

Foreword

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In the past, the foreword to each new issue of *aspeers* has often served to explain the journal's purpose, scope, and scale. After fifteen years, this seems almost superfluous. Yet even in its sixteenth iteration, *aspeers* remains unique in its project of giving a platform to MA students of American studies in Europe to present their research, ideas, and perspectives on the culture, literature, history, and society of the United States in its transatlantic, transpacific, and hemispheric entanglements. The same holds true for *aspeers*' second purpose as a learning tool in American Studies Leipzig's MA program. In the winter term 2022/23, a new group of editors has again spent week after week, month after month, in creating a journal issue from scratch. This meant learning the ins and outs of peer review from evaluating scholarly work to providing constructive feedback, editing articles, penning what is often their first own publication in the form of an introduction, and developing the crucial skills of self- and time management as well as working in teams. Sufficient to say that this year's team of editors excelled in all of these areas.

Although the newest issue is therefore also the product of, by now, over fifteen years of combined experience in supporting MA-level scholarship in American studies, *aspeers*' continues to hold on to its mission of continuity and change by allowing each cohort to make the journal their own. Often hailed as a "laboratory" (Koenen and Herrmann iv), the project does not just enable its student editors to experiment and try out many things related to academic publishing. It also serves as the scaffolding for the editors to build their own house, furnished with their handpicked articles, and decorated with additional ideas in the form of a 'professorial voice' and art. This also facilitates valuable learning experiences for the instructors having to take the backseat, only providing guidance and some nudges—and allowing the project to unfold on its own terms. For those of us used to meticulously prepare their teaching, coming up with learning objectives, course plans, and finally evaluating students, the freedom *aspeers* provides students to grow

into independent scholars with their own ideas and priorities is both humbling and exciting, privileging us to see a cohort grow from students to future scholars.

The efforts of this year's team of editors have resulted in an issue focusing on the timely topic of 'American Apocalypses.' As such, this issue contains a collection of articles that not only reflect the complexity and popularity of American studies but also highlight the breadth and depth of a field that continually reinvents itself by adding new ideas and perspectives and reconsidering received approaches. Examining what an American apocalypse may mean but also adding additional concerns pertinent to the contemporary field, the issue's articles explore the representation and negotiation of ecological crises, slavery, and cults in film and literature from a wide array of angles. As such, this thought-provoking issue speaks both to the hard work of one particular group of MA students and to the ongoing importance of a venue for European American Studies students to stake their claim to participate in larger scholarly conversations and make their voices heard.

We are thus excited to present a new and diverse collection of articles that address the interdisciplinary nature of American studies and provide a unique perspective on US-American culture and history. As you read through the pages, we encourage you to consider not only the specific arguments and findings presented but also the larger questions and contexts that these pieces address. Drawing on the fields of cultural and literary studies, historical analysis, film studies, affect studies, and ecocriticism—to name but a few—the articles in this issue explore the ways in which American apocalypses have been reflected and represented in literature, film, and popular culture. And precisely because of the complexity of the differing, often contradicting viewpoints and interpretations, fostering the ongoing debate that is American studies, we greatly admire the courage it takes for young scholars to suggest new directions for future research and scholarship in the field. We are confident that this issue of *aspeers* will prove to be a valuable resource for anyone interested in engaging with American studies, and we hope you find the articles within it as thought-provoking and enlightening as we do.

WORKS CITED

Koenen, Anne, and Sebastian M. Herrmann. Foreword. *aspeers: emerging voices in american studies*, vol. 4, 2011, p. iv. www.aspeers.com/2011/foreword.