



Apocalypse then

Description

The science fiction writer Fredric Brown (1906-1972) retells a short horror story (attributed originally to Thomas Bailey Aldrich [1836-1907]). It goes as follows:

“The last man on Earth sat alone in a room. There was a knock on the door.”

That’s reputedly the shortest horror story ever written. It’s apocalyptic. It’s about the last human standing, but also about a message. We assume the knock is deliberate, but there’s no obvious source, at least nothing human – hence the horror.



Apocalypse simply means *revelation*. To reveal is to show. The last book in the Christian Bible is known as *The Revelation of St John*, *The Book of Revelation*, or simply *The Apocalypse*. It’s a message provided ostensibly via a dream (or vision), a message in a dream about the end times. That particular message is about impending disaster, more so for some than others.

Hardly a sign

A knock at the door is a minimal signal. A succession of knocks is a bit of pre-Morse code, a binary signal – a knock, followed by an interval of silence, then another knock, and perhaps another.

The knock is a rudimentary item of data. That's another aspect of apocalypse, where everything turns to irreducible elements, on/off signals.

As if in celebration, the apocalyptic writer Reza Negarestani equates data to dust.

Xero-data, or dust, swarms planetary bodies as the primal flux of data or the Mother of all Data-streams in the Solar system (88).

Becoming trans

Another science fiction writer, Russell T. Davies invents a family struggling through a not-too-distant future. That's in his recent TV series *Years and Years*. Here's a teenager talking with her parents about becoming *trans*.

I'm not comfortable with my body. So I want to get rid of it. I don't want to be flesh. I'm sorry, but I'm going to escape this thing, and become digital. They say one day soon they'll have clinics in Switzerland where you can go and you'll sign a form, and they'll take your brain and download it into the cloud.

And your body? her dad dares to ask.

Recycled into the earth, she replies beaming, I want to live forever as information.

That's an apocalyptic prospect a universe without human beings, just data. Data leaked, transmitted messaging reduced to sequences, patterns, codes, with just machines to receive them or no one.

Also see posts: [One knock for yes two for no](#), [Everything is code](#), and [The sarcophagus at the end of the Anthropocene](#).

Reference

- Negarestani, Reza. 2008. *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*. Melbourne: re.press

Note

- Image above is an abandoned nursery near Chernobyl, Ukraine (July 2017).

Category

- Body

Tags

- ciphercity
- code
- information
- message
- technology

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