

Re-Imagined Aftermath

Author: Wenzel Mehnert

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Abstract:

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"Then comes the time after the end of the world. Because things keep happening and history never stops."

Think of Yourself as a Planet (Kim Stanley Robinson, 2017)

In many contemporary discourses, global crises such as climate change are often presented as *The End of the World*, building on culturally shared ideas such as the apocalypse. In this view, the dominant imaginary with which we think about the future and imagine a time after the present, ends at a fictional event horizon and does not allow us to see beyond it. But as writer Kim Stanley Robinson points out in his prose poem "Think of Yourself as a Planet", time is endless and does not stop at a socially defined point in time.

As climate change becomes more concrete and seen as inevitable, science fiction (SF) creates visions of what might come after the end of the world. Well known are the dystopian visions of the post-apocalypse, such as George Millers *Mad Max; Fury Road* (Miller 2015) or Lob, Rochette & Legrands *Le Transperceneige* (2014)¹ which stem from the Cold War era angst of the 1970s and 1980s and often depict societies where tyrants and dictatorships rule with violence and fear.

In contrast to notions of post-apocalypse, SF also provides ideas for the future to aspire to, to re-imagine the future in a different way. Emerging anti-dystopian

¹ The story is also known from the movie adaptation „Snowpiercer“ (Ho 2014)

visions create an image of a post-climate change world beyond feelings of hopelessness and despair. Genres such as solarpunk and hopepunk paint pictures of a future for humanity that learns from the effects of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene and imagines a new society living in the aftermath of the apocalypse.

In this essay, I will give an insight into the different approaches to re-imagine the time after the end of the world. In doing so, I focus on the SF imaginaries that offer different visions beyond catastrophe and the dystopian future. SF, understood here as a seismograph of present trends, hopes and fears, becomes a mirror for our current values and social imaginaries. It thus helps to answer the question, in which kind of future we want to live and opens a way to build it.

Biography

Wenzel Mehnert is a culture and media scholar and works as a research assistant at the Berlin University of the Arts and the Technical University Berlin. In his research, he focuses on socio-technical imaginaries of new and emerging technologies. In addition to the analytical examination of technofutures in various discourses, he develops creative methods for reflecting on present futures through creative means from design and literature. His doctoral thesis is dedicated to the science fiction subgenre Neuropunk and analyses the present and past imaginaries of the neurointerface in popular culture.