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Musicking Green Alarm: Prophecies of environmental catastrophism in pop and rock music

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Abstract

Tropes of disaster, apocalyptic reckoning, and fears of impending doom have determined the perception of environmental crisis since the rise of the ecological movements in the early 1970s. Environmental studies such as *Limits to Growth* and *Global 2000* provide the theoretical basis for perceiving the future prophetically as endangered. To what extent are environment-related prophecy, fear, and escape scenarios a topic of pop music? This article discerns current pop-musical approaches to environmental prophecy by analyzing Western societies' coping methods and latent conflicts. Whether it is the alarmism, the display of equanimity, or the communication of hope: pop music is not only a sounding board of environmental prophecy within the entertainment industry. Rather, as an expression and agent of power, it is a decisive factor within ecological crisis dynamics.

KEYWORDS: Sustainability Communication; Political Communication; Latency; Future Studies; Luhmann

Pop Music and Environmental Prophecy: A Challenge of Boundary Work

Several attempts have been undertaken in recent years to examine the complex link between pop music production and environmentalism (Ingram 2010; McDowell et al. 2021; Pedelty 2012), but analyses on the potential of pop music in environmental *communication* have remained rare (Boykoff 2010; Philipp 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025). The ecological commitment shown by selected pop music representatives and communities has occasionally drawn scholarly attention

(Taylor 2019; Kahn 2013). In recent years, the environmental impact of music production and the pop music industry as a whole has garnered increasing attention. Both the production and consumption of music – ranging from sound carriers and streaming servers to distribution chains – are associated with significant environmental costs. However, these impacts remain largely unknown to consumers and are only gradually becoming a subject of critical discussion (Brennan 2020, 2021; Brennan and Devine 2020; Devine 2019).

In order to better understand dynamics, challenges, and risks of current environmental conflicts, it is worth digging deeper into this interrelation from a political science perspective. This applies in particular to the manifold narratives of apocalyptic disaster and impending doom that have determined the perception of environmental crisis since the rise of the modern ecological movements in the early 1970s. Modern prognostic writings such as *Limits to Growth* (Meadows 1972), *The Hirsch Report* (Hirsch et al. 2005), and the regularly released IPCC assessment reports (e.g. IPCC 2023) provide the statistical and theoretical basis for perceiving the ecological future as endangered. Major players in environmental politics have often been perceived as "prophets of pessimism" (Herman 1997: 9), re-actualizing the Western narrative of an unstoppable downward development in ever new ecological contexts (Spengler 1926; Toynbee and Myers 1948-61). However, the prominence of prophetic speech and apocalyptic future scenarios is not just an issue of environmental activism and sustainability theory.

As this article will show, it also accompanies cultural practices and shapes music productions. When analyzing pop musical adaptions of apocalyptic prophecy, this article proposes to explore sound regime and lyrics less as an act of eco-activism, protest culture, or artistic testimony, but rather as a possibly involuntary insight into the hidden layers and subconscious streams of Western societies: their unresolved problems, partly un-spoken conflicts, and *latent structures*. German sociologist Nicolas Luhmann has formulated a diagnosis that all modern societies are co-determined by structures that are not communicatively addressed, such as taboos, normative codes, or explicit bans on speech. The challenge of latency thus concerns "the observation of what other observers cannot observe" (Luhmann, 2000: 94). At the same time, Luhmann states modern societies have developed cultural and scientific techniques of observation (e.g. psychoanalysis, the fiction novel) with a particular interest for the observed actors' unknown interpretive strategies, emotions, and latent decision mechanisms. To observe others "with regard to what they cannot observe — whether in respect of unknown motives and interests, the ideologicality of their worldview, or of latent functions and structures in general" (Luhmann 2013: 103) may also open a path to differentiate environmental communication in pop music. By adapting Luhman's analytical paradigm on pop music, this article explores the value of prophetic speech and apocalyptic tropes in the environmental movements, evaluates selected methods of processing musically environmental prophecy and apocalyptic tropes to venture, and concludes with a summary analysis. The following overview of songs is not representative for this discourse. It exclusively considers pop music pieces with English-language lyrics, reflecting their widespread appeal and dominant presence in the global music market. Since the article centers on the interplay of lyrics and sounds in exploring latency, the analysis is confined to music that includes lyrics. The works examined span a production period from 1961 to 2023. All the examples

originate from the Global North. The selection process of the case studies drew on the author's teaching experience at universities, and discussions with students, along with insights from recent academic research. Rather than attempting to comprehensively cover the entire spectrum of environmental prophecy in music, this essay narrows its focus to a curated set of case studies to substantiate their explanatory potential on latent societal problems.

Prophecy and Prognosis in the Environmental Movements

Prophetic speech is a particularly productive form of political communication that both ecological movements and institutionalized actors in environmental and climate politics have used frequently throughout their history. In its original, pre-modern form, practiced over centuries around the globe, the prophetic speaker attracts public fascination by his or her communicative strength and ability in predicting a conceivable future. Despite all the differences in content and historical context, the prophet appears as a medium of a hidden, invisible reality and a legitimate voice of a theological or cosmic authority. In distinction to practices of clairvoyance or fortune-telling, the prophet establishes or reestablishes a normative and meaningful *order of existence* (Skrimshire 2014: 235). Prophecy is thus not necessarily religious, but a political means of securing the future of societies — it establishes relations between belief and value systems and offers guidance to interpret empirical events. The prophet's dominant rhetoric is a conditional threat (Aune 1996: 337): If the indications are ignored, seemingly inevitable consequences will occur. In this way, prophecy consists in constructing a fictious causal chain, combining it with expectant punishment or reward. It admonishes and warns while at times anticipating disaster. Its core function in political communication is *prevention*.

When it comes to the harmful consequences of modern environmental degradation, scientific prognostications have long intertwined with prophetic patterns. Among the most prominent examples, the regular assessment reports of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have provided projections based on current technological and scientific standards. Since the release of its first report in 1990, the IPCC globally gained influence on civil society, economy, and politics by analyzing the present and possible future outcome in data-based scenarios. Due to their political objectivity and scientific reliability, the reports became an eloquent prophetic medium, depicting the future as endangered, generating individual and political pressure for action, and using science as an authority to constitute order. Decades before, the environment study *Limits to Growth* followed a prophetic agenda (Kool 2013). Legitimized by confidence in the reliability of algorithmic models, its authors warned the global audience by communicating an effective threat: if the status quo is maintained, the study says, "the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years" (Meadows 1972: 23). With a comparable prophetic impetus, *The Global 2000 Report*, commissioned in 1980 by US President Jimmy Carter, predicted harmful consequences of global population growth by 2000, if adequate political measures were not taken (Barney 1980). In 2006, applying prophetic patterns on the climate discourse, British economist Nicolas Stern launched the largest report on future climate scenarios and their consequences on the world economy. With 5-6°C

warming and without any adequate political action, Stern estimated an average 5 to 10 per cent loss in global GDP (Stern 2009: ix). In all these examples, humankind was given alternatives to counteract the trends and to avoid the predicted catastrophe.

It was not just in science, but also in environmental politics that representatives have used a prophetic aura to communicate environment conflicts. Among the most prominent, US politician and businessman Al Gore, who had been working on environmental issues since the 1990s, defined himself as a political advocate for science in order to convey the message of global warming and its catastrophic consequences. Alarmist prophecy defined several of his speeches, such as his Nobel Lecture in 2007. Gore combined science and mystical vision: "I have a purpose here today. [...] I have prayed that God would show me a way to accomplish it." Gore saw himself as a messenger within a prophetic mandate when confronting the audience with a dichotomous order: "Life or death, blessings or curses. Therefore, choose life that both thou and thy seed may live" (Gore 2007). Another prominent representative of contemporary ecologic prophecy, the founder of the *Fridays for Future* movement, Greta Thunberg, chose prognostic clauses when addressing the European Parliament in 2019: "Around the year 2030, 10 years, 259 days and 10 hours away from now, we will be in a position where we will set off an irreversible chain reaction beyond human control that will most likely lead to the end of our civilization as we know it" (Thunberg 2019: 46). In contrast to biblical prophets, Thunberg legitimized her warning not by mystical experience but by the IPCC's projections. The access toward an open future was blocked, as her much-quoted speech at the World Economic Forum showed: "I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic" (Thunberg 2019: 24). Shortly thereafter, Thunberg was perceived as a controversial "climate prophet" (Boucher 2019).

Thunberg's rhetoric is just one of many indicators that environmental prophecy, throughout history, has been intensively related to the perception of decadence. Rhetoric of decline, a final warning, catharsis, doom, and the longing for a new beginning have accompanied environmental movements and their writings since the 1970s in Europe and North America (Radkau 2014: 182-183). Apocalyptic thinking gains particular relevance when societies are faced with problems they feel unable to cope with: the notion of doom offers a simple narration in situations of high complexity (Skrimshire 2014: 243). With their prophetic warning of a contaminated future, the anti-nuclear movements in Europe, e.g., successfully reactivated the risk perception of a global and permanent nuclear winter-scenario, as it had been advanced by scientists like Herman Kahn during the Cold War (Kahn 1960). In this case, however, an essential component of the apocalypse – the belief in a new beginning and the emergence of a new world – had disappeared: the impending catastrophe was absolute. This radicalized doom narration, devoid of any promise of survival, was not merely a secular manifestation of current moods and requests for change (Renner 2012: 205); it also served as a prophetic reform agenda articulated as a threat.

Prophecy in Pop Music: Alarmist Approaches

Multiple attitudes determine the processing of environmental prophecy in pop music. A common strategy involves conveying alarm in response to catastrophic

threats. Such a prophetic fiction of an apocalyptic worst-case scenario appears with particular frequency in metal bands such as Gojira (*Global Warning*, 2005; *A Sight to Behold*, 2008), Warrant (*April* 2031, 1992), Nevermore (*Matricide*, 1992), Queensrÿche (*Resistance*, 1990), Black Sabbath (*Children of the Sea*, 1980), Fugazi (*Burning Too*, 1989) and Kreator (*When The Sun Burns Red*, 1990). Many, but not all of these songs contain an explicit reference to environmental concern. US hard rock formation Aerosmith, inspired by California's earthquake problems (Huxley, 1995: 54), contributed *Nobody's Fault* in 1976, processing dysfunctional alarm, burning fires, panicked flight, and human responsibility: "Man has known / And now he's blown it", sings Steven Tyler's in a high-pitched voice, accompanied by aggressive guitar beats and drums, evoking a depiction of chaos and anxiety. Although not written with an environmental agenda, the song can be perceived as an ambivalent play on ecological disaster scenarios. Apart from the Metal genre, the vision of a "docked apocalypse" (Vondung 1988: 11) that leaves no path of escape appears in countless forms, not in all cases with an explicit ecological frame. Among the most successful, Peter Gabriel's *Here Comes The Flood* from 1977 combines Old Testament apocalyptic metaphors with spirituality and articles of faith: "Lord, here comes the flood / We'll say goodbye to flesh and blood."

Attempts to give Greta Thunberg's alarmist prophecy a musical spin attracted particular attention throughout different genres in 2019. Fatboy Slim was among the most discussed examples. During a concert in Gateshead, England, on October 4, 2019, the British musician remixed one of his most popular house hits, *Right Here, Right Now*, from 1999, with fragments of the speech that Thunberg had given twelve days earlier at the UN Climate Summit in New York. Underpinned by a synthetic, linear techno sound, Thunberg's both childlike and increasingly restless voice resounds: "My message is that we will be watching you." A central motif of her text "Right here, right now" recurs in permanent repetition. Thunberg had literally told the delegates: "Right here, right now is where we draw the line. The world is waking up. And change is coming, whether you like it or not." When musician David Scott posted the mash-up on Twitter right after the concert, accompanied with images of ice mountains breaking apart, it rapidly went viral (Lyons 2019). Thunberg's alarmist speech became electronically serialized – nothing more than a phonetic sound material without semantic content.

Fatboy Slim however was not the first to transfer Thunberg's New York speech into new sound experiences. Just a few days after Thunberg's statement at the UN, New York drummer John Meredith aka John Mollusk, impressed by Thunberg's anger, combined fragments of Thunberg's appeal with death metal sounds. Despite the darkness of the lyrics, Meredith felt Thunberg's voice did not sufficiently match the metal aesthetic, and therefore replaced her voice with his own, digitally processed voice. Meredith's video *How Dare You*, published under his alias G.T, immediately went viral via YouTube and Bandcamp. Meredith was convinced that "Teen angst can be a powerful and important driving force in society" (Grow 2019), and Thunberg commented on the artwork ironically: "From now on I will be doing death metal only!" (McFall-Johnsen 2019). However, the combination of Thunberg's speech and metal sounds provided a rather satirical element to the piece. Meredith's music was apparently intended as conveying a sense of fear, but

in the end tended towards comedy. Here too, Thunberg's prophetic rhetoric lost its alarmist effect and was reduced to a sonic meme.

No Tragedy and No Importance: Approaches of Indifference

Although prophetic speech and apocalyptic tropes have historically been associated with fear and concern (Skrimshire 2014: 237), musical adaptions of doom scenarios may choose a strategy that leverages emotion in a completely opposite way. One of the most famous and earliest expressions of equanimity and sober disillusion is Zager and Evans' prophetic folk-rock song *In the Year 2525*. Narrating the future as a gradual process of alienation from nature, the song placidly advances in tonal shifts and three modulations in a dystopic time ride from 2525 to 9595. At its end, all the earth's bounty will have fallen victim to man's greed: "He's taken everything this old Earth can give." While the Earth dies, a new planet is being born, providing shelter to a new human civilization. A sedate reprise of the first verse to the end of the song underscores its cyclical logic. Tranquilly, the course starts anew.

Fun and amusement characterize one of the most celebrated and contradictory musical adaptations of the nuclear disaster scenario: Righeira's *Vamos a la playa* of 1983, a summer hit that topped the single charts in many European countries and has sold over three million copies worldwide (Riccardi 2013). Its Spanish lyrics narrate the explosion of a nuclear bomb at the beach: *"La bomba estalló / La radiaciones tostan / Y matizan de azul"* ("The bomb exploded / The radiations roast / And tinge blue everything", own translation), says the first verse. Though the catastrophe has lost its hostile character, it offers advantages: *"Vamos a la playa / Al fin el mar es limpio / No más peces hediondos / Si no agua fluorescente"* ("Let's go to the beach / At last the sea is clean / No more stinking fish / No more fluorescent water", own translation). Summery cheerfulness, animation, and liveliness characterize the sound of the chorus, leaving no room for associations with disaster and doom. Songwriter Johnson Righeira declared in 2018 that his "post-atomic beach song" was an answer to the perceived nuclear Damocles sword that hovered above Western societies: to get over it required not just ignorance, but also the willingness to accept a new luminous and radioactive world (Contegreco 2022: 187).

Unconcerned by the catastrophic future, unempathetic and indifferent in its approach is 2018's *Time is up* by synth-pop representative Poppy, an art figure created by singer and Internet personality Moriah Rose Pereira and her producer Corey Titanic Sinclair. Their common *Poppy Project* is a combination of cotton-candy aesthetic, parody, social criticism, internet culture, and AI aesthetics. Poppy is an android and speaks with a gentle voice, robotically listing the consequences of environmental destruction. Realizing what humans have done to earth, Poppy concludes that their extinction is the only way out. As Poppy is not dependent on the gifts of nature, it will easily survive the final destruction: "Baby your time is up" the chorus says, accompanied by a subtle sound reminiscent of an alarm clock's ticking. The predicted future is cruel but without any importance: "Your life is meaningless, you're just like cockroaches / Extermination's your only hope / Human history, pollution and overcrowded cities / That's your legacy / But don't look so depressed, you'll soon be nothingness". Humankind is miniaturized as a "baby"

and the doll-like Poppy with her characteristic feminine, monotone, and high-pitched voice appears as a representative of Barbie aesthetics. In the music video, Poppy performs as an artificial android in a sterile, clinical, and minimalist room. The persona's design merges idealized notions of femininity, which nowadays serve as elements in designing actual robots, but at the same time appears devoid of history and identity (Davis 2018). Unobtrusively, humanity's extinction is not a single event, but a gradual process. Poppy is an auto-referential play in between real-life and virtual reality, combining questions of identity and responsibility with dystopian science fiction and a glossy Camp aesthetic – a cold, commodified form of entertainment in times of lethal crises (Kaszuba 2021: 58; Pandell 2017).

The staging of indifference and fun in response to prophetic crisis rhetoric has other colorful adaptations in pop music: Madonna's seemingly alarmist, four-minute global hit *4 Minutes*, produced in 2008 together with the popular singers Timbaland and Justin Timberlake as a response to climate change scenarios, is less a gesture of alarm, warning and doom scenarios, as the ticking clock in the background and the chorus verse "We only got four minutes to save the world" seem to suggest. Rather, the song appears as an energetic offer of entertainment, hedonism, and joyful performance in the face of critical danger (Philipp 2019: 336).

Hope and Progress Communication: Optimist Approaches

Despite such testimonials of artificial apathy and indifference in which the speaker is rather a distanced observer than a suffering subject of the tragedy, the true function of prophetic speech and apocalyptic reckoning has never disappeared in pop music: the call for inner conversion, motivating courageous action to escape catastrophe. Pathos, clichés of care to Mother Earth, and sentimental hope determine, for instance, The Kelly Family's *If the Last Tree…* of 1993, staging a prophetic sentence that was ostensibly a Cree Indian proverb, but in fact resulted from a Greenpeace campaign (Philipp 2023: 20). The group concluded with a vague imperative, as it is essential for this type of prophecy: "Give it a chance." Different in style and appearance, but comparable in their doom logic, The Cranberries' *Time is ticking* out from 2001 provides a series of moralizing questions on an endangered future such as "What about our children then", concluding succinctly: "For me, love is all". And Icelandic singer-songwriter Björk, who in manifold ways processes environmental questions in her songs, insists in her artful *Alarm Call* (2012), far from any resignation: "You can't say no to hope / Can't say no to happiness / It doesn't scare me at all".

More prominently, with their contribution *A Minute to Breathe*, US songwriter Trent Reznor and his longtime collaborator Atticus Ross propose a vague approach to optimism. The song was launched in 2016 as the soundtrack to Leonardo DiCaprio's environmental documentary *Before The Flood*. The two musicians, members of the US industrial rock formation Nine Inch Nails, had already won Oscars for an earlier soundtrack when they accepted to create the documentary's soundtrack in only six months. Post-rock representative Mogwai and composer Gustavo Santaolalla, who scored *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005) and *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006), agreed to assist. "This could be the end of life on this planet. And, as a parent of young kids, it's pretty easy to fall into despair and apathy", Reznor said when looking back on the project (Grow 2016). Accompanied

by a restrained piano and ethereal synthesizer sounds, Reznor begins with reverberant, easily intelligible vocals, slightly dissonant to the piano, taking up one of the primal motifs of the apocalyptic flood: "We wait / We pray / For the rain." Flat, ambient sounds determine the song, which completely forgoes percussion, drums, abrupt changes, modulations or any other effective dynamic effects. The lyrics reference another prominent element of the doom theme, the anticipation of judgment and sentence: "I don't want to say goodbye / Stars falling from the sky / We will all be judged / By what we leave behind". Artificial reverb, delay and echo effects characterize the sound. Reznor's song, about six minutes long, appears at the very end of DiCaprio's documentary. Directed by Fisher Stevens for Netflix, the camera follows Leonardo DiCaprio, the narrator, over two years as he travels around the world in his role as a UN Messenger of Peace. The 2015 UN Climate Conference in Paris and the Paris Agreement are the historical focal points. Apart from explanations on the effects of climate change and expert discussions with scientists and politicians, the documentary unveils how DiCaprio's rather pessimistic attitude at the beginning changes towards a perspective of optimism towards the end of the film. When DiCaprio concludes his speech at the Paris Climate Change Conference signing ceremony, Reznor's song fades in. "It's up to all of us" is the message on the screen (*Before the Flood* 2016).

Reznor's textual reference to prayer suggests that hopeful lyrics in the face of a lethal crisis can also draw on spiritual resources too. As William James Adams Jr. aka will.i.am, inspired by Al Gore's environmental prophecies (Block 2007), suggests when listing the manifold dimensions of human crisis while "The planet's gonna die 'cause of bullshit politics", only God appears to provide a solution: "Lord, come down and help us out / Send us an angel, help us out."

Prophecy and the Normalization of Catastrophes: Pop Music as a Sounding Board of Latency

The overview shows that the subject of prophetic speech in ecological contexts covers a broad range of applications in popular music and operates on different levels of defining the future. Prophetic perspectives and doom scenarios enter many musical genres. Pop music shows that the ecological prophecy not just produces imaginations of a hazardous future, but also creates reflexive spaces to argue and negotiate knowledge about the future. The pop musical adaptation underscores that prophetic and catastrophic speech in pop music is part of the cultural heritage of the Western world (Philipp 2021; Riesch 2021: 144), and so does pop, like other discourses, work with those speech pattern. Particularly, the many expressions in the Metal genre show that the apocalyptic motif, though it may appear pre-modern, remains topical: its particular appeal is its *finality*, the ultimate disappearance of a society. The complexity of many environmental problems, their diffuse constellation of interests and their seemingly hopeless character are just one reason for the prevalence of the doom discourse. In this way, music is not only an expression of overall, consistent, and latent fear; it resonates a modernized society's perception that "every technology produces, provokes, and programs a specific

accident" (Virilio and Lotringer 1997: 46). Its latent function is to urge for a plan of salvation (Radkau 2014: 183).

The overall latency problem however is that today's catastrophe is not a single event, but a slow and gradual process, and pop music is an artistic practice that provides an expression to what is partially present, but mostly hidden behind ongoing, everyday practices such as shopping, mobility, nutrition, etc. Even Chernobyl has endured beyond the striking event in 1986 in a series of long term (and de facto never-ending) damage. The public discourse has ended, but a multitude of long-term consequences continues to operate powerfully beneath the surface: today's apocalypse is "a catastrophe without event" (Horn 2018; 229). It is to no surprise that pop music also allusively processes the infinite latency period of environmental tragedy, as Zager & Evans, Poppy or the serialized phonetic patterns of Fatboy Slim show. The latency problem of ecology related pop is the fact that environmental degradation – apart from spectacular catastrophes such as Seveso (1976), Bhopal (1984), Fukushima (2011), or Deepwater Horizon (2010) – mostly appear imperceptible and do not influence daily life beyond their immediate locale and therefore will merely not cause direct action or counter measures. However, "waiting until they become visible and acute before being stirred to serious action will, by definition, be too late" (Giddens 2009: 2). Giddens' paradox can be understood as a plea for communicating the catastrophe as a concrete, close-enough event with a precise date of no return. And indeed, modern environmental prophets such as Meadows, Stern and Thunberg have tried to meet this need – and pop music examples such as Peter Gabriel, Aerosmith and Gojira might contribute to experience the catastrophe as a real and ongoing event, not as a hypothetical and far future: If we could imagine the apocalyptical future as present, we might be able to work on its destructive causes – and avoid Gidden's paradox (cf. Dupuy 2004: 163). In contrast to other forms of political communication, prophecy in pop music could offer potential for environmental problem solving, as it offers no information, but emotional experience and thereby provides a space for embodied learning) to address body and mind jointly for sustainable knowledge production (Allen 2023).

However, if, contrary to the threat, the prophesied or predicted environmental catastrophe repeatedly fails to happen, the competition in catastrophic scenarios will lead to a loss of credibility of their speakers. The resulting "apocalypse fatigue" (Nordhaus and Shellenberger 2009) may not lead to changes to behaviors or lifestyles. It rather fosters an attitude that celebrates the present and profits from remaining areas of freedom, despite all doom scenarios. Fatboy Slim and John Meredith even show that the alarm call can turn out to be an aesthetic of the surface, pure phonetic material that lacks any message. From this point of view, the latent function of disaster communication in pop music is not to resonate the warning, but rather to liberate environmental communication from illiberal tendencies and psychologic pressure caused by modern prophecy. What is basically at stake is the question of liberty and determination of the will: "Once the good comes on stage, the question necessarily arises: Whose good?" (Zupančič 2011: 55). If environmental prophecy is perceived dominantly as a restrictive communication that leaves no space for individual ethical discernment, pop music as part of the entertainment industry does provide the long-awaited relief from encircling and

limiting environmental imperatives: As Righeira, Poppy, and Madonna show pointedly, the future is sinister, but why shouldn't people have some fun before the disaster occurs? The apocalyptic narrative in pop is attractive also for another reason: Confronted with the end of days, cultural differences, hierarchies and dependencies between groups, classes, and individuals lose their significance. All humans appear equal, and the tremendous difference in causations seemingly disappears.

On the one hand, prophecy in pop music tends to stage all the destructive longings for a total collapse of the global, capitalist, and digitalized project with its exploitative practices of global injustice (cf. Baudrillard 2007). The truth however is that, in contrast to all warnings and sinister forecasts, the global privileged middle class in most parts of Western consumer societies continues to have a comfortable life. Despite all downfall discourses and experienced crises, neoliberalism and capitalist logic of exploitation have been globally secured, as they continue to dominate all aspects of life. News on droughts, famines, and burning forests have long since undergone a process of "normalisation" (Blühdorn and Welsh 2008: 336). Is the disaster trope in pop music in the end nothing less than an affirmative strategy to maintain the status quo? There are many signs that musical narratives of doom and their underlying perspectives of hope *stabilize* the system instead of deconstructing it. Even if this question remains undecided, prophetical pop music continues to play a decisive role within ecological crisis dynamics and its inherent social conflicts. The prophet's fascination and communicative potential is still unbroken.

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