

MULOSIGE Modules: World Literature and Planetary Catastrophe

Reading List Description

Dr Florian Mussgnug's research on twenty-first century narratives of global catastrophe is situated at the intersection of three vibrant disciplinary fields: world literature, risk and disaster studies and the environmental humanities. It explores genre as a process of creative expression and selection that displays and displaces established poles of institutionalized power, across national, cultural and linguistic boundaries. Focusing on ideas of the planetary – specifically in relation to global existential risk – I argue that the cultural force of genre literature is only partly located in their specific discursive and geopolitical context and must be understood as an open-ended trajectory.

His work explores the relevance of apocalyptic thinking to the emergent, paradigmatic concept of the Anthropocene and examines how cultural accounts of global catastrophe have changed and evolved in response to new perceptions and temporalities of existential risk and planetary connectedness. Twentieth-century apocalypse fiction focused on global 'events' such as lethal pandemics, devastating comet strikes and nuclear wars. As the gravity of the present environmental crisis becomes more evident, stories of planetary catastrophe have become progressively associated with the slow, irreversible deterioration of environmental conditions and with the potentially catastrophic global interconnection of technologies, exchanges and movements. The distinction between so-called 'natural' and 'man-made' apocalypse appears increasingly meaningless in an age that has come to view Earth as a single, interlocked feedback system.

Mussgnug's forthcoming monograph maps a growing interest in narratives of emergency, global catastrophe and survival in a damaged world. Drawing widely from twenty-first century literature and film, I argue that apocalyptic thinking plays a key role in contemporary conceptions of human vulnerability, shaping pervasive stories and values. Coherence will be achieved through three broad, cross-disciplinary concepts: revelation, resilience and radical hope. Each term corresponds here to a corpus of primary texts and to a different social and political conception of apocalypse fiction: as an articulation of anxious paralysis, a site of progressive activism and a means to building more livable futures.

Reading List contributor:

[Dr Florian Mussgnug](#) (UCL) has published *The Eloquence of Ghosts* (2010, winner of the 2012 Edinburgh Gadda Prize) and is working on a comparative study of the contemporary European novel: *Twenty-First Century Apocalypse Fiction: Revelation, Resilience, Radical Hope*.

Part One - [Modern Apocalypse Literature and Film](#)

Readings

Berger, J. *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999)

Bull, M. *Seeing Things Hidden: Apocalypse: Vision and Totality* (Verso, 1999)

Geraci, R. *Apocalyptic AI: Visions of Heaven in Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality* (Oxford University Press, 2010)

Gribben, C. *Writing the Rapture: Prophecy Fiction in Evangelical America* (Oxford University Press, 2009)

Heffernan, T. *Post-Apocalyptic Culture: Modernism and the Twentieth-Century Novel* (Toronto University Press, 2008)

Horn, E. *Zukunft als Katastrophe* (Fischer, 2014)

Landes, R. *Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2011)

Leigh, D. *Apocalyptic Patterns in Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Notre Dame University Press, 2008)

Lino, M. *L'Apocalisse postmoderna tra letteratura e cinema* (Le Lettere, 2014)

Lisboa, M. *The End of the World: Apocalypse and its Aftermath in Western Culture* (Open Book, 2011)

Mousoutzanis, A. *Fin-de-Siècle Fictions: 1890s/1990s* (Palgrave, 2014)

Paik, P. *From Utopia to Apocalypse: Science Fiction and the Politics of Collapse* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010)

Schossböck, J. *Letzte Menschen: Postapokalyptische Narrative und Identitäten in der neueren Literatur nach 1945* (Projekt Verlag, 2012)

Szendy, P. *Apocalypse Cinema: 2012 and Other Ends of the World* (Fordham University Press, 2015)

Tate, A. *Apocalyptic Fiction* (Bloomsbury, 2017)

Weninger, R. *Sublime Conclusions* (Legenda, 2017).

Williams, E. *Combined and Uneven Apocalypse* (Zero Books, 2011)

Žižek, S. *Living in the End Times* (Verso, 2010)

Many of these studies refer back to a small set of influential precursors:

Dellamora, R. (ed.), *Postmodern Apocalypse: Theory and Cultural Practice at the End* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

Kermode, F. *The Sense of an Ending* (Oxford University Press, 1967)

O'Leary, S. *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (Oxford University Press, 1994)

Rabkin, E. et al. (eds), *The End of the World* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1983)

Stafford, F. *The Last of the Race: The Growth of a Myth from Milton to Darwin* (Clarendon Press, 1994)

Wagar, W. *Terminal Visions: The Literature of Last Things* (Indiana University Press, 1982)

Part Two - [Planetary Thinking](#)

Readings

Allen, J. *Topologies of Power: Beyond Territory and Networks* (Routledge, 2016)

Brenner, N. *New State Spaces: Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood* (Oxford UP, 2004)

Brown, W. *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (MIT Press, 2010)

Code, L. *Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location* (Oxford UP, 2006)

Connolly, W. *Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming* (Duke UP, 2017)

Cosgrove, D. *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (The Johns Hopkins UP, 2001)

Cronin, M. *The Expanding World: Towards a Politics of Microspeciation* (Zero Books, 2012)

Elden, S. *Terror and Territory: The Spatial Extent of Sovereignty* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009)

Elias, A. and C. Moraru (eds), *The Planetary Turn: Relationality and Geoaesthetics in the Twenty-First Century* (Northwestern UP, 2015)

Haraway, D. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke UP, 2016)

Heise, U. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford UP, 2008)

Latour, B. *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime* (Polity, 2017)

Mezzadra, S. and B. Nielsen, *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* (Duke UP, 2013)

Nixon, R. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Harvard UP, 2011)

Oliver, K. *Earth and World: Philosophy After the Apollo Missions* (Columbia University Press, 2015)

Sassen, S. *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton UP, 2006)

Spivak, G. *Death of a Discipline* (Columbia UP, 2003).

*MULOSIGE Modules seeks to foster research and pedagogy that highlights comparison across and between languages and that is attentive to the 'significant geographies' of each context. Readers can create and submit syllabi based on their own collaborations with other scholars at <http://mulosige.soas.ac.uk/contribute-collaborative-courses/>.