

CATASTROPHISM

The Apocalyptic Politics of Collapse and Rebirth

Sasha Lilley, David McNally, Eddie Yuen, and James Davis • Foreword by Doug Henwood

Our times are riven by catastrophe. The world is reeling from the deepest economic crisis since the Great Depression, with the threat of further meltdowns ever-looming. Global warming and myriad dire ecological disasters worsen—with little if any action to halt them—their effects rippling across the planet in the shape of almost Biblical floods, fires, droughts, and hurricanes. Governments warn that no alternative exists than to take the bitter medicine they prescribe—or risk devastating financial or social collapse. The right, whether religious or secular, views the present as catastrophic and wants to turn the clock back. The left fears for the worst, but hopes some good will emerge from the rubble. Visions of the apocalypse and predictions of impending doom abound. Across the political spectrum, a culture of fear reigns.

Catastrophism explores the politics of apocalypse—on the left and right, in the environmental movement, and from capital and the state—and examines why the lens of catastrophe can distort our understanding of the dynamics at the heart of these numerous disasters—and fatally impede our ability to transform the world. Lilley, McNally, Yuen, and Davis probe the reasons why catastrophic thinking is so prevalent, and challenge the belief that it is only out of the ashes that a better society may be born. The authors argue that those who care about social justice and the environment should eschew the Pandora's box of fear—even as it relates to indisputably apocalyptic climate change. Far from calling people to arms, they suggest, catastrophic fear often results in passivity and paralysis—and, at worst, reactionary politics.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

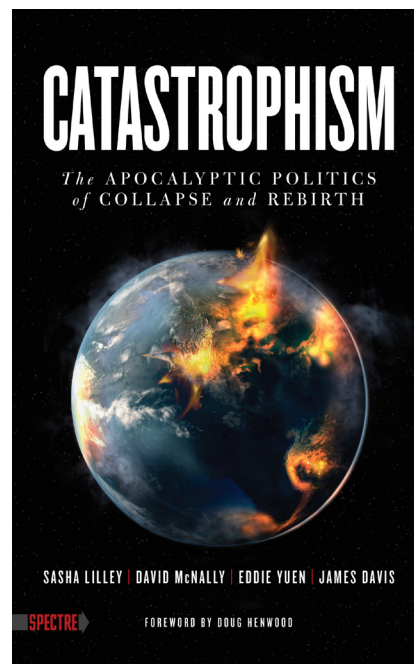
Sasha Lilley is a writer and radio broadcaster. She is the co-founder and host of the critically acclaimed program of radical ideas, *Against the Grain*. Sasha Lilley is the author of *Capital and Its Discontents: Conversations with Radical Thinkers in a Time of Tumult* and series editor of PM Press' political economy imprint, Spectre.

David McNally is Professor of Political Science at York University, Toronto. He is the author of six previous books, including *Against the Market*; *Another World is Possible: Globalization and Anti-Capitalism*; and *Global Slump: The Economics and Politics of Crisis and Resistance*.

Eddie Yuen teaches in the Urban Studies Department at the San Francisco Art Institute. He is the co-editor, with George Katsiaficas and Daniel Burton-Rose, of *Confronting Capitalism: Dispatches from a Global Movement*.

James Davis is an Irish documentary filmmaker based in the San Francisco Bay Area. His works include "Safety Orange" and "Meeting Room."

Doug Henwood is publisher and editor of *Left Business Observer*. Among other books, he is the author of *After the New Economy* and *Wall Street: How It Works and for Whom*. He is a contributing editor to *The Nation* magazine.



SUBJECT CATEGORY
Politics/Current Events

PRICE
\$16.00

ISBN
978-1-60486-589-9

PAGE COUNT
192

SIZE
5x8

FORMAT
Paperback

PUBLICATION DATE
10/12

DISTRIBUTED BY
Independent Publishers Group
(312)337-0747
www.ipgbook.com

◆ **PM PRESS** ◆
P.O. Box 23912
Oakland, CA 94623
www.pmpress.org
info@pmpress.org
(510)658-3906

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