



SURRENDER

ANNE MARIE WIRTH CAUCHON

Issue 004: APOCALYPSE, and I don't know how to begin. I don't know how to begin an editorial statement at an evolving time like this, when it's never been easy to find words adaptive enough to flourish through a happening as insistent and inventive as the destruction of humanity, and its worlds. But you and I both know—maybe now more than ever—we simply can't let all this be finished, not really; we couldn't possibly mean *the end*.

Not like that.

So we'll carry on, enduring all the way, lest we risk surrender to an enemy that doesn't deserve our precious souls: call that enemy fear, obedience, indifference, evil, or hate. Then let me start with a "line of flight," a half-sentence I've read or written again and again in various iterations during the five years I've partly devoted to the study of *apocalypse*: originally, in its Greek form, *apokalyptein* meant to uncover. To reveal, unveil, strip, expose—like you would your lover, or your enemy. And in its Latin variant, *apocalypsis* meant revelation. Revelation: the transmission of transcendent mysteries to mortal beings, or more simply: a confession, a divulgence, an utterance.

A word.

As steeped as my colleagues and I were in these kinds of ruminations about the hard path to knowledge, as attendant as we were to the expressions of catastrophe erupting around us, when we chose *apocalypse* as the central concept for Issue 004 in late 2019, we couldn't have predicted the pandemic now unfolding around us. We likely considered other threats latent today: totalitarian nightmares, widespread terror and warfare, the swell of digital dominance, the proliferation of extreme weather events, or even the chance for nuclear conflict and fallout. And these potentials remain, even if we ignore them.

But what arrived to make that potential appear more imminent than ever was something microscopic: a virus. A virus like a spark, able to ignite chaos and ruination across this lonely planet, across and within us puny humans, buried in our daily joys, triumphs, tragedies, heartbreaks, and struggles. That's not to suggest that, through the works curated in this issue, my colleagues and I mean to imply that the coronavirus pandemic marks *the end*.

Not like that.

Still, as we witness the beginning of transformations that outstrip our ability to fully understand them, this single word—*apocalypse*—has gained an overwhelming, insistent fragility and a seductive, descriptive allure. It's a word that hypnotizes with the comfort of closure, of predictable explanations. But more than that, it's a word that requires those of us who've begun to encounter it with increasing regularity—in films and literature, in social media and in the news—to bear the psychic weight of its burdensome denotation, *destruction*, and hold tight to the luminescence of its shimmering connotation, *revelation*, keeping them in impossible, intertwined companionship.



Ngemba Country (Watermarks) ~ Paul Harmon

That's where we started, in the eye of the intimate tempest swirling between these two distant interpretations: revealed knowledge on the one hand, wreckage on the other. And through these first long days of crisis, a crisis whose end is not yet in sight, buffeted as we are by boredom, loneliness, exhaustion, uncertainty, mortality, by knowledge or experience of poverty, displacement, hunger, we've protected—tenderly—a statement that lies in the obscured, desirous heart of our founding discipline, psychoanalysis: destruction is a cause of coming into being.

I suppose here I should say: *apocalypse* has a way of making a writer like me wax poetic. I would apologize, but it proves a point: with *apocalypse*, even each word becomes urgent,

alchemical, as the boundaries between entities blur. Let me go on, and mention the way a word can act like a fractal of *apocalypse*, as it kills the thing, to make it new and known. At the very root of our beings, language itself enacts a violence, a finality. Which brings me back to where I started: *the end*. Since here we are at last, unable to ignore that ultimate possibility, even as we know the coronavirus pandemic is not the first or last time catastrophe has destroyed worlds.

That's where our team started too, looking back through the hidden histories that have delivered us to a tangled present, to a global system that's built dominance by decimation, through generations. There's a lot to learn from those riotously thriving in the wake of supremacy and constant growth. Perhaps first among these lessons is one that unexpectedly collides with therapeutic work, one we've returned to again and again: when trouble comes, stay with the storm.

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Watermarks is shown here as a portion of the full accompanying artwork originally featured on stillpointmag.org.

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