocalyptic drive. They are a guarantee for survival in a (post) apocalyptic scenario, but they also play the role of conservatively maintaining the status quo of the social order.

The women recruited by Bolsonarism – to use the militarized vocabulary they employ in their own propaganda – are primarily white, heterosexual, and come from a middle-class background. In other words, they are women who still revel in the "delights and advantages of submission."[17] They are proud to say that right-wing women are the most beautiful. They dance alongside Bolsonaro to the sound of Mc Reaça [Reactionary MC]: "I give CUT [Brazil's most significant labor union] bread with mortadella [a reference to poverty, since mortadella used to be relatively cheap] / And for feminists, dog food in a bowl / The right-wing girls are the most beautiful / While the ones on the left have more hair than bitches."[18] They reactivate the feminist stereotype of the "ugly, unloved, disgusting, hairy, smelly" woman, using the typical dehumanization of their enemies to which fascist propaganda has always resorted.

However – and this, I argue, is the most interesting and novel element – at the same time, they bid farewell to the image of the "beautiful, modest and homely" woman.[19] They dress like "businesswomen." They present themselves as independent women who do not need feminism – a form of "self-victimization" – in their lives. They post videos driving pickup trucks. They take up arms, go to the streets to distribute pamphlets, and form stands on the main avenues of São Paulo to convince women of the "fallacies of feminism." They are submissive "only to God and their respective husbands," as Júlia Zanata said in one of her posts. They defend homeland, liberty, family, and safety.

However, this propaganda also has "positive" elements; it is not just about discrediting feminism. On the one hand, it explores the social insecurity produced by

17 Manon Garcia, *We Are Not Born Submissive: How Patriarchy Shapes Women's Lives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 157.

18 MC reaça, "O proibidão do Bolsonaro [Bolsonaro's forbiden funk], INgrooves; LatinAutor – SonyATV, LatinAutorPerf, SOLAR Music Rights Management, Uniao Brasileira de Editoras De Musica – UBEM, Sony Music Publishing, ASCAP e 9 associações de direitos musicais, 2018, accessed July 22, 2022.

19 When president Dilma Rousseff was impeached, her vice-president, Michel Temer, who became the president, paraded with his wife, Marcela Temer, more than 40 years younger than him. The woman had a tattoo of her husband's name on the back of her neck. She was described by *Veja,* one of the country's most influential magazines, as "beautiful, modest and homely": the ideal first lady as opposed to Rousseff, an unapologetic divorced woman who fought in the armed struggle during the Dictatorship.

neoliberalism in the peripheries of capitalism.[20] In Brazil, one of the most coveted middle-class achievements is the possibility of living in a gated community far from the post-apocalyptical reality of the favelas and poor neighborhoods. As Christian Dunker has stressed, these enclaves are matched by a certain "condominium mentality" which favors right-wing politics since "the logic of the condominium is premised on precisely excluding what is outside its walls, so deep down [that] there is nothing to think about the tension between this walled place and its exterior. The place is already conceived and lived as a false universal. That is why the ones that are outside are without place, without land, without ceiling, without destiny, without face."[21] The pro-gun discourse, in that sense, is well received in most of these enclaves. It gives some reassurance of security in a violent world, and it empowers with a promise to do justice with one's own hands.[22] That is why the far-right mobilizes an apocalyptical discourse that pictures the end as a

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20 According to Samir Gandesha, "the ongoing crisis conditions of the neoliberal order combined with a deepening ecological crisis constitute it as radically insecure compared with the one it has replaced, insofar as it comes into being through a roll-back of formal and informal networks of solidarity and social security. It is possible to argue that while it has contributed to the accelerated modernization of the so-called BRIC states (countries as diverse as India, Brazil, and China), neoliberal globalization has had, overall, myriad adverse effects. Through an expansion of the sphere of negative market freedoms, the neoliberal order has increased both economic insecurity and cultural anxiety[.] […] The experience of the neoliberal order can, therefore, be understood as profoundly traumatic. As a way of surviving such shock-like conditions, subjects could be said to identify overwhelmingly – not with those radical democratic forces that constitute a robust challenge to such an order, under conditions of solidarity with others facing similar forms of structural exclusion – but, paradoxically, with the very social forces that maintain and benefit from those structures." Gandesha argues that by deviating from this insecurity (and offering a scapegoat for it, that is a positive solution), the far-right can produce a dissociation of the individuals and their own interests. Samir Gandesha, "Identifying with the Aggressor: From the Authoritarian to Neoliberal Personality," *Constellations*, 25 (2018): 13.

21 Christian Dunker, "The logic of the condominium and the neoliberal suffering," *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, 13 (2017): 4.

22 Drawing from the Frankfurt School studies on authoritarianism, McWilliams and Gordon researched how some "F-scale" personality traits were present in Trump supporters, such as "punitivism." The same could be applied to the Brazilian context. In addition to significant support for incarceration for minor offenses, "punitivism" is widely spread within society. During the pandemic, a poor black teenager was caught stealing a chocolate bar in a small market and taken by security to the back of the store, where he was tortured with electroshock. The torture was recorded by the perpetrators and posted on social media. This video was on the trending topics of Twitter for weeks and received millions of views and "likes." See Peter Gordon et al., *Authoritarianism: Three Inquiries in Critical Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018) and Matthew Macwilliams, *The rise of Trump: America's Authoritarian Spring* (Massachusetts: Amherst College Press, 2016).

social uprising that will destroy this society of enclaves. Mark Payne argues that "postapocalyptic fiction is political theory in fictional form. Instead of producing arguments in favor of a particular form of life, it shows what it would be like to live that life. This is its mode of persuasion."[23] I want to argue that said postapocalyptic fiction (mainly movies and TV series) in which the favelas are usually pictured as a territory without law while the State has concrete political consequences, often creates a fear in middle classes from peripheral countries that enhance the support for punitive policies and politicians.

During the pandemic, Bolsonaro stated in his polemics against the lockdown that if people stayed home, informal workers would lose their source of income, and there would be riots on the streets. In a peripheral and unequal society like Brazil, the apocalypse is often accompanied by the ghost of a social uprising. In this scenario, the gun, as Jonathan Crary has stressed, becomes one of the most sought after commodities:

> The gun symbolically, and too often in actuality, redeems the hollowness of a material culture that produces powerlessness and disappointment. A gun does not wear out and rarely needs repair. For many, it is the reassuring inverse of all the shoddy objects and broken relationships that pass in and out of one's life. Most of all, the gun in its inherent lethality becomes the last guarantee of a society of equals and the frightful specter of a vanished individual agency.[24]

Antifeminist propaganda inserts the gender element into this scenario. Suddenly, women no longer depend on men to protect themselves against the poor or other men and, by extension, said men themselves. In Brazil (as in the US), the gun lobby is applying the same techniques developed by the tobacco industry in the 1920s when it began to target women: they are turning guns into an empowering and sexy object. For the March 8th celebrations in 2021, Brazilian gun manufacturer Taurus launched a special collection of pink revolvers designed exclusively for Brazil. Its ad: "a gun for the strong woman."

On the other hand, antifeminist propaganda is also "positive" in the sense that it highlights the appreciation of the family which historically meant that woman would hold responsibility for social reproduction. Thus, antifeminists seek to create fear in people by claiming that feminists want to destroy the family and impose abortion as a social norm. Again, we are faced with a "doomsday scenario." The impression produced by their speech is that abortion will be compulsory if

23 Payne, Mark, *Flowers of Time: on Postapocalyptic Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 2.

24 Jonathan Crary, *Scorched Earth. Beyond the Digital Age to a Post-Capitalist World* (London: Verso, 2022), 23.

women are granted reproductive rights. On her Instagram account, Gel Fadel, congress candidate, states:

> Today I am faced with a reality that frightens me […] young teenagers, our women, are very fond of drugs, parties, drinking, fun, and they love pleasure. These women, however, do not like and do not want to be held responsible for their actions. 'My body, my choice.' Your body, your choice, woman, but that does not give you the right to take a life […] do you think life is a little plastic cup you throw in the trash because it is no longer useful?[25]

The practice of abortion is associated, in this kind of discourse, with hedonism, promiscuity, and an insatiable pursuit of pleasure on the part of women; that is, reprehensible social behavior and pathological and irresponsible female sexuality. The practice of abortion thus threatens not only the family but the entire social order, according to this antifeminist propaganda. It brings about the idea that the "others," the feminists, have access to a *jouissance* of which "decent" women are deprived, and that pregnancy is a "divine" consequence of the experience of sexual freedom and must be endured as a deserved punishment for this behavior. Furthermore, this discourse presents abortion as synonymous with the "disposable culture," just as the Catholic Church did in Argentina when *Ni una a menos* originated.[26]

It is worth recollecting that the feminist critique of the family involves recognizing that the family is "care" but, at the same time, produces unpaid labor as one of the key domains of women's ongoing oppression. As Silvia Federici argues,[27] one of the main historical banners of Marxist feminism consisted precisely in making capital and the State pay for reproductive labor in the form of food, transportation, and housing policies, as well as wages for/against domestic work. This feminist critique was accompanied by the discovery of the family as a "secret laboratory" of capitalist production and reproduction.

Nothing is more dangerous for Bolsonarism. As the president uttered in an interview in April 2021 to the TV show Brasil Urgente, at the beginning of the pandemic, "the family is the cell of society; the perfect, adjusted family is more than profitable for the State and goes hand in hand with the defense of free markets and liberty." The economic element of this discourse is evident. The notion of family is updated in the convergence between neoliberalism and neoconservatism. As

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25 Gel Fadel, "Today I am faced with a reality that frightens me…," *Instagram*, 2021, accessed August 13, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/reel/ChfHbHHscce/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=.

26 See chapter seven of Verónica Gago, *Feminist International. How to Change Everything* (London: Verso, 2020).

27 Silvia Federici, *Patriarchy of the Wage: Notes on Marx, Gender, and Feminism* (Los Angeles: PM Press, 2021), 81.

Melinda Cooper has shown, the family must become the primary source of economic and social security to release the State from all social responsibility. Therefore, this idea is crucial to right-wing politics and the religious conservatism that accompanies it. This "perfect," "adjusted" family refers to a notion of a heteronormative white family that was also a means of oppression of Black women in Brazil, who historically headed their families and provided for them unaided.

Furthermore, as Verónica Gago has also shown, the boom of evangelical churches under neoliberalism in Latin America and their defense of the "family" also aims to restore male authority eroded by precariousness that starts to disconnect male authority from their function as household providers.[28] In any case, this type of propaganda seeks to tuck all these feminist arguments under the rug by mobilizing the fear of losing the only security that most women have in Brazil: the family and the collaborative care networks it entails. Right-wing propaganda claims to protect this family –– while the Left aims to destroy it.

The defense of the family, however, is not the only element that somehow recognizes the (purposeful) bankruptcy of the social role of the State that accompanies neoliberalism. In the interviews given by Zanata and published on her social media, she continuously emphasizes how protective juridical actions and military police are not enough to fight violence against women. It is curious to notice how a reactionary movement that sustains itself through the massive support of the military so openly declares the incompetence of its base. The argument put forward is that, as families must take responsibility for their survival, women must take responsibility for their own safety under a State that is too busy funding churches and agribusiness and cannot waste resources on policies that protect women. Once again echoing the U.S. Right, this propaganda often returns to the argument that "it is not about guns, it is about freedom." Women's "distrust" and dissatisfaction with public services are mobilized towards this form of empowerment through social warfare. Antifeminist propaganda plays a significant role in transforming public and social security demands into individual responsibility.

This notion of "freedom" is also fundamental for understanding the ideological functioning of right-wing discourse. Wearing out the word "freedom" is one of fascism's outstanding political achievements. This wear and tear is not pure propaganda but is based under capitalism on the objective tensions between freedom and equality. As Adorno stated in his lecture on *Aspects of the New Right-wing Extremism*, "fascism is a wound of democracy;" that is, it grows where democracy

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28 See chapter seven of Verónica Gago, *Feminist International. How to Change Everything.*

fails to fulfill its promises.[29] As they do with "freedom of speech," which consists of the freedom to commit a series of crimes, antifeminists use the notion of freedom to mobilize the widespread resentment that has accompanied the growth of feminism in recent years, as well as to criminalize and pursue the feminist struggle.

Adorno has always held a fascinating thesis that can help explain why this antifeminist propaganda works so well: it takes almost as much effort to adapt to the capitalist system as it does to refuse it. When solicited to discuss late capitalism, Adorno outlined the following idea: drawing from Marx's thesis that the worker was forced to integrate into capitalist production as an appendage of machines, he says that this integration was extended in this period to the most intimate emotions.[30] One could argue that this also applies to male domination and means, at first, that all the effort to "dis-adapt" to the old models of gendered relations will generate a strong reaction from those who spent so much energy adapting to them. As Manon Garcia argues, at some level, and where the pure domination of brute force does not reign, there is also, in the gender domain, a kind of "inner colonization."[31]

The "feminist spring" of recent years has destabilized a series of agreements that supported the neoliberal and conservative social pact that ruled Latin America. This resentment does not come exclusively from the male population. Various feminisms denounce social reproduction and unpaid care work for which women are held responsible as if it were a natural destiny. In addition, several currents of feminism disassociate sex, gender, and sexuality and seek to disconnect the right to desire and to be desired from the need to have a body, a color, or a specific physical appearance. The idea that the right to desire and be desired does not involve being born with a specific color, in a particular class, going hungry by choice, and spending hours exercising to meet a beauty standard established by the male gaze arouses as great a resentment from some women as the one once raised by the social welfare program *Bolsa Família.*[32] "Well, so the poor now get paid without working for it?" In antifeminist propaganda, this resentment appears in the constant praise

29 Theodor W. Adorno, *Aspekte des neuen Rechtsradikalismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2019), 18. [My translation].

30 Theodor W. Adorno, "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?" in *Modern German Sociology*, ed. Volker Meja et al. (Columbia University Press: New York, 1987), 238.

31 Garcia, *We Are Not Born Submissive,* 175.

32 The Worker's Party has implemented a conditional cash transfer program focused on health and education. The benefit is paid monthly and varies according to the family composition. To be part of the program, one must be below the poverty line. To receive the benefit, women must prove that they are sending their children to school and keeping on top of their health through regular check-ups.

of “beauty rituals,” especially waxing, which “feminists hate,” as Gel Fadel posted on her Instagram account.

Black feminisms in Brazil refused the sexualization of Black bodies inherited from slavery and claimed an equal position in universities, politics, and work. The antifeminist critique follows the same pattern: “Are *these people* going be admitted to universities and companies by quotas while the other women must study to get in? Where is the meritocracy in that?”

Feminisms have asked: why should women be monogamous when men, in reality, never were? Why should women be obligated to accept absurd harassment in almost all social spaces they circulate? Why can’t women talk about reproductive rights and decide the fate of our bodies? Those who had to accept a non-monogamous relationship exclusively for their partners, who took responsibility without complaining (or even complaining) for the heavy work of social reproduction, who silently suffered sexual and moral harassment at work, in the family, from a partner, who, with great difficulty accepted this social pact, resent the big “no” that feminist movements have been aiming at contemporary Brazilian patriarchal society.

The regulation of domestic work in Brazil in 2015, for instance, generated a massive revolt in the middle classes, especially among women who were immediately responsible for commanding this genderized and racialized work. “How come these people want to earn 30 dollars for a day’s work? How come they have the right to waged vacation?” With this revolt, it became evident how this unregulated domestic labor bought for a bargain was not only a material compensation for the reproduction of the middle and high classes but also a mechanism of psychological compensation in this sector.[33]

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33 As Rahel Jaeggi stresses, in the section “going forward” in her conversations with Nancy Fraser, “provided that we conceive it not merely as a sociopsychological concept, but as a form of ‘affect’ that is genuinely social, we can examine the deeper structural causes for ressentiment as part of a more comprehensive analysis of crisis and regression. Ressentiment is what I would call a second-order affect: the starting material of ressentiment is not a certain social situation *per se*, the absence of certain desired social gratifications or goods, but rather a situation normatively judged as bad, undeserved, and unjustified – a situation of indignation and outrage. But there is another element that Max Scheler has pointed to in his brilliant analysis: ressentiment always occurs in combination with a feeling of impotence, the feeling of powerlessness. And, again, this powerlessness is not merely the impotence against a first-order problem – for example, that I cannot change being unemployed or that I have no health insurance. Rather, the powerlessness which triggers ressentiment is the impotence or inability even to express one’s feeling of indignation or outrage. Within a neoliberal culture of ‘taking responsibility,’ one can easily see how people see themselves in a situation in which even their indignation is banned.” Rahel Jaeggi and Nancy Fraser, *Capitalism: A Conversation in Critical Theory* (Boston: Polity, 2018).

Feminisms expose the social production of female submission. Furthermore, by problematizing these social processes, they make relations of gender oppression visible and explicit and thus open paths to social transformation. Those who have made an effort to adapt, even if unconsciously (especially in the more privileged strata, where there is still some room for maneuver for women), feel especially angry at how some feminisms mobilize these energies in the opposite direction; making this process of adaptation not only superfluous but an index of domination. The antifeminist propaganda has extensively exploited the resentment of "those left behind," of those who feel that their values, their way of life, have become obsolete. As Wendy Brown has shown, resentment is connected, on the one hand, to humiliation and the frustrations of weakness (existential, historical, or material) and, on the other hand, to dethronement and lost entitlement.[34] In Brazil, the latter kind of resentment prevails in the antifeminist propaganda, led mainly by heterosexual, white, and middle-class women. However, it finds its way into the first kind of resentment through a series of processes that combine popular religious conservatism and social insecurity.

This is also why Bolsonaro's propaganda exploits the clash between generations. Many young women have suffered intensely from the family conflicts produced by Bolsonarism. This movement authorized once and for all the sexist, racist, and homophobic discourses and practices already present in Brazilian society. The split that divides the country is subjectively experienced by those who live in it through conflicts and disruptions within families, friendship groups, and work colleagues. As Verónica Gago stressed, under these circumstances, instead of exploding into conflict, society "implodes."[35]

The Cross or Spiritual Warfare

The religious element is one of the main characteristics of Bolsonarism since his government is massively supported by evangelical churches. Bolsonaro's middle name "Messias" [Messiah] was widely advertised during the campaign. This is also something that this movement shares with National Socialism. As Göring put it in a 1934[36] speech, Hitler was considered "an agent of providence." Likewise, Bolsonaro is also presented as a "savior" of the country. His campaign mottos "God, homeland and Family" [Deus, Pátria e Família] and "Brazil above everything, God

34 Wendy Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*, 177.
35 See chapter four of Verónica Gago, *Feminist International.*
36 Victor Klemperer, *The language of the Third Reich*, 117.

above everyone" [O Brasil acima de tudo, Deus acima de todos] were inspired by Nazi slogans.

And furthermore, the bracelet Bolsonaro wears, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, refers to the following passage of the bible: "they triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." The apocalypse is thus interpreted as a fight between Good and Evil and a call to sacrifice. Bolsonaro evokes the apocalypse not only to instill the fear (and pleasure) of collapse, which is largely real, but to point to himself as the one holding the key to the new kingdom.

Bolsonaro repeatedly states that his election was an event that came to liberate Brazilian society from evil and corruption. At the same time, he recurrently threatens the population with the "doom" the Left will bring if it crawls back to power.[37] This "end of times" discourse was also strongly mobilized by Bolsonaro and his supporters during the pandemic. *Record TV* a television channel owned by Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus, one of Brazil's most significant religious rackets, further re-played the soap opera *Apocalypse* during this period.

Due to the anti-feminist twist in the propaganda I have outlined, Michelle Bolsonaro became a main driver of this apocalyptical discourse during the 2022 election. At the launch of Bolsonaro's campaign, she claimed that "God chooses Bolsonaro" and that "this man has a pure heart, a clean heart." She insisted that "the reelection is not for a project of power, as many argue. It has to do with liberation, a cure for our Brazil." According to a speech she gave in Juiz de Fora in July:

> Brazil is God's. [...] God says that when someone just governs a nation, the people are happy. However, when the unjust govern, people moan[.] [...] They say he [Bolsonaro] does not like women. However, he was the president who sanctioned the most laws for women in the history of Brazil, to protect women[.] [...] A new cycle begins[.] [...] I believe in liberation, cure, I believe in the rescue of Brazil [...] be strong my dears, be strong and courageous, do not bargain with evil, this fight is not against men or women but against powers and principalities.

37 Even though Bolsonaro lost the election of 2022 to Lula, his discourse hasn't changed and neither have his supporters. The apocalyptic picture that circulates on the networks is accompanied by a profusion of posts that advise people not to leave their homes, not to use a credit card, and not to make unnecessary purchases to save money, among other nonsense. Some even sell a "North American Protection Protocol," a survival guide for leftist governments conceived after the defeat of Trump to protect "your family, your money, and your freedom." But what matters in all of this from a political point of view is that Bolsonarism, like other forms of fascism, is characterized by the impossibility of transforming consciousness in the face of reality and presenting that consciousness as something that is outside ideology. It is no coincidence that what appears to them as truth has the same nature as religious revelation and establishes a series of affinities with religious fanaticism.

The call is to action. As critical theory recalls, the primary function of fascist agitation is not to inform but to serve as a lubricant for terror.[38] A terror of which religion has become one of the main instruments. With the "boom" of feminism in Latin America, the Right enhanced religious warfare and started associating feminism with evil. The emotional substrate and the apocalyptical discourse are also present here: the projection of chaos that "the Left" seeks to install, the doomsday scenario that awaits us if "the giant does not rise;"[39] "if we have not done something to avoid it." As Verónica Gago has argued, there is now a battle "for political spirituality in the streets, in homes, in bedrooms, and schools":

> Feminism speaks of bodies at the same time that it contests the meaning of political spirituality. As a multiform movement, feminism disputes the prevailing understanding of bodily sovereignty and of feminized bodies in terms of their differentiated hierarchy. They are bodies that were historically declared non-sovereign, sentenced as incapable of deciding for themselves –that is, designated as bodies under guardianship or tutelage. For feminism, it is a political spirituality precisely because it does not separate the body from the spirit, nor flesh from fantasies, nor skin from ideas. There is a mystical dimension to feminism (as a multifaceted movement). It works from affects and passions. It opens that thorny field of desire, of relationships of love, of erotic swarms, of ritual and celebration, of longings beyond their sanctioned borders. Feminism, unlike other politics that are considered leftist, does not deprive bodies of their indeterminacy, of their not-knowing, of their embodied dreaming, of their dark potencia.[40]

Antifeminism (as neofascism) is always a countermovement because it fights against all trends of disintegration and "internal decolonization" in progress: feminism, the fight against precariousness, the abolitionist struggle, and so on. Hence, it is also a sign that something is moving beneath the surface.

Antifeminist propaganda transforms submission, objectification, and unrestricted capitalist accountability for the work of reproduction, among other elements, into freedom. Furthermore, it seeks to re-confine women to their former spaces and roles (albeit with a pink gun in its holster). In doing so, this type of propaganda reinforces several traits of our Brazilian "F-Scale":[41] conventionalism and rigid adherence to conventional middle-class values; anti-intellectualism; the

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38 Norbert Guterman, "Four books on occupied France," *Commentary*, accessed July 29, 2022, https://www.commentary.org/articles/norbert-guterman/four-books-on-occupied-france/.

39 "The giant is awake" is the Brazilian version of the American far-right "red pill." During the demonstrations that supported the coup in 2016, the awakening of the giant was a metaphor for the right-wing apprehension of consciousness that Brazil was a socialist country.

40 See chapter seven of Verónica Gago, *Feminist International*.

41 Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), 228.

authoritarian aggressiveness that accentuates the punitive tendency towards those who escape conventional values; projectivity (projection of unconscious emotional impulses) and exaggerated preoccupation with sex.

The advertisements by Damares Alves mentioned in the introduction of this chapter exemplify a series of these points very well. Furthermore, their effectiveness is linked precisely to the fact that the more absurd they are, the more they appeal to the most forbidden fantasies. As psychoanalysis has demonstrated, the obsession with pedophilia and incest, in addition to arousing the desire for revenge against those who break social rules and harm innocents, produces an undeniable appeal to sexual fantasies around which our society is organized. Damares' struggle against pedophilia, the core of her politics, places it at a level dangerously close to sexual fantasy. Bolsonarismo offers its voters, among other things, a libidinal gratification that is linked to the release of forbidden fantasies. The same procedure concerns violence. In fact, the relationship between violence and sexuality on the Brazilian extreme Right comes from afar if we consider the type of sexual torture that figures like Brilhante Ustra practiced; otherwise a family man well-adjusted to the bourgeois order. It is the same in terms of religion. Michelle Bolsonaro's speeches unite the defense of the family and the church with a spiritual war and associate "the communists" with the Antichrist, just as National Socialism had done with the Jews, perverting the universalist nature of Christianity and equating Pentecostalism with "Brazilianness." It is evident in the First Lady's speech that religion is mobilized to create scapegoats in a cathartic process of releasing aggression (and transforming class struggle into generalized social conflict). As shown by Löwenthal, this type of propaganda is a kind of "reverse psychoanalysis."[42] Its effects go far beyond the positive appreciation of the family and the church they preach.

Fascist propaganda is a mechanism for distorting the perception of gender and class domination. It feeds on a dissatisfaction present in the social body – which has material bases – and guides the direction that this dissatisfaction will take. Some women participating in this antifeminist propaganda certainly have something to gain, whether candidacies, positions, money, or followers. However, these gains will not extend to those who believe his speech. It is, however, a political and scientific task to show that they are the real prophets of deceit under the auspices of the right-wing apocalypse.

42 Leo Löwenthal, "Adorno and His Critics," in *Critical Theory and Frankfurt Theorists: Lectures, Correspondence, Conversations* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 51.

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MC reaça. "O proibidão do Bolsonaro [Bolsonaro's forbiden funk], INgrooves; LatinAutor – SonyATV, LatinAutorPerf, SOLAR Music Rights Management, Uniao Brasileira de Editoras De Musica – UBEM, Sony Music Publishing, ASCAP e 9 associações de direitos musicais. 2018. Accessed July 22.

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Julia Grillmayr and Christine Hentschel

World without Humans, Humans without World: Apocalyptic Passions in the Anthropocene

Ends of the World: Günther Anders, the Anthropocene Thinker

"The end of the world is a seemingly interminable topic – at least, of course, until it happens."[1] In *The ends of the world*, Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro examine the numerous contemporary end-of-world narratives in philosophy and cultural studies, but also in literature and pop culture. Three thinkers help them to "recognize the magnitude and gravity of current transformations," as well as the needed "metaphysical reinvention […] of the notions of humanity and world elicited by the Anthropocene's and Gaia's bursting on the scene": the contemporaries Dipesh Chakrabarty and Bruno Latour, who have extensively published on the notion and condition of the Anthropocene, and – more surprisingly – the German-speaking philosopher Günther Anders who passed away in 1992; ten years before the term Anthropocene was even coined.[2] As Danowski and Viveiros de Castro argue, one cannot write a book about the end(s) of the world without coming back to Anders's philosophy: "It is impossible not to remember Günther Anders's dry, somber conclusion in a capital text on humankind's 'metaphysical metamorphosis' after Hiroshima and Nagasaki: 'The absence of future has already begun.'"[3]

In Anders's thinking, the atomic bomb, the technical possibility of planetary destruction, marks a point of no return; an existential absence of the future that cannot be fought, but only delayed on a day-by-day basis: "at least, of course,

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1 Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), 1.

2 Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, *Ends*, 80.

3 Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, *Ends*, 4.

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until it happens." We can only speculate if Anders himself would have approved of the term Anthropocene. At first glance, probably not, since he refuted the idea that we live in an epoch or any kind of "-cene" at all. In his seminal essay "Die Frist" (1960), most often translated as "The Respite," he famously exclaimed: "We do not live in an era, but in a *Frist*":[4] a reprieve, a time still granted, a stay of execution that is always already defined by its end.

This means that we can think about our time only in the sense of time that is running out; a period of time that necessarily has an expiration date. The 'we' in Anders's texts refers to the inheritors of the atomic bomb, and as we try to explore in what follows, it can most likely be extended to "us," the inhabitants of the Anthropocene. He calls "our" time an "era" only in the sense that it is a "'time' that is constantly in danger of coming to an end, thereby taking with it *time* [itself]. Theologically spoken as end time."[5] Anders goes as far as to say that it does not matter how long the world will exist, there will be no new era for humankind, because, as his notion of *Frist* implies, we live in a time that only "remains."[6]

At a second glance, his own framing of *Frist* reads like the very marker of the Anthropocene itself: the age in which "we" are and have been changing the earth system so significantly that "we" may go extinct "ourselves." Anders argues that nothing could compete with the possible self-annihilation of humankind as a defining criterion for a new geological epoch.[7] We, as a civilization and as a species, are changed by the nuclear bomb and its enormous destructive potential. We, as contemporaries of the atomic age, are, Anders writes, already "other [...] creatures of a new kind."[8] In this sense, Anders's "future that is over" reads as a sad description of the Anthropocene, "our" epoch, that of humankind, yet one that already marks our end. As Danowski and Viveiros de Castro note: "The Anthropocene [...] is an

4 "Nicht in einem Zeitalter leben wir, sondern in einer Frist." Günther Anders, "Die Frist," in *Endzeit und Zeitenende: Gedanken über die atomare Situation*, ed. Günther Anders (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1972 [1960], 203. All translations are ours. Thanks to Chris Müller for offering his insights on how best to circumscribe *Die Frist* in English.

5 "Denn ebensowenig gibt es heute ‚unsere Zeit' im Sinne von ‚unser Zeitalter'. Es sei denn, wir bestimmen dieses Zeitalter als diejenige ‚Zeit', die pausenlos in der Gefahr schwebt, ein Ende zu nehmen und dabei auch *die* Zeit mit sich zu reißen. Theologisch gesprochen also als *Endzeit*." Anders, *Die Frist,* 204.

6 "Wie lange die Welt auch stehen mag, welche Scherze und Sensationen die Geschichte in ihrer Pandorabüchse auch noch verbergen mag, mit einem neuen Zeitalter wird sie uns nicht mehr überraschen können." Anders, *Die Frist,* 205.

7 "weil keine Veränderung denkbar ist, die als stärkeres Kriterium eines neuen Weltalters mit dem heutigen Kriterium ‚mögliche Selbstauslöschung der Menschheit' in Wettbewerb treten könnte." *Die Frist*, 205.

8 "Aber wir *sind* Andere. Wir sind Wesen einer neuen Art." Anders, *Die Frist,* 170.

'epoch' in the geological sense of the world; but it points toward the end of epochality as such, insofar as our species is concerned."[9] Or, in Jean Pierre Dupuy's words: "we have irreversibly entered into an era whose ultimate prospect is the self-destruction of the human race."[10]

To be sure, "we" are not in this together. Bringing about "the end" doesn't happen equally. "We" have not caused the destruction of our livelihoods, forests, rivers, oceans and the atmosphere to a similar degree; and "we" are not suffering its consequences equally.[11] As implied in the various re-namings of the Anthropocene, e. g. as Capitalocene (Malm and Moore) or Chthulucene (Haraway), not the human species as such; not the *anthropos*, but specific humans, groups and lifestyles continue to cause these catastrophic events and they affect specific humans and non-humans in very different ways. Often it is "the least responsible for the climate-wrecking emissions [who] are the worst affected by it," as artists-activists Isabelle Frémeaux and Joy Jordan remind us.[12]

Anders helps us not only to frame the Anthropocene as an ultimate era, a *Frist*, but he can also help us to develop a more situated understanding of the Anthropocene. Yes, we may all die from nuclear disaster, but this, Anders emphasizes, does not make it a "suicide of humanity," but rather a "nuclear murder"[13] committed by some. Anders asks his readers to question the "we" that he refers to in his texts. As Chris Müller and David Mellor point out,

> Anders's work uses this collective pronoun to address humanity as a whole only to foreground that these technological processes at once entail a forced and unprecedented unification – 'we are all affected by the challenges disclosed' – whilst simultaneously also unfolding by means of an absolute fragmentation. These challenges explode any illusion of a 'universal' humanity or equal attribution of value to life on earth – it is only a miniscule fraction of this global 'we' (a 'we' that can be extended to include all of life on earth and all future life) that can enjoy the high living standard enabled by technological progress or have any say in or meaningful power to shape processes that are set in motion by 'us.'[14]

9 Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, *Ends*, 5.

10 Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *A short Treatise on the metaphysics of Tsunamis* (Michigan State University Press, 2015), 56.

11 See Jairus Victor Grove, *Savage Ecology: War and Geopolitics at the End of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019); Evan Calder Williams, *Combined and Uneven Apocalypse* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2010).

12 Isabelle Frémeaux and Jay Jordan, *We are 'nature' defending itself: Entangling Art, Activism and Autonomous Zones* (London: Pluto Press, 2021), 18.

13 Günther Anders, "Atomarer Mord – kein Selbstmord," in *Endzeit und Zeitenende: Gedanken über die atomare Situation,* ed. Günther Anders (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1972 [1959a]), 62–3.

14 Christopher John Müller and David Mellor, "Utopia inverted: Günther Anders, technology and the social," *Thesis Eleven* 153 (2019), 5.

In the face of the ultimate (unifying yet fragmented) catastrophe, "we," Anders argued, have been blind, lazy, and indifferent.[15] It is Anders's belabouring of the end, his frustration about our indifference towards the threats ahead and the ultimate destruction that has already begun, as well as his ideas to work against this apathy that inspire this chapter. Working through Anders's texts that he wrote in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the presence of the atomic bomb, we look for the transformational potential of his apocalyptic reasoning. How can Günther Anders's pessimistic philosophy help us make sense of some of the emerging struggles against ecological devastation in the Anthropocene? For this endeavor, we first reconstruct Anders's "humans without world" as a way of building a parallel to an "uneven apocalypse"[16] in the Anthropocene and then delve into his appeals to nurture our "apocalyptic passions" and to engage in "moral stretching exercises"[17] for our imagination and our feelings. We end on some fragments of contemporary affective workouts at the edge in the face of ecological emergency that might be read as examples of such stretching exercises.

From Humans Without World to World Without Humans: a Situated Anthropocene

Günther Anders was known as a doomsayer, a modern Cassandra who never got tired of warning his contemporaries of the coming end of the world and, today, most of the literature on Anders speaks to his dark vision of the Atomic Age and his pessimistic philosophy of technology.[18] But besides his radical idea of *Frist*, another concept that allows us to grasp Anders's relevance in the Anthropocene is his meticulous analysis of what it means to "have or not have a world" as a human being.

In the introduction to *Mensch ohne Welt*, a collection of essays about art and literature published in 1993, Anders explains that whereas he was rightly regarded

15 Günther Anders, "Language and End Time (Sections I, IV and V of 'Sprache und Endzeit')", translated by Christopher John Müller. *Thesis Eleven* 153 (2019): 1.

16 Williams, *Combined and Uneven Apocalypse.*

17 Günther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen: Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution Bd. 1.* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1987 [1956]), 274.

18 This is the case in the prolific readings of Günther Anders by the "enlightened catastrophists," especially the French philosopher Jean-Pierre Dupuy. See, for example, Julia Grillmayr, "Was übermorgen gewesen ist. Die Rezeption von Günther Anders im zeitgenössischen französischen catastrophisme éclairé," *Günther Anders-Journal* 1 (2017), accessed September 30, 2022, http://www.guenther-anders-gesellschaft.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/grillmayr-2017.pdf.

as someone whose obsession was the world without humans (Welt ohne Menschen), his former philosophical interest was with humans without world (Menschen ohne Welt). The dropping of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima, the nuclear testing programs at Bikini Atoll, and the growing peace and anti-nuclear movement in the course of the 1940s and 50s brought forth a turn in Anders's philosophy. While his early writings about worldlessness were very much inspired by Martin Heidegger and his notions of ontologically being in the world, Anders soon broke with Heidegger as a person and as a philosopher and we can witness a "successive politicization" of his use of the term worldlessness.[19] His turn from humans without world to world without humans is a shift from ontological anthropology to political philosophy. In the introduction to *Mensch ohne Welt,* Anders shows himself surprised and shocked at the lack of political consciousness in his early takes on worldlessness and argues that, in contrast to his earlier approach, he does not see being in the world as an automatic and necessary condition. Some humans, and indeed, a large part of humanity, are not "in the world," he argues, but live "within a world" that is not their own; they are "chained" to a world that is not theirs, but, rather, the world of a ruling class.[20] Anders writes this in regard to capitalist exploitation, although not yet in a globalized context. For him, the proletarians and the unemployed in the capitalist system are key figures to understand what it means to be without world, because they are deprived of work and money inside a system where work and money define who you are and your place in the world.[21]

In Anders's later writings, world presents itself as an ecosystem of material and non-material elements such as means, values, and power structures. To talk of humans without world means to address this inequality; to have a world, to be-in-the-world is a question of class and power. Anders's critique is thus: In all of his writings about care (*Sorge)* and despite his own experience of being poor,

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19 Andreas Oberprantacher, "The Desertification of the World: Günther Anders on Weltlosigkeit," in *The Life and Work of Günther Anders*, ed. Günter Bischof et al. (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2014), 96.

20 "da er [der Proletarier] nur für die Welt Anderer lebt, für eine Welt, in der Andere sich zuhause fühlen sollen, trifft auf ihn Heideggers Grundcharakterisierung menschlichen Seins: daß dieses eo ipso ‚In-der-Welt-Sein' sei, nicht eigentlich zu; lebt er *nicht* eigentlich ‚*in*', sondern nur ‚*innerhalb*' der Welt – innerhalb der Welt Anderer, eben der ‚herrschenden Klasse', auch wenn die ‚Ketten', die ihn an diese Welt der Anderen kette, so weich und geschmeidig gemacht worden sind, daß er sie für die ‚Welt' hält […]." Günther Anders, *Mensch ohne Welt* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1993), XII.

21 "Der Ausdruck ‚Mensch ohne Welt' bezeichnet […] eine Klassentatsache." Anders, *Mensch ohne Welt,* XII.

Heidegger never did ask the question: "Who owns the world?"[22] Anders reconceptualizes worldlessness by reading Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, but also texts by Franz Kafka and Bertolt Brecht that feature disenfranchised and powerless protagonists. While he also relies very much on Karl Marx's political economy, Anders's argument is "more radical," as Andreas Oberprantacher notes: The philosophical notion of "world" implies a totality and can be read as more "comprehensive than the classical definition of *alienation* according to Marx."[23] Whereas one can indeed decipher a shift from his early ontological framing to his later political framing of worldlessness, the two notions are best understood together. As Oberprantacher argues, the two expressions "remain entangled in a complex sensibility for catastrophic situations that oscillate between event and condition. In other words, whereas the expression 'world without men' is principally obliged to the devastation of the word as a future event, the expression 'men without world' addresses the living conditions faced by all those who usually cannot confide in 'being-in-the-world' in a privileged sense."[24]

Thinking these two formulas together in the Anthropocene, it becomes apparent that the end of the world is not (only) a future to be averted (or awaited) but is happening now, in countless instances of slow violence, suffering, and destroyed livelihoods.[25] Stronger still, the world without humans is directly linked to humans without worlds: it is because some humans are "without a world," as Anders would say, that the downward spiral towards a possible world without humans has been set off. As has been argued for the Anthropocene, "this world," its continuation (and the obligation to "save it") has meant and required the end of many other worlds.[26] As Danowski and Viveiros de Castro hold:

> [i]f the Humans who invaded it represented the indigenous America of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a *world without humans* – be it because they objectively depopulated it, be it because the humans they found there did not fit the category of "Humans" – the surviving Indians, fully entitled Terrans from that New World, reciprocally found themselves as *hu-*

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22 "Die Frage: ‚*wem gehört die Welt?*', in der zu sein unser Dasein angeblich ausmacht, hat Heidegger in seiner ausführlichen Analyse des Weltbegriffs, trotz aller seiner Betonung der ‚Sorge' und trotz seiner eigenen langjährigen Armutserfahrung niemals gestellt." Anders, *Mensch ohne Welt*, XIII.

23 Oberprantacher, "Desertification," 100.

24 Oberprantacher, "Desertification," 102–103.

25 Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

26 Claire Colebrook, "What would you do (and who would you kill) in order to save the world? Dialectical Resilience," in *Resilience in the Anthropocene. Governance and Politics at the End of the World*, ed. David Chandler et al. (London: Routledge, 2020), 179–199.

> *mans without world:* castaways, refugees, precarious lodgers in a world in which they no longer belonged, because it could not belong to them.[27]

"And yet, it just so happens that many of them survived", Danowski and Viveiros de Castro write to point out that, first of all, the cruelties of colonization are far from over and, second and most importantly, that Indigenous cultures do not only have a past, but a future.[28] There have been many ends of many worlds. The ultimate destruction we are facing today, is, in this sense, "'just' the name of the final reckoning of these figures of the end; Gaia is, in short, the maximal scale that we can reach."[29] Our interest in what follows lies in thinking through what happens when the concepts of humans without world and world without humans are actively entangled in struggles against ecological catastrophe. We build up some of the most evocative scenes from Anders's writings on apocalyptic passions, and the exercises to work our imaginative and affective capacities in order to learn, visualize, imagine, feel and believe catastrophe not as a way of giving up, but to confront them – as future events and as unfolding catastrophes that have long begun.

Stretching Exercises With and Against Apocalypse

In his *Theses for the Atomic Age*, Günther Anders writes: "'*We Are Inverted Utopians*': The basic dilemma of our age is that 'we are smaller than ourselves', incapable of mentally realizing the realities which we ourselves have produced. Therefore we might call ourselves 'inverted Utopians': while ordinary Utopians are unable to actually produce what they are able to visualize, we are unable to visualize what we are actually producing."[30] It is this gap between "our" capacities to create and "our" abilities to imagine the effects of "our" very inventions that Anders is concerned with. "We" can produce devices for mass death, "we" have created systems for the exploitation of large parts of humanity, "we" have poisoned the air, polluted the oceans, heated up the atmosphere to a degree that it might lead to an end of life on earth, but "we" seem to lack the ability to envision, imagine, or feel the consequences of this "capacity". And, "[n]ot only has imagination ceased to live up to production, but feeling has ceased to live up to responsibility."[31]

27 Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, *Ends*, 105–106.

28 Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, *Ends*, 105–106. Italics in the original.

29 Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, *Ends*, 105.

30 Günther Anders, "Theses for the Atomic Age," *The Massachusetts Review* 3:3 (1962): 496.

31 Anders, *Theses*, 496.

It is the enormity of the threat that has paralyzed our ability to imagine the possible effects of our collective actions: Anders calls this the "supra-liminal," by which he means a "stimulus too big to produce any reaction or to activate any brake-mechanism."[32] We seem "unable to feel that which is too big", even though we may be able to think it.[33] A lack of reason or rationality is not our problem but rather our "emotional idiocy" as technology has entered our senses and created "our comfortable world";[34] speaking, of course, from a perspective of those who actually do live in a comfortable world. We are blind, mute, and deaf toward the apocalypse.[35] And we have to confront this indifference and laziness by building up our "apocalyptic passions" and by becoming "anti-apocalyptics" or "enemies of the apocalypse."[36] This entails building up our courage to fear, one that is "vitalizing" and mobilizing; a "loving fear"[37] that is concerned with the world and not just that which might happen to "us."[38]

Becoming "enemies of the apocalypse" is not a mere decision or political position, it requires a range of affective and imaginative exercises. The endeavor is to extend our imagination in such a way that it remains adequate to the products and effects of our actions.[39] Anders wants us to commit to "moral stretching exercises", which might be exhausting and experienced as "over-stretching," "over-tension," or an "overload."[40] At times he treats imagination and sentiment as forces with moods and corporality – unwilling, lazy, but open to seduction – they can be pulled, widened, and forced "into the accomplishment of the work-load."[41] It is al-

32 Anders, *Theses*, 497.

33 Anders, "Language and End Time," 135.

34 "Und trotzdem fehlt die apokalyptische Mentalität. Wie lässt sich das erklären? Dadurch, dass die Entmachtung *zu groß* ist. – Damit ist gemeint, dass die uns entmachtende Übermacht: nämlich die Technik, so total herrscht, daß sie uns als Übermacht nicht mehr erkennbar ist, uns vielmehr als ‚unsere Welt', sogar als ‚unsere komfortable Welt' erscheint." Günther Anders, "Die Wurzeln der Apokalypseblindheit," *in Endzeit und Zeitenende. Gedanken über die atomare Situation*, ed. Günther Anders (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1972 [1962], 111–112. Italics in the original.

35 Anders, "Language and End Time," 135.

36 In the German Version: "Apokalypsefeinde," see Günther Anders, "Thesen zum Atomzeitalter," in *Endzeit und Zeitenende: Gedanken über die atomare Situation,* ed. Günther Anders (Munich: C. H. Beck 1972 [1956b]), 94.

37 Anders, *Theses*, 498.

38 Günther Anders, "Thesen zum Atomzeitalter," 98.

39 Günther Anders, "Unmoral im Atomzeitalter. Warnung während einer Windstille," in *Endzeit und Zeitenende. Gedanken über die atomare Situation*, ed. Günther Anders (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1972 [1959c]), 67–92, 74.

40 In German he speaks of "Überdehnung," "Überspannung" and "Überforderung", see Anders, *Antiquiertheit*, 313, 316.

41 Anders, *Antiquiertheit*, 275.

ways about working the "elasticity" of our imagination and our feelings in order to "widen our horizon of responsibility,"[42] and reach out to our "proximi" in space and time.

These "attempts at imagining" must necessarily fail, Anders states, but there is no way around them: we must try and orient ourselves in the right direction, train these capacities, work our muscles. In *Wir Eichmannsöhne* (1964), Anders describes the impossibility to imagine, let alone comprehend, the brutalities of the Holocaust and – in this case – the specific role of Adolf Eichmann. In contrast to a time before the Holocaust and before the atomic bomb, he argues, "our sentimental duties (or exercises) have been increasing and [...] they are disproportionately bigger than before.[43] The German *Aufgabe* that he uses here can mean both duty and exercise, which together describe what Anders invites us to do: namely to try and imagine that which is "too big" even as we fail. Since "[t]he condition for the fruitfulness of the failure is, of course, that the very attempts to imagine are actually being undertaken."[44] Becoming enemies of the apocalypse is thus the work of trying: to reach out, envision better, fear more – and confront the ultimate destruction of life on earth. In other words, to act in the face of "the real possibility of the end of 'the ends of the world'."[45]

Stretching towards these underdeveloped emotional and imaginative capacities and, in so doing, widening our responsibility in space and time is a way of reconnecting to a world in which 'we' have become strangely absent. As Chris Müller argues:

> From the perspective Anders's work opens, it is precisely the obsolescence of the human through technology that has allowed for the arrival of this epoch. It is not the human that has become a global, geological force in the Anthropocene; it is rather what Anders describes as the removal of the human – its worldlessness, absentmindedness, absent-heartedness, – that has led 'us' here.[46]

To think through 'our' present condition with Anders, we must widen the scene of catastrophic threats from the event of the nuclear strike to the "slowly unfolding

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42 Anders, *Theses*, 495.

43 "daß unsere *Gefühlsaufgaben gestiegen* sind, daß sie nun ungleich größer sind als früher." Günther Anders, *Wir Eichmannsöhne* (Munich: C.H. Beck 2002 [1964]), 28.

44 "Voraussetzung für die Fruchtbarkeit des Scheiterns ist es natürlich, daß die (zum Scheitern verurteilten) Vorstellungsversuche auch wirklich unternommen werden." Anders, *Wir Eichmannsöhne,* 36.

45 Srećko Horvat, *After the Apocalypse* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2021), 16.

46 Christopher John Müller, "From radioactivity to data mining: Günther Anders in the Anthropocene," *Thesis Eleven* 153:1 (2019): 9–23, 20.

environmental catastrophes" of ecological devastation.[47] Here we are especially interested in the apocalyptic passions and stretching exercises that Anders wanted to convince his contemporaries of, in the awareness of a humanity at the abyss. Apocalyptic passions, Anders teaches us, are not only obsessions with the end, but exercises in awareness, calls to embrace last chances, and a general scene of a nervous attempt to figure things out.

Some of this "apocalyptic mindfulness"[48] is deeply engrained in present-day activism in the face of an ecological emergency in the Anthropocene; in the many public acts of grieving, accusing, or warning, e. g. through die-ins, street blockades, or acts of sabotage (from pipe-lines to oil paintings). These "affective workouts"[49] in the face of climate apocalypse do not only emanate from places most hit by the climate crises; they do not solely happen in the islands that are drowning, the sacred territories through which pipelines are built, the cities with the worst air quality or the communities suffering health risks because of toxic products in their waters. Countless others in Europe, North America and Australia have "woken up" to the broken promise of their 'good life' and they are trying to relate their dire outlooks to the ubiquity of slow violence and to the ordinariness of catastrophe in places long brutalized through slavery, colonialization, and ongoing exploitation. This awakening is not necessarily the result of witnessing and experiencing the consequences themselves but of imagining how bad things might become, also, but not only, for them. Often it is in this intense work with and via the end *vis-à-vis* ecological ruination that the idea of humans without world is connected to that of world without humans when activists do such work, which we, with Anders, describe as "stretching exercises."

Affective Workouts at the End of the World

One might agree with Danowksi and Viveiros de Castro when they say it is the very "humanist optimism" that has brought about the ruination "of our global civilization."[50] Unsurprisingly, it is from the "structural others of the modern humanistic subjects," Rosi Braidotti holds, that the "great emancipatory movements of postmodernity" emerges, from women's rights movements to anti-racist and decolonial

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47 Nixon, *Slow violence.*

48 Catherine Keller, *Facing Apocalypse. Climate, Democracy, and other Last Chances* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2021), 17–18.

49 Christine Hentschel, "Stretches of Imagination at the End of Times: affective workouts against apocalypse," *Artnodes* 29 (2022).

50 Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, *Ends*, 2.

and anti-nuclear struggles and environmental movements.[51] But also for the people who currently fit into the norms of the hegemonic system, and those who adhered to the promise of a good life, progress and growth in “the West” and, as such, “humanist optimism” has become a “cruel optimism.”[52] The young people in Europe and North America, who are marching the streets, blocking traffic hotspots, hunger striking and finding ever new forms of direct action against the climate emergency have “woken up”, as they often call it, to the outlook that they too might end up without a world.

Far from daring to determine what Anders’s – moral, affective, imaginative – stretching and overstretching exercises would mean in the struggle against ecological devastation in the Anthropocene, we suggest gestures that resonate with some of the elements in Anders’s apocalyptic approaches: the nurturing of a fear that is not scared to be called alarmist, taking the end itself seriously, the performative dimension of ringing the alarm, the critique expressed of the very system that allows for this destruction to happen, and the sense of worldlessness articulated, which includes both the sensitivity for the humans who are – in the political definition of Anders – deprived of a *world* and the facing of the ultimate end of everything.

Some forms of direct action against the climate emergency explicitly point to the end as an event coming closer, placing us into a *Frist*, in Anders’s sense, and orienting our gaze to the approaching moment when our space for maneuver, let alone for planning, preventing, and transforming will have dramatically shrunk. *Save Old Growth*, an activist group fighting the logging of thousand-year-old trees in British Columbia, Canada, perform their message in spectacular scenes. As can be seen in their press statement:

> *Lək̓ʷəLək̓ʷəŋən Territories – Lekwungen Territories (Victoria, BC), August 8, 2022:* Save Old Growth supporter, known as “Ever,” climbed atop the downtown Victoria Visitor Centre at Belleville and Government Street at 11AM today. Across her bare chest and back were the words “961 days left.” […]
>
> “My dangerous areolas are a threat to some,” says 37-year-old Ever, acknowledging societal discomfort with women baring their breasts. “I’m attracting attention to raise an alarm for our world in crisis—a place where ancient trees that give all of us the oxygen we breathe are clear cut for profit.” […]

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51 Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 37.

52 Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

> "We've lost our connection to the earth and as a result our collective consciousness. There's no good reason to be cutting down 1000 year old trees," Ever says.[53]

This is only one in a series of interruptions in Canada, France, Germany, England, and the US at sports events, such as the French Open, the Tour de France, international soccer games, and the Athletics Championship, caused by activists jumping onto the scene, tying themselves to the goal or net or gluing themselves on the asphalt, having the eyes of millions of spectators upon them; each time with a message indicating the days remaining until irreversible climate collapse. Counting down the days here is not prophesying the end of the world, but it refers to climate scientist David King's statement made in February 2021 according to which "what we do in the next three to four years, I believe will determine the future of humanity."[54] Still, it is an enactment of *die Frist*, and the message it is always both: too late and, yet, we must do everything we can to avert this end. "Facing apocalypse" here means calling out a number of "last chances."[55] It is the end, but, also, a temporal opening,[56] a nervous oscillating that is inherent to an ambivalent inhabiting of the *reprieve.*

In the best of cases, this contradiction allows to comprehend 'the apocalypse' not as one single phenomenon, that we avert or await, but as a number of distributed events that need to be connected and compared without being ranked and played against each other. While the Anthropocene is "too big" to grasp – in its level of destruction and its inherent *Frist* – stories can create powerful ways of connecting and of presencing. Anders himself crafted a powerful scene of this. In "Die beweinte Zukunft" (1961), he features a frustrated Noah who kept trying to warn his people of the coming flood. Noah only managed to make an impression when he finally decided to "perform a little" by creating a scene of grief as he steps out onto the street in sackcloth and ashes.[57] Inconsolable in his grief for the dead of tomorrow he triggers not only the curiosity of his audience, but also their em-

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53 Save Old Growth, "Save Old Growth supporter bares truth of government inaction," *Save Old Growth.ca*, accessed January 9, 2023, https://save-old-growth.ca/2022/08/09/release-save-old-growth-supporter-bares-truth-of-government-inaction-2/.

54 Climate Emergency Summit, "David King at the Climate Emergency Summit," accessed January 9, 2023, https://www.climateemergencysummit.org/speakers/david-king-speaker-profile/.

55 Keller, Facing Apocalypse, 2.

56 Kevin Pelletier, *Apocalyptic Sentimentalism. Love and fear in U.S. Antebellum Literature* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2018).

57 *Endzeit und Zeitenende. Gedanken über die atomare Situation*, ed. Günther Anders Munich: C. H. Beck, 1972 [1961]), 1–10.

pathy and a feeling of grief, which sets in when he begins to sing their familiar mourning ritual kaddish.[58]

In contrast, the *Save Old Growth* supporter with the remaining days written on her breast has chosen a different style for sounding the alarm about the coming catastrophe: presenting her bare breasts on an iconic political building she does not evoke a feeling of mourning, but she creates a scene of corporeal metaphors and associations, where she "bares truth of government inaction" (with the help of her bare breasts containing the message) on the top of a building with a "painful history" of negotiations and the forced removal of Lekwungen-speaking people from their territory.[59] The stretch is thus not so much one of feeling that "our days are numbered" but one of making a visual argument to remind their audience about the troubling interrelations between thousand year old trees being logged, the injustice done to Indigenous people, and our shrinking time span for averting "irreversible climate break down."[60] As a visual argument, it works as an apocalyptic prophecy that connects 'our' destruction of *the world* with a long colonial history of making many worlds end, especially Indigenous and Black worlds. Still, the direction of the moral appeal surrounding such acts is focused on the future as the ultimate apocalyptic horizon, e. g. when in questions such as: what will you do with the remaining time? Will you sit still? Or will you act? When Noah saw that he had indeed left an impression, he ends his performance by saying: "There is still time," before announcing that the "show is finished" and disappearing into his home.[61] Noah was successful, he didn't even feel the need to conceal the fact that he was performing. Shortly afterwards, a carpenter, a roofer, a steersman, and many others knock at his door to offer their help to build the ark with him "for that the kaddish will become untrue." The activists work with a similar message – it is already too late, and there is still time for you to act now – although with less success than Noah (so far).

A second stretching gesture in the scenes of affective workouts at the end of the world is a postapocalyptic reflection by those species that will outlast humanity. In a puppet theatre called *From the Bottom of the Sea*[62] created by an activist

58 Cf. Grillmayr, "Was übermorgen gewesen ist" and Hentschel, "Stretches of Imagination."

59 "Save Old Growth supporter bares truth of government inaction" /

60 As argued in a different counter back action: Save Old Growth, "Save Old Growth supporters glued to goalposts at canada-curaçao intenational [sic] soccer game," *Save Old Growth.ca*, accessed January 9, 2023, https://save-old-growth.ca/2022/06/09/save-old-growth-supporters-glued-to-goalposts-at-canada-curacao-intenational-soccer-game/.

61 Anders, *Beweinte Zukunft*, 9.

62 Altenburg am Meer!, "Puppentheater Vom Grunde des Meeres," *Openpavillion.eu*, accessed January 9, 2023, https://www.openpavillon.eu/puppentheater.

collective in contemporary East Germany, the imagined inhabitants of the ocean write – collectively, as they emphasize – a eulogizing letter to "us" humans, now extinct. The letter to "us," which gets transported in the belly of a fish, is not vengeful or gloating for the extinction and self-extinction that "we" caused. Rather, it is a tender letter that looks with wonder at "us," the genius species, who got things so fundamentally wrong. The corals, fish, seaweed and jellyfish study "us" in a similar way as archeologists would look at a collapsed civilization. As they collect traces to piece everything together and recall their memories of "us," they show that they have a big heart for their hapless object of study. They find it especially touching that we used to tell genesis stories to ourselves, which they interpreted as some respect for our origin. The sea dwellers even tell these stories to each other, as some kind of folklore or melancholia. Only the nets of plastic remain as our legacy. Floating on the overheated surface of the sea, yellow squeaky ducks, their eyes melting into tears; their bodies melting also. When the poles were melting and the sea levels rose, they reflect, "we" began to make up our minds. But then it was too late.

It will be too late. It will have been too late. While the simple future is the grammatical tense for a doomsayer, Anders's Noah works on his people's sentiments through mobilizing a future perfect ("it will have happened") in order to shape their actions in the present.[63] *From the Bottom of the Sea* imagines a similar scenario (the human species has gone extinct), however, unlike in Noah's mourned tomorrow, the demise of humankind does not mean the end of time, but the end of one species and its multifold worldings; the end of the world as we know it. Instead of "nobody," here, the more than human underwater world is imagined to mourn "us" and they do so lovingly.

What is striking in this story is not only the postapocalyptic look at how everything will have ended, but also how what we call "environment" or "nature" speaks with remarkable intelligence and emotion about "us." It is a way of narrating differently, reordering the "we" and working the sentiments and imagination, full of empathy and sentimentality, that it may even affect "us" as we are still in the middle of making up our minds, and hearts.

This workout in tenderness and listening to a more than human world after us brings us to a final turn in our reflection: that of more hopeful stretching exercises with Donna Haraway.

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63 See Julia Grillmayr, "Branching Timelines. Speculations on a Future (Never) Perfect," trans. Peter Blakeney and Christine Schöffler, in *Kunstraum Lakeside – Future Perfect*, ed. Gudrun Ratzinger and Franz Thalmair (Vienna: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2022).

> Each time a story helps me remember what I thought I knew, or introduces me to new knowledge, a muscle critical for caring about flourishing gets some aerobic exercise. Such exercise enhances collective thinking and movement in complexity. Each time I trace a tangle and add a few threads that at first seemed whimsical but turned out to be essential to the fabric, I get a bit straighter that staying with the trouble of complex worlding is the name of the game of living and dying well together on terra, in Terrapolis.[64]

Not convinced of the transformative power of apocalyptic stories, Haraway sketches utopian feminist fabulations of a hopeful future in the midst of environmental and sociopolitical catastrophes to come. Not unlike Anders's propositions, however, "staying with the trouble of complex worlding," as she calls it, is a matter of exercising; a tiring workout that is never finished. And similar to Anders, she refuses Heideggerian worldings because of their apolitical and "grumpy human-exceptionalist" character.[65] Famously, in Haraway's thinking, nature and culture, as well as the material and the semiotic, are not only closely entwined, but are two sides of the same coin. Working against what Anders called worldlessness is thus not merely a human or humanist problem. Instead, Haraway proposes a world of complex and complicated multispecies flourishing: *Terrapolis* which is "rich in world, [...] inoculated against human exceptionalism but rich in humus, ripe for multispecies storytelling."[66] Worlding, in Haraway's understanding, is always "relational material-semiotic" and therefore challenges once again the "we" of the Anthropocene as an anthropocentric, homogenous and ontologically fixed community. "Natures, cultures, subjects, and objects do not preexist their intertwined worldings."[67] Perhaps, then, the apocalyptic mindfulness that Anders calls for and the *Storytelling for Earthly Survival*[68] that Haraway puts forth can be seen as two connected exercises in stretching against the apocalypse, which means to warn of and mourn the many already ongoing endings of worlds, but also to imagine new worldings.

64 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press. 2016), 29.

65 Haraway, *Staying*, 11.

66 Haraway, *Staying*, 11.

67 Haraway, *Staying*, 13.

68 Terranova, Fabrizio, "Storytelling for Earthly Survival a film by Fabrizio Terranova," *Earthlysurvival.org*, accessed January 9, 2023, https://earthlysurvival.org/.

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Dan Holloway

The Wheelchair and the Whale: Disability and the End of the World

We think of disabled people as simply being absent from many idealised visions of the future. But it is more complicated. Disabled people are absent as subject from, for example, environmental utopias, but that subjective absence goes with a symbolic presence: as warning (this is what will happen if you do not act well) and as hope (act well and you can be free of this). This absence and presence drives a mechanism of disgust (at the brokenness of disabled bodies and minds) and holiness (distinctive behaviours that set apart a community of those who want to be free of that brokenness). This mechanism works within a framework of final eschatology, which imagines a future paradise (or idealised earth) that will be free from broken bodies and minds. An alternative way of imagining the future is needed, especially in environmental movements, that will allow space for disabled people to be present as subjects. Such a model might rest on ideas coming from realised eschatology, which recognises disabled bodies and minds as part of the community of an ideal world. In this model, "acting well," being part of an ideal community, would consist not in behaviours that separate that community from disabled people and erase their subjectivity, but in empowering disabled people to be subjects in the fullest possible sense.

Signs of the End of the World: Presence and Absence in Visual Representations of Utopia

Like many people, there is a single moment in my childhood I can point to and draw the lines that connect it to the ideas and structures that still shape me. For me that moment was a school visit to the Tate Gallery (there was just one of them back in those ancient times). Forty years on, I still have the postcards of two sets of paintings. And the story those paintings tell is a narrative that still, in many ways, frames the shape of this chapter.

Those sets of canvases are John Martin's *Last Judgement Triptych* (1853) and Mark Rothko's *Light Red Over Black* (1957) paintings which were, at the time, grouped together in a single, small room.

Martin's sweeping yet intricate imagining of Heaven was the Athena print or Windows screensaver of its day, and bore its Romantic and romanticised-rural, highly selective and biblical overtones in exactly the same way that a sunset

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over palm trees might bear a Deepak Chopra or Eckhart Tolle quote today (here we will skip over the midpoint between these sets of images, when the hills in Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above a Sea of Fog* echoed with Nietzsche; though that inconvenient connection is the perfect backdrop for this paper).

The idea that someone would imagine heaven in such a way fascinated and frightened me in equal measure. No matter how hard I stared into the beautifully-constructed scene with its pristine landscape and crisp colours, I simply could not see myself within it.

The textured, layered darkness of the Rothko, by contrast, seemed not so much to beckon me in as to invite me home. This was an imaginative space in which I could position myself. It is not a religious painting, but standing before it was a deeply religious experience; suitable for an artist whose works adorn the walls of a non-denominational chapel in Texas.

A more important connection to Martin's stylised and misty-eyed utopia, before which my 10-year-old self responded viscerally "I can't imagine ending up here," before turning to the roiling crimsons of 'Hell,' is found in the architect's concept drawing.

Nearly four decades after that encounter with a visual heaven, I walked around another exhibition, for the new £150 million Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities at Oxford University. From 2025, the building, which combines academia, the arts, and public engagement with research in the most intentional of ways to create that most stylised of concepts, the creative "planned accident," will be my home. But from that initial competitive exhibition to the concept drawings of the successful applicants, a familiar feeling was always present: "I am not here."

In the early drawings disabled people were, literally, not there, a point I raised at early meetings. The answer, intended clearly as an explanation, was enlightening. The non-wheelchair using, non-cane using ghost like figures that haunted this utopia were, we were reassured, purely generic; just representative "people" without the depth or nuance that would come later.

There is so much that could be said here about the role of architectural utopias in marginalising practice, from the whiteness of their ghosts[1] to the disrupted flows designed to keep away sleepers and skateboarders alike, but the importance here is the absence of disability. And, specifically, that such absence is not planned directly but a phenotypical expression of a deeply embedded sense both that the generic human family does not include us, and that the specific community for

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1 See Stephen Cave and Kanta Dihal, "The Whiteness of AI," *Philosophy and Technology* 33:4 (2020): 685–703 on the Whiteness of AI for interesting parallels.

whom utopias are intended would not include us. In this, the competitive exhibition, the presentation to important stakeholders (and the implied taxonomy of "importance"), and the eye towards RIBA judges all play a part in clarifying the iconography. It is an iconography designed to communicate something pristine, sustainable, pure, hygienic. The subject of the grand architectural drawing, like Martin's, is the City of God. And it is one in which I, as a disabled person, am both actually and imaginatively absent.

And yet I am not wholly absent. Because just as Martin's Heaven was displayed next to his Hell, the architectural drawing constantly reminds us in every detail of its design that is not there.

These are two not so different visions of a divided end of the world: Heavens in which the disabled are absent unless our bodies and minds are transformed into vehicles more suited to the surroundings. As we find ourselves before these binary imaginings, the only space that fits our bodies and minds as they are is hell, whether actually depicted or implied as being outside the immaculate walls and disruptively landscaped gardens.

The End of the World

And this brings us to final eschatology.

The conceptual framework that makes sense of this simultaneous omnipresence and omni-absence is eschatology, because eschatology's central concern is, in essence, what is present and what is absent in an ideal communal space or time. It is the vision of heaven. But it is also, and in equal clarity, the vision of hell. It is the sheep and it is also the goats. And the stories we tell about our ideal societies. The damned are, of course, absent from visions of heaven. But no vision of heaven can exist without their constant presence in the form of prohibition, warning, and whisper.

Eschatology is, literally, the study of the end time. But eschatological thinking in the Judaeo-Christian tradition is not necessarily focused on the "end of the world" in the sense of a specific event that will take place at a specific time in the future. The "end of time," in the sense in which it matters for eschatology, is an event in salvation history. It is the point at which the qualitative change takes place between life as it is in a broken world and life as it is in a healed world. The time that has ended at the end of time is a period of time that is qualitative in nature. It is the time during which humanity is fighting for its redemption, before such time as that redeemed future is secured.

It is often the case that this involves some kind of physical end point or break at which time what we recognise as human history comes to an end and another kind of history comes into being. This is what is often called "final eschatology."

On the other hand, it is sometimes the case that this rupture is seen as something that has, in some significant way, already taken place. That healing, or at least the path to healing, has been made possible in a radical way as the result of a particular event. In the Christian tradition this is most commonly when the death and resurrection of Christ is seen as the key disruptive event, and the subsequent gift to believers of the Holy Spirit is seen as constituting the new history, a qualitatively different period of time in which there may still be troubles for those living in the world but their ultimate destiny is secured and they are comforted by that knowledge. In these scenarios eschatology is often referred to as "realised."

The term realised eschatology was coined by C. H. Dodd in his book, *Parables of the Kingdom*[2]. The idea developed from a recognition that in the later-written Gospels of Luke and John, the focus of Jesus' parables had shifted from the need to be ready for a coming final judgement to the need to act radically and differently in response to an event that had already happened.

It is no accident that the most detailed account of this decisive event, the imparting of the Holy Spirit to believers, comes in the account of Pentecost in Luke-Acts.[3] Luke-Acts is the primary biblical source for much of the Liberation Theology movement.[4] The whole narrative structure of Luke-Acts is built around the creation of a community of the Holy Spirit, starting with Jewish believers and moving to the wider world, whose inner dynamic is one of liberatory praxis.

The presence and absence of disabled people; our use as horror and hope, and as demonstrable warning fits firmly within the framework of final eschatology. It is the connection between final eschatology and the erasure of disabled people (both by their literal absence and by their omnipresence in ghostly or monstrous form in other people's subjectivity) that I want to explore.

I suggest that, in large part, this final eschatological framework into which disabled people have been slotted is born of, but also designed to arouse, horror; to create distance; and that both of these are driven by disgust at disabled people's existence, both unconscious, because we represent brokenness, and conscious, because we represent what people could become. There is a lip service

2 C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1936).
3 Acts 2:1–13. The English translation of the Bible used is the New Revised Standard Version.
4 In particular Luke 4:18 where Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1,2 on preaching good news to the poor and liberating captives.

paid to the fact that we are human and therefore able to be redeemed (or "made whole" or whatever secularised equivalent of redemption might hold). But our appearance is horrific; we seem to be part of the troubled world "out there" from which people seek to flee. So, the only way they have of acknowledging that we could be fully human is to maintain that our current form is not our final form. That we will, literally, at some point, be transformed. This would mean our embodied experience is not fully human; where, importantly, there is nothing qualitative about their experience that means it might not be. So that the desire to pay lip service to our humanity actually serves to strip it from us.

I argue that we are in fact inextricably connected with the end of the world, but in the sense of a realised eschatology. Not as a warning or something to be, ultimately, removed or restored. Rather we represent the presence of the end of the world in contemporary society in the sense that we are essential to society's healing. It is the removal of the barriers that disable that marks the healing of society. To heal a broken society you need not to create a society from which we are cast out but to break open society and transform it so that it fully includes us. Our bodies and minds are neither broken nor healed. They are simply here. It is society that is broken or healed as it relates to those bodies and minds.

A Tale of Two Scientists: Symbolic Presence and Absence from the End of the World

I want to examine two examples of popular narrative imagination, exploring how they adopt final eschatological frames for disabled people in different ways, connecting disabled people with frightening outcomes at the end of the world.

What these examples do is demonstrate a conception of disabled people that the pictures we have considered so far concretise. And they help to explain more clearly just why it is that disabled people hold this position as signs of the end of the world. Once we understand this, we can begin to reimagine what an ideal community might look like, what our place within it might be, and how both relate to the end of the world.

Stephen Hawking died on 14 March 2018. One aspect of the popular response was inevitable. And sure enough the memes appeared straightaway. There was the dead and risen Hawking, looking towards the afterlife and standing to move forward into it, leaving his wheelchair behind: "free at last." Hawking's obituary in

the LA Times from March 13, 2018 described him as a "British physicist whose body was chained to a wheelchair."[5]

The online disabled community quickly responded. Indeed, one key lesson from the representation of disability in the public space is that you won't win a meme war with us. Marnanel Thurman's "Nyan Hawking" animation,[6] based on the original evergreen *Nyan Cat* video, showing a joyful Hawking in his chair riding across space to the *Nya Nya* backing track while shooting rainbows from his chair is a glorious riposte.

So, what is the problem with the "empty chair" (itself a notable use of the Christian empty tomb typology) portrayal of the risen Hawking? Let us consider the mechanics of this representation.

The same mechanics were at play in Lego's misplaced attempt to support 2022's Autism Awareness Month, which featured a mini figure in a spacesuit and the caption "I am" with the word "autistic" crossed out and replaced by the word "astronaut."[7]

The mechanics work as follows: To be disabled is to be broken. Humans are, in their ideal form, not broken. Disability is, therefore, not a part of one's true essence. And we succeed in being fully human, humans "as we were meant to be" as it were, when we escape, when we are finally healed. It is the model of a tripartite salvation history of lost paradise, a fallen existence on earth, and an ultimate restoration to original perfection in a heaven that is a part of our future.

Disability is fundamentally positioned in relation to a final eschatology. And that relation is one of "hope" and "horror." Hope because the end of the world offers those of us who are disabled freedom from our disability. And horror because we are a warning. As living representations of lives separated from God at the most basic level, we are a warning of the worst that could happen, a symbol of danger.

We are the monsters carved outside church walls, the dragons in the deep beyond the edge of the map, the witches outside the town walls. It is the role of those "inside" to keep us out. Our bodies and minds seem so distorted and distressed

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5 Thomas H. Maugh II, "Stephen Hawking, who redefined the view of the universe for scientists and public alike, dies at 76," *LA Times*, February 13, 2018, accessed February 14, 2018, https://www.latimes.com/local/obituaries/la-me-stephen-hawking-20180313-story.html. Note that Hawking died in the UK and so his death is commonly recognised as having been on March 14 2018, but because of the time difference, the LA Times obituary appeared on March 13 local time.
6 Maranel Thurman, "Nyan Nyan Stephen Hawking," *YouTube*, March 16, 2018, accessed April 25, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzkWjsR6n4I.
7 For reactions, see, for example, Fiona Clarke on Twitter, April 10 2022, https://mobile.twitter.com/Fiona_Clarke_/status/1513089067835170818.

that we can only be absent from scenes in which the abled picture themselves as relaxed and happy; they are unable to imagine any kind of community with us, or indeed any peace for us, unless we have been transformed.

However, it is also essential that they keep us "inside" as warnings in their stories, as symbols, as illustrations. It is this need – of abled society to keep us present but only as symbols; and of disabled people to manifest ourselves as subjects within society – which gives the debates over language their keenness. "Do not call yourself disabled," a father begged me after I gave a lecture on disability. The comment was the manifestation of an existential struggle. This was a man who genuinely sensed that, in some way, his child must be stripped of that label because it was an actual barrier preventing them from ever being truly together "on the inside."

David Attenborough's *Blue Planet 2* took up a remarkable place in the imagination of the British public. While the damage done, in particular to marine life, by single use plastics had already started to lead to attitudinal and legislative changes, it was the film of a mother pilot whale grieving for her dead calf, killed by ingesting plastics, that turned using plastic straws into a socially unacceptable act overnight, similar to drink driving and smoking around children.

Anyone who claimed to need a single use plastic straw was vilified on social media by armchair experts who explained that alternatives were available. And as with Stephen Hawking the disabled community leapt into action online. Jessica Kellgren-Fozard produced a superb pair of YouTube explainers titled *Banning Straws Hurts People*[8] and *What's Wrong With Reusable Straws*.[9] And infographics proliferated listing the functions of single use plastic straws that could not be replicated by the alternatives.

But bans, both legal and voluntary, remain in place. The inadequacy of exemption clauses would be enough for another whole book let alone a chapter.

The mechanics here are slightly different. It is not that disability is something "to be kept out." Rather, it is something which simply can't be imagined in an ideal society. The needs of disabled people do not need balancing with other needs in a green utopia, because it cannot be imagined that paradise could involve such nuance.

The plastic straw debate demonstrates that the perception of disabled people's needs stops at the point where those needs appear to conflict with environmental considerations. People who need single use plastic straws are offered metal, paper,

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8 Jessica Kellgren-Fozard, "Banning Straws Hurts People," *YouTube*, August 3, 2018, accessed April 25, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IBH0pcKzlY&t=603s.

9 Jessica Kellgren-Fozard, "What's Wrong With Reusable Straws?," *YouTube*, August 16, 2019, accessed April 25, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XGIxUXDWqw&t=1s.

silicone, or bamboo as alternatives because a need beyond that of "moving liquid from a container to a human" cannot be imagined. And this is where the underlying ontology of disability is the same in each of the two scenarios.

Because imagining the lives of the disabled, as experienced by disabled people, would be, as with Hawking's wheelchair, to invite the witch back within the city walls. And because the act of imagining itself would be an act of empathy or solidarity with the monstrous that cannot be permitted within the holy mind.

Holiness: A Society that Clothes Itself in Our Absence

But what factors have led to the continued presence of such an eschatological way of framing people's position in society when that society is largely secular? There is, of course, an obvious driver. So much of the narrative that shapes our experience of the world is directly apocalyptic. Whether it's pandemics, climate change, pollution, or the rise of killer robots, both the imagery and the language used to describe it creates the narrative of impending apocalypse. It is easy to think of this as the result of the proliferation of social media; whether that takes the form of chasing clicks or a more subtle form of echo chamber creation where the most exaggerated catastrophising achieves some kind of resonant frequency until the bubbles that support it collapse under the weight of their own fear.

But while we may not, as Stephen Pinker would have us believe, be living through a period of inexorable betterment, we are living in a time that, like many other times before it, manifests the experience of uncertainty as an anxiety about the possibility of discontinuity with the familiar that lends itself to the ameliorating frame of a final eschatology that whispers comfortingly, "your place in this world and your experience of this world might be uncertain, but another world is coming in which that certainty is assured. In fact the current uncertainty is a positive sign that the future certainty is coming." That has been the soothing message of final eschatology since at least the southern Kingdom's time in exile.

Furthermore, these current pressures lend themselves not just to the narrative of final eschatology but to an accompanying narrative of a holiness that manifests in ways for the community experiencing upheaval to use common behavioural practices as signs of a common identity, as ways of tasting a little part of what is to come at the same time as in some way guaranteeing that they will attain the promised future.

These markers of holiness serve to set the community apart from "others" who do not share their future, not just by proving themselves but by marking

themselves out in a very literal way. They are the equivalents of the red crosses painted on the doors at the first Passover which told the angel of death to carry on by and not stop at those houses that had been so marked.

Biblical language remains consistent on these mechanics over hundreds of years up to the time when Paul asks believers to "put on Christ"[10] and speaks of the crucifixion as an atoning sacrifice. Rituals and behavioural markers serve two purposes in this schema. They are an outward manifestation of an inward truth. To practise a behaviour, whether that is a ritual, the act of loving one's neighbour, or simply "repenting," is an indicator of the internal state of being a citizen of the kingdom of heaven ready to be in paradise when the end of the world comes.

And they are a sign to whatever force carries out the disrupting act of judgment that brings about the end of the world to "pass on by." It is a matter of some controversy, played out in New Testament translations, precisely what Paul means when he talks of Christ as an atoning sacrifice.[11] One suggestion is that he means propitiation, in which Christ is killed in the place of sinners, a direct swap as it were, so that at the moment of death the sins of the world fill him, while sinners take on his sinlessness. The other suggestion is that he means expiation, in which the blood of an innocent sacrifice covers up other people's sins.

Whichever of these Paul intends to be understood, one element is not in doubt. Whether there is no sin any more or because sin has been covered, when believers stand before the judge the judge sees no sin and ushers them through. A literal marker is being made available. Those who are part of the kingdom of heaven can gain access to it through a certain action. At some future time when judgement comes the judge will see that mark and send them on their way to salvation. In the meantime, however bad their experience of the world becomes and so long as they retain that mark, they can be certain that things will be OK.

"Holiness" is the simple term that refers to this process of marking oneself out according to these mechanics.

The fact that current narratives retain these mechanics of holiness is not a result of anything particularly cataclysmic about the times in which we find ourselves. It is, rather, a function of just how powerful this narrative is at offering a way of providing solace.

And disability fits right into this narrative of holiness as assurance.

10 Romans 13:14.

11 Romans 3.25; [Ιλαστήριον] in Greek.

Disgust

I suggest that retaining this positioning of disability, despite the apparently progressive narrative often presented, meets a far deeper need within society. That the primal feeling of disgust that led to the dual positioning of horror and hope within religious discourse in the first place survives the apparent decline of that religious framework. And that the structures this feeling creates – of a society within a society that functions as a beacon or a model of the possibility of something better – also serve an existential purpose at times like this because they offer a reason to persist.

In her 2016 Kyoto Prize lecture, Martha Nussbaum argues that disgust is people's natural response to their animality, which they associate with weakness, fragility, and inevitable decay. The lecture adds a level of aetiological nuance to her book from a decade earlier: *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and Law.*[12]

This disgust at their own weakness is then projected outwards onto others who remind them of their weakness and fragility. This happens most readily with the elderly and the disabled. Feelings of disgust towards these groups provides people, Nussbaum argues, with a psychological buffer that protects them from contemplating their own animal nature.

I suggest final eschatology, either in the Neoplatonist sense of spirit purged of body or the Judeo-Christian belief in a perfected body that has been transformed or restored enables a perpetual prevarication in relation to that animal nature, and that it is this which gives it its ongoing appeal, even in a secular world. To believe in a heaven free from minds and bodies like ours is to believe that while the process of degeneration and decay may be inevitable it is temporary and reversible. Like a scary rollercoaster ride, if you close your eyes at the right point, by the time you open them again the scary part will be over.

The mechanism that has enabled the survival of this disgust-based eschatology, and provided the means for people to close their eyes during the scary parts is the ritual and belief around a set-aside community, marked out by particular behaviours.

A millennium and a half ago Saint Augustine distinguished between the earthly city and the city of God. The city of God was the term he used to distinguish those people here on earth who would ultimately find themselves in heaven. The idea drew on the more ancient notion of "holiness." We have already looked at the way holiness involves taking on an identity in the writings of Saint Paul. And

12 Martha Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and Law* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004).

how it goes back further with its origins at least in the Mosaic community fleeing Egypt.

This idea has persisted, driven by the same fears of impending cataclysm and the need to persevere as a distinct community; one that will come through its tribulation in the desert. One that will, thanks to its identity concretised in its unique behaviours, and as the hymn of 1 Corinthians 13 concludes, "remain."[13]

It exists in the belief that it is possible to distinguish the "chosen ones" by their behaviour, their character; both markers that set them apart as special. It is an idea that has filtered through to activism. From a vegan diet to shunning single use plastic, behaviours that benefit the planet demonstrate that you are "at home in the city of God."

Holiness, behaving now as you will behave in the ideal future world, means, if I am right, to behave in such a way that this very particular fragility, the one associated with distortion and decay, is permanently prevaricated. The disabled cannot be part of the city of God, in this account, unless they transcend or are healed of their disabled status. And holiness cannot accommodate or adapt the city of God to such broken bodies and minds because to do so would collapse that prevarication. A holy community that is truly accessible would no longer be holy.

Signs of the End of the World Redux: Recognising and Rejecting Final Eschatology

It matters that we understand this background to disability's persistent presence and absence in popular discourses because it helps us to put up some waymarkers that allow us to reimagine those discourses in such a way that disabled people are present as subjects. This is imperative for the climate justice movement on the one hand, because without centring disabled people as subjects, in order to retain subjectivity, disabled people will have no choice but to push back against solutions to an existential threat. And this will create a spiral as climate catastrophe increasingly disables a larger proportion of the global population, pushing them into a position where they are left with no choice but to lean into this catastrophe. And, on the other hand, it is essential for disabled people, because the only future in which we exist at all is one in which climate change and our own erasure are both solved.

Those waymarkers are:

13 1 Corinthians 13.13.

First. Acknowledging that positioning disabled people as present-but-absent always serves the tactical purpose of removing us *as people* from the scenarios being mooted. The tactical moves it enables form a pincer attack.

Second. Accepting that all such positioning serves a tactical purpose, and constitutes a move to erase disabled people. This may or may not be deliberate but it is always present, and structurally always driven by othering ("we are disgusted by you; keep out!" or "society should find disabled people disgusting; and make itself as unlike them as possible").

Third. Accepting that, as disabled people, it is not, as we are often told, petty or pedantic to reject all utopias that exclude us and the structures built upon them. If we can go no further than rejection, especially in a world that strips us of the resources to do more, that should be enough. We need feel neither moral guilt nor intellectual pressure to provide an answer to the question: "well what *do* you want?" The demand that disabled people provide a workable alternative as an addendum to criticising a proposal that is unworkable for us is simply the reflex mechanism of the final eschatology that excludes us. The implication is very simple. An imagined future that cannot work for humanity is unthinkable. An imagined future that cannot work for disabled people is conceptually just fine because our humanity is considered to be fundamentally different and less. As such, we can reject all such utopias with impunity.

Fourth. Realising why so much rhetoric fails to engage disabled people who should be its natural allies; not just because it seeks our erasure but because it fails to make a positive case as to what difference it will make to disabled people now or in the future. We are often expected to be absent from the public sphere "for the sake of staving off catastrophe." But if that is the case, then for us catastrophe has already occurred. So, whose future are we preserving? Not that of future disabled people, because if our removal is part of the origin myth of what comes next then they will also be systematically excluded.

Fifth. Insisting that relating disability to the future is essential for erasing us. This allows society to say "look what might happen" in a way that provokes horror at the idea that if we are not removed from the future there may be more of us and more people might become like us. And it allows society to say "look what might happen" in hope as they look around and see that we are still here in the promise that, one day, if they do things right, we will no longer be.

From these waymarkers we see how we might do better as we imagine our ideal futures. And we might do so by no longer engaging with a final eschatology. Instead of readying ourselves for an impending apocalypse by establishing behaviours that exclude the disabled, we can live out the consequences of accepting that we are already living in end times.

The End of the World as Phenomenology and Liberative Praxis

We can remove the element of the future altogether, unapologetically focusing on a utopia in which we are active subjects, making eschatology no longer final, so that our presence is accepted as a given and a society is built around it and in relationship with that acceptance; that we are integral to society. To insist that disabled people are markers of the existence of an end times community and not markers of its boundaries is to engage in truly liberative praxis. That is, it sees not our liberation from our bodies and minds, but liberation for our body-minds, enabling them to flourish as they are.

In doing this, we also remove any rationale for strategies that urge us to cope with social or global issues by making "difficult choices" that exclude disabled people "for now" as a price worth paying for a future in which such choices will not have to be made.

Keeping disability rooted in the present ("we are among you. We are part of society. Being human means living with us") implies a phenomenology. The realised eschatology of Luke-Acts meant a phenomenology of the Spirit in the sense that those who were part of the eschatological community navigated the world in a fundamentally different way. They did so in the way of the Spirit; that is, doing the work of liberation and empowerment. This was a co-discovery of the world with the Spirit, where to "be in society" meant discovering, alongside the Spirit, that the Spirit was also always present and allowing the Spirit subjectivity in one's own subjectivity.

So, a realised eschatology of disability requires us to navigate our social spaces with a new phenomenology: discovering each other everywhere and discovering at every point that to be subjective means always experiencing the disabled person's subjectivity. Such a phenomenology always leads to a hermeneutic for our environment. Is this a space in which we can co-exist subjectively? And that requires an answer of the imagination: "can I go into this space subjectively and find you, as subject, there also?" In this sense, the disabled are the limit case of the City of God. If you can find us as subjects there then you can find every subject there. It is a reversal of disgust - imaginatively seeking us out rather than imaginatively creating narratives in which we cannot be found;

This is what we mean by the disabled as necessary for the City of God - that we create a praxis of questioning and imagining that enables a society to approach all its would be utopias and ask "are you real?" A final eschatology of disability asks the question "can I find you here as object?" and hopes for the answer "no." A re-

alised eschatology of disability asks "can I find you here as subject?" and hopes for the answer "yes."

These markers allow us to reimagine disability's place within discourse based on an eschatological template by replacing the current final eschatology with a realised one. In realised eschatology, the change is already here. This is a way of subverting the attempt to distance us by collapsing that distance. No longer are our bodies and minds "the scary parts" through which a community, in order to preserve itself and come out the other side, must close its eyes by turning its back and putting on behaviours in which we cannot be a part. Rather, we are not just an integral part of that community, but essential to how it establishes its identity as "City of God." Society can only thrive as society by opening its eyes, turning towards us, and building together, alongside us, strategies and an infrastructure for mutual empowerment.

A truly beneficial "end times" (in the sense of a world whose healing is underway) must embrace those who need inclusion, it is our presence and not that of the abled that is essential, the *sine qua non* of the end times.

In such a model disabled people are not recipients of action only. We do not just exist as catalysts to enable the rest of society to do better.

We are only objects of sufficient support from society to enable us to become fully participatory subjects in said society. This is the same sense in which the poor are the first fruits of salvation within liberation theology, not because there is a moral quality to poverty, just as there is not a moral quality to our bodies and minds, but because our presence is necessary for a society to know whether or not it is good, because our voices, in whatever form or medium we use them, drive transformational change through our agency within society; because our presence necessitates transformational change to give us back the agency a broken society has stolen from us; and because our fully empowered autonomy is the pen that draws the map, the tool that builds the road, and the vehicle that drives a broken society to healing.

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