

Gabriele Dürbeck, Universität Vechta, gabriele.duerbeck@uni-vechta.de
Caroline Schaumann, Emory University, cschaum@emory.edu
Heather Sullivan, Trinity University, hsulliva@trinity.edu

Proposal for the workshop: “Non-human Agencies in the Anthropocene”

Conference “Culture and the Anthropocene”, Alexander von Humboldt network Environmental Humanities, Rachel Carson Center, Munich, June 14-16, 2013

The age of the Anthropocene, when all surfaces and bodies in the biosphere contain traces of anthropogenic matter, challenges the humanities to reevaluate the human-nature relationship specifically in terms of agency and responsibility. Such challenges focus on the ‘attachment’ of human beings to the environment (Latour) and on the formation of natureculture hybrids (Haraway, Alaimo, Iovino and Oppermann), which emphasize the human responsibility for, and inextricable participation in (culturally transformed) nature. The planned workshop starts from the assumption that fictional literature and film on the environment are significantly populated by different non-human agencies interacting with individual characters as well as larger groups, thereby contextualizing human “freedom” and will, and unfolding a different context of action, process, and closure in a narration. Although non-human agencies sometimes adopt near-human properties, they generally do not operate according to plausible laws of intention. Their capacities demonstrate that “agency” is a distributed, emergent process rather than a quality solely attributable to a (human) subject.

Building on both the new materialism’s emphasis on “vibrant matter” (Bennett) and on how its discourses, in return, shape human agents, this workshop explores various kinds of non-human agencies, such as self-organized nature, atmospheric phenomena, bodies both big and small including bacteria, animals, dirty nature (meaning both toxic pollution and bodily exchanges, Phillips and Sullivan), and the agentic capacity of particular landscapes (deserts, forests, mountains, oceans, dystopian cityscapes etc.). It also addresses non-human agencies on many different scales, such as physical forces at the quantum level (Barad), the local/global (Heise), and the biosphere.

Central questions include: How do we integrate these phenomena into the established poetological and narratological categories in literature and film? How can familiar ideas of subjectivity and individuality, as well as the principal understanding of action, be extended to respond to non-human agencies? How do texts present the complex problem of the scale of agencies? Does environmental literature practice new narrative methods or reshape existing methods? How do these approaches challenge our engagement with “nature” in general?

After circulating framing comments and select readings in advance, the workshop starts with brief summaries to open up the discussion of meanings and forms of non-human agencies.

References:

- Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2010.
- Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, S.C.: Duke UP, 2010.
- Haraway, Donna. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003.
- Heise, Ursula. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.
- Iovino, Serenella, and Serpil Oppermann. “Theorizing Material Ecocriticism: A Diptych.” *ISLE* 19.3 (2012): 448-475.
- Latour, Bruno. “It’s Development, stupid!” or: how to Modernize Modernization. Ed. Jim Proctor. *Post-environmentalism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.
- Phillips, Dana and Heather Sullivan. “Material Ecocriticism: Dirt, Waste, Bodies, Food, and Other Matter.” *ISLE* 19.3 (2012): 445-447.
- Sullivan, Heather. “Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism.” *ISLE* 19.3 (2012): 515-531.

“Der Wald will nicht, daß die Menschen zurückkommen”:

Literary and Filmic Imaginations of Nature and Humanity in *Die Wand*

In Marlen Haushofer's novel *Die Wand* (1963), the narrator suddenly comes across an invisible wall during her vacation in a hunting lodge in the Alps. This mysterious barrier splits the external lifeless world from the mountain forest in which the woman is trapped together with several domestic and wild animals. Her report describes how she survives as the supposed last human in the wilderness. The novel has garnered critical attention, especially in feminist and ecological literary discourses, often being read as a female robinsonade or a critique of an aggressive patriarchal world or even civilization as such. Yet the murder of the intruder at the end of the novel makes it clear that *Die Wand* is no utopian conception of a matriarchal society based on love and welfare. Despite its cultural critique, the text traces the narrator's failing to become one with nature. Instead, she holds on to language and writing to assure herself of her humanity. Her report is just a delay – she recognizes the finite nature of her resources and writing materials – that records her and thereby humanity's gradual vanishing into nature.

More surprising is Julian Pölsler's film adaptation of *Die Wand* (2012). Here, the protagonist is inserted into an idyllic panorama of the Alps that contrasts with the novel's threatening mountain forest. On the one hand, the director is loyal to Haushofer's text by having the narrator read passages from the novel as a voice over. On the other hand, the camera remains focused on the woman, representing her as the female protagonist in the flashbacks managing her everyday life in the wilderness as well as the self-reflective author of those memories writing her report. In this way, the film deviates from Haushofer's novel, whose first person-narrator becomes a minor character in the story and already announces her own vanishing. The handwritten manuscripts of *Die Wand* make it especially clear that the novel intentionally forgoes concrete historical references and refuses to characterize the protagonist as an individual. By setting the action in the present and contrasting the close-ups of the narrator's face with images of a positively connoted landscape, the film deviates from the novel's imagination of nature and humanity. This talk deals with those shifts between novel and film and connects them with different media reflections on the relationship between nature and culture, especially how those differences reflect on culture in the anthropocene in the last 50 years.

Risk, Denial, Narratives, and Images in Climate Change Fiction: Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* and Ilija Trojanow's *Melting Ice*

Axel Goodbody

This paper is concerned with the role of narratives and images in shaping public perception of risk, and with the potential of contemporary climate change novels to enhance environmental awareness, both by deconstructing hegemonic narratives and by adapting traditional cultural forms and images so as to promote new patterns of thinking. It takes as its starting point comments on the significance of cultural narratives for risk perception in the ecocritic Ursula Heise's *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, and observations of the environmental sociologist Kari Norgaard on narratives and images as cultural tools facilitating climate denial (in *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life*). Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* (2012) and Ilija Trojanow's *EisTau* (*Melting Ice*, 2011) are shown to use the genre templates of Bildungsroman and toxic discourse, while integrating apocalyptic elements, and employing analogies and metaphors as subsidiary structuring devices. The paper explores the ability of their respective representational strategies to convey factual information in such a way as to motivate readers to translate their knowledge of climate change into their everyday lives, throw light on the sociocultural phenomenon of climate denial, and bridge the gap between an apathetic public and communities of experts and activists.

Adalbert Stifter and the Gentle Anthropocene

Sean Ireton, University of Missouri

Adalbert Stifter's gentle law or *sanftes Gesetz*, as famously elaborated in the preface to *Bunte Steine* (1853), is a universal ethical principle that is predicated on a correspondence between the equilibrium of nature and the moral status quo of humanity. Stifter consistently integrates this normative notion of cosmic order into the thematic structure of his texts, particularly those written after the 1848 uprisings, and he further employs the terms *sanft* and *sanftmütig* in leitmotif-like fashion in order to underscore the omnipresence of this law in everyday reality. Yet *das sanfte Gesetz* not only governs the operations of nature and the ethical conduct of humanity; it can also be applied to the interaction between humans and the environment. In more direct terms: it can be interpreted as a pragmatic environmental ethic. In my talk I will probe this Stifterian version of the anthropocene, focusing on some unique examples of humankind's "gentle" manipulation of nature in two narratives, *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters* (1848) and *Der Nachsommer* (1857).

The former text takes place during the first half of the eighteenth century, when much of Stifter's native Bohemian Forest was still in a primeval state and human settlement was just beginning to pierce its depths. Stifter repeatedly alludes to the clearing of woodlands, the draining of marshes, the cultivation of such newly appropriated land, and the expansion of forest paths into carriage roads. One of the principal characters, significantly dubbed "der sanftmütige Obrist," engages in various projects that carry out his vision according to which "eine Natur, die man zu Freundlicherem zügeln und zähmen kann, das Schönste ist, das es auf Erden gibt." Nevertheless, despite this anthropocentric chauvinism, his plans prove to be more sustainable than exploitative, as he seeks to modify small tracts of the primitive landscape in a gradual, indeed "gentle" manner — not only for immediate human benefit but also with a consideration for long-term ecological integrity. One intriguing and typically intricate example involves the cultivation of an area locally known as "das Steingewände" (which is not a vertical row of cliffs, as its name implies, but rather a fissured rock bed in the middle of the forest). I outline this undertaking below, but point out that analogous examples of such human tampering with nature occur in *Der Nachsommer* (which I will discuss at greater length in my talk).

Die Föhrenpflanzung des “sanftmütigen” Obristen:

A patch of land in the Bohemian Forest is covered by an ancient rock bed that has become so eroded over time that it now resembles a talus field. The colonel intends to make this desolate terrain fertile by packing handfuls of soil along with pine seeds into the many nooks and crannies of the fissured rock. (Stifter goes into significant detail about finding the perfect combination of hearty seeds and accommodating soil.) The colonel hopes that a healthy pine forest will eventually spring from this human-engineered ground and reach maturity when the surrounding woodlands will have likely disappeared due to resource consumption by the increased inhabitation of the region. Humans will then be able to use wood provided by the pines and perhaps ultimately — “in tausend Jahren” — convert the pine stand into arable land, for by then the soil will have become thoroughly fecund thanks to centuries of growth and decay (e.g. from the constant cycle of fallen pine needles that not only decompose into the earth but that also help the ground retain moisture from the rain, thereby increasing its fertility).

Thomas Lekan, Rachel Carson Fellow/University of South Carolina History Department

“The Blue Marble: Aerial Photography, Spacecraft Imagery, and the Anthropogenic Landscapes of Modernity.”

This paper explores the tensions between the new modes of cartographic, photographic, and satellite representations of the earth that emerged during the Cold War, the birth of the anthropocene as unifying theme for understand “humankind’s” role in shaping the earth, and the increasing marginalization of local, “on the ground” forms of environmental knowledge in Third World from the 1950s-1970s.

As the late cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove noted in his landmark book *The Apollonian Eye* (2001), images of the earth as a floating sphere that could be mapped and analyzed in its totality had long been associated with European imperialism and statist domination, but the competition between the United States and the USSR after 1950 fueled an unprecedented period of geo-exploration and a space race that resulted in the famous “blue marble” image of the earth taken by Apollo 17 in 1972. This process of mapping “man’s” transformation of the biosphere began, however, in the 1950s with a vast array of popular aerial photographs and documentary films by wildlife conservationists such as Bernhard Grzimek and the bird’s eye landscape photographs found in Berkeley geographer’s landmark *Man and Nature* volume (1954).

The assumed representational truth of these high-tech images—and the belief that the human species shared the fate of the planet—gave environmentalists a moral mission that appeared literally above politics and culture differences. But it did so in ways that occluded the stark socio-ecological differences between advanced industrial societies and the developing world and the adaptive capacity and vernacular environmental knowledge of local actors in rangelands, forests, and arid steppes. The blue marble image circulated widely at the same time as the 1972 UN Conference on the Environment in Stockholm and the Limits to Growth debate in the Western scientific circles. The image’s focus on Africa, the last frontier of the Western imagination, was hardly coincidental; indeed, the Stockholm conference’s appeal to a universalist environmental ethic sparked a Third World backlash about the legacies of underdevelopment that remains unresolved today: is it possible to speak of *anthropos* as a unitary environmental agent in a postcolonial world marked by stark socio-economic and socio-ecological differences?

The Natural History of the Anthropocene:
The Reclamation of Space in Graham Swift and W.G. Sebald
Bernhard Malkmus, Ohio State University

The Fens in East Anglia, England, are the product of a major land reclamation effort that started in the 17th century. Originally the part of the world in which the River Rhine flowed into the sea, it first began to be reclaimed naturally by the deposits of marine silts from the sea, which ultimately led to the formation of salt marshes, peat and fertile soil: “For consider the equivocal operation of silt. Just as it raises the land, drives back the sea and allows peat to mature, so it impedes the flow of rivers, restricts their outfall, renders the newly-formed land constantly liable to flooding and blocks the escape of floodwater.” (Swift, 7) East Anglia and the rich metaphorical resonances of the Fens, in particular, are the setting of two major reflections on the loss of nature and cultural landscapes in the anthropocene, Graham Swift’s *Waterland* (1983) and W.G. Sebald’s *Die Ringe des Saturn* (1995). Both texts develop, in their rich palimpsests of natural and human histories, a cultural landscape that is not viewed from a distance but rather woven into the fabric of the narrator’s experiences and personal histories. Human histories, always in the plural, are narrated within the framework of a specific geography and natural history. The most interesting aspect of comparing the two travelogues lies in the fact that they reflect on the anthropological ramifications of the dual character of human nature as both a dweller in the “primary world of the senses” (Straus) and a being in an “eccentric position” that inadvertently puts a distance between the individual consciousness and its sensual presence in a specific environment (Plessner). Much ink has been spilt on the notion of history in these novels, yet they are also profound meditations on space and place and resonate with some of the interdisciplinary debates in British geography during the 1980s (Cosgrove, Lowenthal, Porter).

I argue that the most striking narrative strategies these meta-travelogues have in common – dissolving teleological concepts of history in multiple layers of story telling, questioning orders of knowledge by inserting them in local genealogies, incessantly marking and reflecting the narrator’s standpoint – are rooted in the way they navigate and map histories onto space. They tell of a time when humans themselves have become a geological force, changing the course of rivers (Swift) and the sea (Sebald). While Swift’s archeology of time renders the future narratable, as part of a perpetual history of loss and reclaiming, Sebald’s “*Englische Wallfahrt*”, as the subtitle has it, obsessively rebounds into the past. It is a testimony to the past, a work of mourning, a Renaissance-inspired exercise in penetrating the world’s mysteries with a melancholy stare; it looks at the anthropocene as the last era in history that can be narrated by a dutiful collector of stories and images, by an aimless pilgrim who is still able to reach behind the dialectic of Enlightenment that will ultimately turn everything into a “representation” (Bild) or an “enframing” (Gestell), as Heidegger has predicted. According to Swift, humans in modernity are still part of specific cultural landscapes with specific cultural and social praxes; according to Sebald, this connection is lost and the destruction of nature dissociates us from cultural landscapes and alienates us from our narrative connection with the past (cf. his global “natural history of destruction” in chapter vi). Both authors offer “thick descriptions” (Geertz) of a particular cultural landscape to rethink the human conditions through the lens of a phenomenological attention to space and the spatial sedimentation of history. This poetics of space resonates with two important epistemic shifts of the anthropocene: an increasing awareness of the global nature of the ecological crisis and the related rethinking of humans as biological species (cf. Heise).

Sylvia Mayer
University of Bayreuth

Alexa Weik von Mossner
University of Klagenfurt/RCC

Anticipated Transformations: Imagining the Risks of the Anthropocene

As an informal geologic term, the Anthropocene denotes the fact that over the past 200 years humanity has exerted an increasingly powerful influence over the Earth's ecosystems, changing not only the planet's surface appearance but also its chemistry and geology. Those who are interested in the *cultural* dimensions of the Anthropocene frequently frame their concerns in terms of uncertainty and risk, pointing out that "our collective actions have brought us into uncharted territory" (*Welcome to the Anthropocene*) and wondering what will happen to us once "the opposition between humanity and nature is ... suspended" (*The Anthropocene Project*). Given the speculative nature of such deliberations, it is not surprising that novelists and filmmakers, too, have tried to imagine the potential future opportunities and hazards of the Anthropocene, and no genre would be better suited for the fictional exploration of such risks than science fiction.

On the theoretical level, our paper will draw connections between the geological idea of the Anthropocene and Ulrich Beck's sociological work on the *world risk society*, suggesting that the latter offers helpful tools for thinking through the ecological and cultural dimensions of the former. In a second step, we will then use these analytical tools in our critical readings of two recent science fiction narratives – Dale Pendell's novel *The Great Bay* and Andrew Stanton's animated blockbuster *Wall-E* – which both anticipate future transformations of planet Earth in order to make their audiences aware of the incalculable risks of the Anthropocene.

Cosmopolitanism and the Anthropocene
A Case for Environmental Ethics and Environmental and Justice in a Global Scale

Paper to be presented at the Conference
“Culture and the Anthropocene”
at the Rachel Carlson Center, Munich - Germany
June 14 - 16, 2013

Amos Nascimento
University of Washington, Tacoma
anascim@u.washington.edu

Abstract

In this paper I discuss two philosophical implications of the concept “Anthropocene”: one is the meaning of anthropos as a free-acting human being that is now acknowledged as playing a geological role in altering the global configuration of the planet; the other is the eschatological meaning of cene [kainos] as a the idea of a new kind of cosmological reality. There are many opinions on this recent term, often presented in an apocalyptic tone, but I want to argue that key elements implicit in the discussion can be linked Immanuel Kant’s critical philosophy. Although one way of linking these themes may be through Kant’s position about physical geography and anthropology, his views on these subjects were presented mainly in lectures, published without editorial care, and included many problematic anthropocentric and Eurocentric assumptions. Therefore, I opt to relate the discussion on the Anthropocene to Kant’s wider project for a cosmopolitan Enlightenment. It is possible to interpret his cosmopolitanism in terms of both environmental ethics and environmental justice, especially in light of his statement that “the greater or lesser social interactions among the nations of the earth, which have been constantly increasing everywhere, have now spread so far that a violation of rights in one part of the earth is felt everywhere.” Such reading of Kant may shed light on contemporary discussions on “Culture and the Anthropocene” because scientists have now realized that this new word is not simply a descriptive term denoting a new geological period, but also a term with normative implications. The Anthropocene requires a new “culture” conducive to a new human environmental action on a global scale, capable of reverting apocalyptic forecasts.

Précis

“Do we live in an enlightened era?” Immanuel Kant once asked this question. He answered that “indeed we live in an time of Enlightenment, but not yet in an enlightened era” [Zwar leben wir in einem Zeitalter der Aufklärung, aber noch nicht in einem aufgeklärten Zeitalter] (1784). He saw clear indications that there was an open field leading towards this goal and related this process to the idea of world citizenship.

An overlooked aspect of Kant’s contribution to the Enlightenment is his pragmatic perspective. Among his many works in philosophy, he also developed contributions to physical geography and anthropology. On the one hand, he saw physical geography as natural history, a description of the natural condition of the Earth – especially its seas, continents, mountains, rivers, and the atmosphere, but also including humans, animals, plants, and minerals. This can be understood as geology, especially the part of geography Kant defines as “mathematical geography,” which deals with “the shape, size, motion of the earth, and its relationship to the solar system in which it is located” (1805). On the other hand, he insisted on defining anthropology from an empirical perspective while acknowledging that the human being is one of the principal causes of changes in the shape [Gestalt] of the Earth. Yet, consistent with his philosophical position, he opposed viewing humans merely as things and defended their rights and freedom (1798). Because humans are free-acting beings who can play an important geological role in altering the global configuration of the planet, he defended as possible to unite all “citizens of the world” [Weltbürger] around voluntary actions based on sound principles of ethics and justice that may prompt a change in behavior.

At this point we can relate Kant's cosmopolitanism to current discussions on the "Anthropocene." In his proposal for world citizenship he appeared to anticipate some thoughts similar to those proposed current debates. In fact, the environmental aspect of his cosmopolitanism can be seen in his famous statement that "the greater or lesser social interactions among the nations of the earth, which have been constantly increasing everywhere, have now spread so far that a violation of rights in one part of the earth is felt everywhere." Based on this, many other environmental implications can be derived.

Are we now living in the Anthropocene? This is a more recent question, asked by Jan Zalasiewicz, Paul Crutzen, and others (2008). The term was proposed by Eugene Stoermer, popularized by Paul Crutzen, and is now widely accepted as a designator for the current era of a massive anthropogenic global environmental impact which has left an equally global footprint on the planet. The concept denotes a process initiated around 1800, right after the Industrial Revolution, and accelerated after 1950, when scientists began to observe rapid global changes as a result of a growing rate of land-clearing, enhanced use of fossil fuels, and the maximization in the anthropogenic engineering of natural resources and ecosystems (Ellis et al. 2010). Planetary changes in physical sedimentation, carbon cycle, hydrology, ocean acidification and rising levels, temperature, and biodiversity provide evidence for the thesis that global environmental change is largely due to likely anthropogenic causes.

Initially, the term Anthropocene had a mere descriptive character, denoting a new geological period distinct from the Holocene. Progressively, however, the impact of humanity in natural processes became obvious and issues of environmental ethics and environmental justice entered the agenda (Crutzen 2011). This shift in discourse requires a turn of our attention to at least two philosophical implications of this concept. The first is anthropological and concerns the implicit relationship between earth history and human development: Humanity can now be understood as a global geophysical force, but it cannot be reduced to purely empirical terms. The second may be defined as cosmological and is related to how geological development may be connected to anthropological considerations about the way humans conceive of multiple forms of universe. In fact, the discussions about the possible official definition of "Anthropocene" as new geological age remind us of Kant's view of a "Copernican revolution" according to which reality is a product of human cognition and agency.

The main task in current reflections about "Culture and the Anthropocene" could be to promote an interdisciplinary cooperation beyond empirical and cultural divides in order to promote a different kind of human environmental action on a global scale. This obviously relates to cosmopolitanism, environmental philosophy, and non-anthropocentric views on ethics and justice which may be applicable in a global scale.

Selected References

- Atfield, R. (2007) *Environmental Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity).
- Crutzen, P. and C. Schwaegerl (2001) "Living in the Anthropocene: Toward a New Global Ethics" in *Yale environment360* (posted on 01/24/2011) accessed at <http://e360.yale.edu/mobile/feature.msp?id=2363>.
- Frodeman, R. (2003) *Geo-Logic: Breaking Ground between Philosophy and the Earth Sciences* (Albany, State University of New York Press).
- Elden, S. and E. Mendieta (2011) *Reading Kant's Geography* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press).
- Ellis, E. C., K. K. Goldewijk, S. Siebert, D. Lightman, and N. Ramankutty (2010). "Anthropogenic transformation of the biomes: 1700 to 2000" in *Global Ecology and Biogeography* 19/5 (2010), pp. 589-606.
- IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007) *IPCC – Fourth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2007*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Kant, I. (1902) *Werke* (Berlin: Kgl. Akademie der Wissenschaften) [Text cited according to year of publication]
- Steffen, W., P.J. Crutzen and J. R. McNeill, (2007) 'The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?', *Ambio* 36:8 (2007), pp. 614-621.
- Szerszynski, B. (2012) "The End of the End of Nature: The Anthropocene and the Fate of the Human" in *The Oxford Literary Review* 34/2 (2012), pp. 165-184.
- Zalasiewicz, J. et alli (2008) 'Are We Now Living in the Anthropocene?', *GSA Today* 18:2 (2008), 4–8, 5
- Zalasiewicz, J. et alli (2011) 'Stratigraphy of the Anthropocene', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A* 369:1938 (2011), 1036–55.

Die Zeitform des Anthropozäns: Vollendete Zukunft in Julia Schochs *Wo Venedig einst gestanden haben wird*

Handelt es sich beim Anthropozän um ein „extrem beschleunigtes Zeitalter“, welches sich dadurch auszeichnet, „dass das, was als langfristig gilt, sich als überraschend kurzfristig herausstellt“ (Christian Schwägerl), so findet dies im zunehmenden Gebrauch einer sowohl in Literatur als auch im zeitgenössischen Umweltdiskurs bisher wenig gebrauchten Zeitform Ausdruck: der vollendeten Zukunft, auch Futur exactum oder Futur II genannt. Aus grammatikalischer Sicht drückt die vollendete Zukunft eine abgeschlossene Handlung in der Zukunft aus. Sie eignet sich dazu, sich spekulativ über die Zukunft zu äußern, und, vielmehr noch, herauszustellen, dass das, was in die Zukunft projiziert ist, bereits Fakt ist. Dies schließt einen pragmatischen Aspekt ein, der im menschlich dominierten Zeitalter des Anthropozäns relevant wird: Soll die Zukunftsfähigkeit der Spezies Mensch gewährleistet werden, müssen die bisher stark überbewerteten Interessen der Gegenwart zugunsten langfristiger Interessen aufgegeben werden. Auch in dieser Hinsicht fallen Gegenwart und Zukunft zusammen.

In Julia Schochs Essay *Wo Venedig einst gestanden haben wird* gebietet die komplexe Temporalitätsstruktur der wenig gebrauchten Verbform Futur II Einheit und wird zur Strategie der Verzögerung und Verlangsamung - und damit zur Gegenstrategie nicht nur zur extremen Beschleunigung im Zeitalter des Anthropozäns, sondern auch zum „kurzen Jetzt“, zum Zukunftsvergessenen, das fast alle Krisen der Gegenwart maßgeblich auslöst. Sie erlaubt es dem erzählenden Ich beim Besuch Venedigs, sich rückblickend aus der Zukunft an die Gegenwart zu erinnern: die Zeiten sind „in eins gefallen“. Gleichzeitig jedoch erzählt *Wo Venedig einst gestanden haben wird* von der Lähmung, die sich angesichts des Kollapses der katastrophischen Zukunft in die Gegenwart hinein und aufgrund der verbleibenden, eingeschränkten Handlungsmöglichkeiten einstellt. So lässt die Reaktion der Inselbewohner – „keiner von ihnen rührt sich“ – an die Lethargie der Weltgemeinschaft angesichts des steigenden Meeresspiegels denken: Nicht die Abwendung der Katastrophe hat Priorität, sondern ihre Abbildung. Angesichts solcher Verhaltensweisen bleiben von der Menschheit nur auf dem Meer treibende Fotokameras – Schochs Vision einer *World without us*, die Alan Weisman in seinem gleichnamigen Gedankenexperiment bereits vorausgedacht hat.

Genesis, retold. Representations of the Anthropocene

Even before its publication, Sebastião Salgado's ,photographic homage to our planet in its natural state' (Amazon), *Genesis*, was praised as an ,allegory of the anthropocene' (see, for example, Andrian Kreye in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 13.4.2013). Obviously, here is a dilemma: if, as the anthropocene-model suggest, mankind has entered the stage of geological relevant actors, what can be ,our' (!) planet's ,natural state' - besides ,us'? And what other actors do ,we' meet on this stage? And what, if anything at all, do they want to tell us? Or what do we have to tell them? On the other hand: if, as the catalogue of *The Anthropocene Project* at the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* formulates, the ,Anthropocene model suggests a mobility to the relationship between humanity and the world', what statics has defined this relationship before? Who (or what) are these actors, ,humanity' and ,the world', and how could they have become antagonists in the first place? The ,mobility' claimed for the anthropocene model is not only one between ,subject' and ,object' but between different epistemological models. It seems to require an archeology of the difference between ,culture' and ,nature' and its consequences for the relation between sciences and humanities. What media and what models of representation allow us to speak of the anthropocene? One literary mode of such an archeology could be, as I would like to suggest, the atlas, once a prominent mode of the scientific representation of the world, that has become quite popular in recent literature. Salgado's *Genesis*, a picture atlas, has its literary counterpart for example in Judith Schalansky's *Atlas der abgelegenen Inseln* (2009) and Christoph Ransmayr's *Atlas eines ängstlichen Mannes* (2012). These texts do not only explore the world through the medium of the atlas but also explore the atlas as the medium that claims to represent the (whole) world. Here the dilemma of the ,anthropocene' reoccurs: how can a world (as ,nature', ,environment', or ,the other') that is mediated through the atlas (or through any other human-created medium like photography or narration) still be its own? And how can we represent a world that follows a temporality that is incomprehensible for human experience? The ,allegory' that is (too) easily found in Salgado's photographs seems to be rather the problem than the solution to these questions.

Sabine Wilke

Sleepless in the Anthropocene: An Ethics and Aesthetics for a New Geological Age

For over a decade now, after the term “Anthropocene” – referring to a new geological age in which the human influence on the Earth has become a new geological force – was coined by the Dutch atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen and others in the scientific discussion, the idea for such a new epoch of man has been migrating to adjacent areas via popular scientific magazines and other venues. What is still missing from the current articulations of the concept of the Anthropocene is a critical framework from where one might be able to address social and environmental inequalities. I consider forms of critique in an age of global interconnectedness and imbrication where our old narratives of industrialism and late capitalism may or may not work anymore in the face of the enormous problems and challenges that lie ahead. Linking scientific Anthropocene research to critical developments in the environmental humanities can suggest an added dimension for a normative understanding of this new age and what the ethical and aesthetic parameters might look like for the various strategies of coping with life in the Anthropocene.

Critical theory in the Anthropocene attributes agency to nature and other victims of global economic capitalism but retains a normative postcolonial framework of freedom and more global environmental justice by foregrounding processes of victimization and providing a concept of social critique that is interested in more enlightenment, more freedoms, and a better health of the planet all the while understanding and critically

analyzing the social, economic, political, and cultural structures that stand in its way. A critical theory of the Anthropocene also provides an aesthetic framework for such an ethical perspective by replacing the coherent narrative with a multitude of different poetic practices deriving from the core artistic practices of the age: not the essay, the aphoristic styles of prose, and the fragment that still informed Adorno's universe of aesthetic modernism but hybrid genres that populate and configure "the mesh" are going to be the genres that shape the poetics of coexistence that is characteristic for the Anthropocene. These alternative poetic practices focus on configuring the post-human condition through the perspective of the absurd, the comical, and the invention and creation of new eco-futures, whereas the elegiac models explore the sadness of the destruction of the Earth and its psychological effect on humans. It is this combination of a core ethics (global environmental justice and responsibility for the future) and aesthetics (ecological/textual interrelatedness) that shapes poetic practice in the Anthropocene and will also shape new forms of critique that analyze and tirelessly criticize the contradictions of late capitalism but also go beyond that historical framework to envision an ecological age of global networks, imbrications, mobility, and interrelated structures.