

Introduction: The Invention of Eco-Futures

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The history of science fiction over the last fifty years is a history of expansion and infiltration. The psychological concerns of the New Wave, the exploration of gender roles and social structures in feminist science fiction, the virtual environments of cyberpunk, the often anxious explorations of identity in futuristic Japanese films, and recent blends of high-tech scenarios with fantasy's explorations of the supernatural have led to successive explosions of the science fiction canon, now infinitely larger and more diverse than it was in the early 1960s. At the same time, science fiction has filtered out from the cordoned-off domain of the popular subgenre into mainstream fiction and film. Writers such as Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, Arno Schmidt, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Margaret Atwood have for decades written science fiction that was considered part of the high literary canon, even as the bulk of works in the genre continued to be perceived as part of a separate domain with inferior cultural credentials.

In the United States, the work of Philip K. Dick and Thomas Pynchon in the 1960s and '70s initiated recurrent cross-over fertilizations between science fiction and mainstream fiction and film. As Brian McHale has pointed out, not only did Pynchon integrate comic book and sf conventions in his high-literary works, but Dick's novels and short stories have again and again served as the basis for highly successful films, from *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Total Recall* to *Minority Report*, and a feminist postmodernist such as Kathy Acker appropriated motifs from William Gibson's cyberpunk within a few years after the publication of his epoch-making *Neuromancer* (1984).¹ More recently, Japanese American novelist Karen Tei Yamashita has blended science fiction with North American ethnic writing and Latin American magical realism in *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* (1990); British novelist Kazuo Ishiguro, not previously known for any interest in the genre, has published a novel about clones, *Never Let Me Go* (2005); Rosa Montero, a prominent Spanish writer, has equally adopted the genre so as to reflect on contemporary society in *Temblor* (1990) and *Lágrimas en la lluvia* (2011); French novelist Michel Houellebecq's acerbic social satires are often framed by the sf premise of alien future humans looking back onto the late twentieth or early twenty-first century; and Dominican American writer Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) uses the protagonist's obsession with science fiction as a way of reflecting on the historical trauma of Rafael Trujillo's dictatorship. In the meantime, William Gibson's own most recent works, which continue his in-depth explorations of technology and nostalgia, have attenuated their futuristic dimensions to the point where it becomes hard to justify labeling them as "science fiction" or even, more generally, as "speculative

¹ A remake of *Total Recall* is entering movie theaters as of the writing of this essay in the second half of 2012.

fiction." And even works that belong into the genre fair and square enjoy unprecedented success: German novelist Frank Schätzing's science fiction novel *Der Schwarm* (2004) sold in the millions to a public not known for its deep investment in the genre, and blockbuster films in the United States more often than not have contained science fiction elements over the last few years, as the success of the *Avatar* or the *Transformers* series demonstrate. The mode of science fiction – defined broadly as the attempt to envision social futures and to explore our present and future engagements with new technologies – has therefore more firmly infiltrated mainstream culture than ever before.

It has also seeped into environmentalist writing. Alan Weisman's bestseller *The World Without Us* (2007) explores humans' impact on their environment by imagining that humans disappear from the Earth for an unspecified reason. What, then, happens to their buildings and cities, their roads and bridges, their water and sewage systems? What kind of vegetation would grow back on land that humans have used for agriculture, and how long would it take? How would domestic and wild animal species fare? In answering these questions with the help of materials science, biology, and ecology, Weisman in fact constructs one of many "disanthropic" science fiction scenarios, visions of a future either not at all or only scarcely populated by humans.² Bill McKibben, in his book *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet* (2010), embraces the mode of science fiction even more directly, not as a way of imagining our future but of understanding our present. We no longer live on planet Earth as we once knew it, he argues, because climate change has already transformed the most basic conditions of our inhabitation. To get ourselves used to the idea that "business as usual" will no longer ensure our survival, so his premise goes, it might be best to imagine ourselves as inhabiting a different planet, Eaarth rather than Earth – a planet that shares a good deal with our home planet but is also different from it in crucial dimensions.

This adoption of science fiction as a way of thinking by the foremost spokesperson of the environmentalist movement in the US is significant for an understanding of current developments in the genre. Science fiction, of course, has long engaged with ecology and environmental crisis. Implicitly, as Patrick D. Murphy has pointed out, some of the most fundamental themes of science fiction – the exploration of other planets, the arrival of aliens, or the emergence of new technologies – by their very nature involve questions about the human body, humans' co-existence with other kinds of living beings, and appropriate and inappropriate manipulations of natural systems ("Environmentalism" 379-80).³ Explicitly, a good deal of science fiction from the 1960s to the present has engaged with environmental crisis, from Brian Aldiss, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Ernest Callenbach to David Brin, Joan Slonczewski, Margaret Atwood, and Kim

² Greg Garrard has explored these scenarios in his essay, "Worlds Without Us: Some Types of Disanthropy."

³ Both in "The Non-Alibi of Alien Scapes" and "Environmentalism," Murphy emphasizes that SF "can be . . . nature-oriented literature" ("Non-Alibi" 263), but that it is not necessarily pro-environmentalist ("Environmentalism" 373).

Stanley Robinson.⁴ More indirectly, Frank Herbert and cyberpunk writers such as William Gibson and Bruce Sterling have engaged with scenarios of resource shortage and devastated environments that form the background for plots whose most urgent concerns are not ecological. That as prominent an environmentalist as McKibben would now adopt the genre as a way of thinking in quite non-fictional terms about our current ecological condition shows just how successful such storytelling experiments have been.

But McKibben's portrayal of the present as a science fiction future come true also highlights an important change in the basic functioning of the genre, and quite possibly one of the reasons why it has enjoyed such success as an aesthetic mode over the last two decades. Not infrequently, the protagonists of recent science fiction live not so much in anything that is readily identifiable as a future to the reader, but in a present that in the characters' own minds has undergone some momentous but not quite identifiable change. "Something has changed," the characters in Gibson's *Count Zero* (1986) keep pointing out, without detailed awareness of the merger of two Artificial Intelligences that the earlier volume *Neuromancer* (1984) described. The protagonist of Jonathan Lethem's *Amnesia Moon* (1995) travels through a North American landscape that everyone he meets agrees has been visited by some recent cataclysm, but just what that disaster was and how far back it took place is not clearly remembered by anyone. Gibson's most recent trilogy, *Pattern Recognition* (2003), *Spook Country* (2007), and *Zero History* (2010), is perhaps the most egregious example of this presentification of the future. Living in a society that is barely distinguishable from that of the present day, some of the trilogy's characters are acutely aware that their individual and collective life has become too discontinuous to afford them the perspectives of either deep history or fully fledged futures. As the advertising entrepreneur in *Pattern Recognition* puts it:

"Of course . . . we have no idea, now, of who or what the inhabitants of our future might be. In that sense, we have no future. Not in the sense that our grandparents had a future, or thought they did. Fully imagined cultural futures were the luxury of another day, one in which 'now' was of some greater duration. For us, of course, things can change so abruptly, so violently, so profoundly, that futures like our grandparents' have insufficient 'now' to stand on. We have no future because our present is too volatile. . . . We have only risk management. The spinning of the given moment's scenarios. Pattern recognition." (57)

Gibson himself put it more succinctly when he himself claimed that "[t]he future is already here – it's just not evenly distributed yet" (Kennedy). Gibson was no doubt thinking of technological advances that would have seemed implausibly futuristic just a few decades ago and the modes of perception and experience they enable: extremely powerful computers in every purse and pocket, global digital networks, cloned animals. If this kind of future is not currently available in a good portion of the global South, another kind of future is unevenly distributed the other way around: dystopian scenarios of pollution, deprivation, and oppression that may seem distant to the average citizen of the global North are all too familiar in other parts of the world.

⁴ Brian Stableford gives an extremely detailed survey of ecological themes in science fiction throughout the twentieth century, from the imagination of alien ecologies to the portrayal of ecological management and control and the role of eco-catastrophes in "Science Fiction and Ecology."

This sense of a future that has, however incompletely, arrived at or sedimented in a present that therefore can no longer develop any clear vision of a future different from itself, stands in contrast to the basic mode of classical science fiction. Fredric Jameson has famously argued that the function of SF is not to portray the future but the present conceived as an imaginary past:

[T]he most characteristic SF does not seriously attempt to imagine the 'real' future of our social system. Rather, its multiple mock futures serve the quite different function of transforming our own present into the determinate past of something yet to come. It is this present moment – unavailable to us for contemplation in its own right because the sheer quantitative immensity of objects and individual lives it comprises is untotalizable and hence unimaginable, and also because it is occluded by the density of our private fantasies as well as of the proliferating stereotypes of a media culture that penetrates every remote zone of our existence – that upon our return from the imaginary constructs of SF is offered to us in the form of some future world's remote past, as if posthumous and as though collectively remembered. . . . SF thus enacts and enables a structurally unique 'method' for apprehending the present as history. (*Archaeologies* 288)

This perspective makes sense especially for works of SF set in a future distant from us by at least half a century that ask by their very structure how we might achieve their utopias or prevent their disasters and dystopias. Many of the climate change novels and films that are discussed in this volume fit into this category, but also SF classics such as Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) or Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932).

It also neatly explains works that quite explicitly offer a future history of the present: the future humans in Houellebecq's novels, for instance, who seek to make the present intelligible to themselves; the narrative frame of Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* (1985), in which historians of a distant future critically analyze the reliability and plausibility of one woman's account of near-future totalitarianism, and of George Turner's *The Sea and Summer*, whose thirty-first century historians re-examine the "greenhouse culture" of the twenty-first; or the highly evolved and intelligent animals of Sheri S. Tepper's *The Family Tree* (1998), who travel from a society set five millennia into the future back into a late twentieth century in which animals were at the service of humans, rather than the other way around. All of these novels quite explicitly historicize the readers' present from the perspective of a far future.

Yet a good deal of recent SF no longer ventures into far temporal distances. Cyberpunk, caught up in the beginnings of the digital revolution in the 1980s, focused on futures just around the corner, as does much of the work of Octavia Butler, David Brin, Neal Stephenson, or Kim Stanley Robinson. The issue in such near-future SF is not so much the difficulty of achieving critical distance from the present (although this problem has of course not disappeared) as the temptation to envision the present as a future that has caught up with us, for better or for worse. If science fiction that casts the present as historical past seeks to explore possible roads into the future, science fiction that casts the present as an inadvertent future often highlights some kind of loss. In McKibben's *Eaarth*, what is lost is a sustainable way of life and the possibility of perpetuating high mobility and intensive energy use; the only way forward seems to lie in restricting everyone to a version of the author's own small-town life in Vermont. In a good deal of

environmentalist writing, as also intermittently in McKibben, there is a palpable nostalgia for a world less or not at all transformed by humans. In Gibson's fictional worlds, which heavily emphasize digital technologies and virtual realities, the nostalgia reaches toward older, more material forms of arts and crafts and the connoisseurship that accompanied them: the boxes of Joseph Cornell in *Count Zero*; the building of robots in *Mona Lisa Overdrive* (1988); watchmaking in *All Tomorrow's Parties* (1999); sewing unique garments in *Zero History*. What distinguishes these kinds of longings for bygone ways of life from the losses implied in dystopian futures – say, the loss of individual freedom in Huxley's *Brave New World*, the loss of reproductive freedom in John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968), or the loss of book culture and subsistence farming in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) – is that they are not potential future losses but changes that have already occurred and cannot easily be reversed.

Contemporary science fiction, then – as a distinct literary genre and as a rhetorical mode that has spread far beyond narratives about future worlds or other planets – defines itself in the tension between two different approaches to the present: as the past of imagined futures and as an already if incompletely materialized future that makes palpable the obsolescence of the present. Both of these perspectives, as I have already suggested, can easily be mobilized for the engagement with ecological change and crisis. In any "cautionary tale" that extrapolates dystopian futures from current configurations of capitalism, climate change, biotechnologies, or species loss, for example, readers are invited to contemplate the present as the matrix of the past from which dystopia sprang, as well as to consider how alternative developments might be initiated. Environmentalist texts or films which, by contrast, cast the present as already invaded by the future seek to persuade the reader of the current reality of ecological crisis and of the necessity to adapt to irreversibly changed conditions.

Against this background, the essays in this issue examine how environmentally engaged novelists and film directors deploy already existing science fiction strategies or adapt them to the purpose of capturing ecological crisis. Dolly Jørgensen, in "A Blueprint for Destruction: Eco-activism in *Doctor Who* during the 1970s," examines how the highly popular British television series took up environmentalist concerns as they emerged in public discussion in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The dystopian scenarios of pollution and species extinction that the alien Timelord called the Doctor encounters seem at first sight like straightforward translations of late twentieth-century environmentalist concerns into television entertainment. But as Jørgensen shows, these dystopias come with a twist as the environmentally engaged characters in various episodes seek to reverse ecological crisis by authoritarian means that, as the series portrays them, may worsen rather than improve matters. As the Doctor countervenes some of the more politically extreme measures and criticizes environmentalist fantasies about a return to a more primitive and pastoral world, the series both endorses and amends the environmentalist agenda, weighing the dystopias of the future against false utopias based on a misinterpretation of the past as a Golden Age.

Antonia Mehnert's essay, "Climate Change Futures and the Imagination of the Global in *Maeva!* by Dirk C. Fleck," also investigates the representation of environmental

politics in fiction, but she focuses on the much more recent ecological crisis of climate change. Anthropogenic global warming has gradually emerged as a topic of concern in science fiction over the last twenty-five years, from Australian novelist George Turner's *The Sea and Summer* (1987; published in the US under the title *Drowning Towers*) to Kim Stanley Robinson's Capital trilogy (*Forty Signs of Rain*, *Fifty Degrees Below*, and *Sixty Days and Counting*). The German science fiction novelist Dirk Fleck's *Maeva!* (2011), as Mehnert shows, focuses quite explicitly on the question what political structures and processes might be able to address such a global crisis. Moving resolutely beyond the politics of individual consumer choices and attachments to the local, Fleck imagines the emergence of global coalitions and governance structures and presents them as one possible blueprint for addressing climate change. Yet he by no means envisions a top-down process, but on the contrary sees the internet and other media as crucial tools that enable the participation of a wide range of groups in decision-making processes. For Fleck, Mehnert shows, the novel itself is only one of a series of discussion nodes, the author's blog amplifying and diversifying the issues, in a process for which Mehnert ingeniously borrows the concept of "imagineering" from Walt Disney Studios – "creating a manual for critical intervention derived from creative ideas" (15).

Alexa Weik von Mossner's essay complements Mehnert's by examining the portrayal of climate change in film. In her comparative study of a German-Swiss and an American movie – Tim Fehlbaum's *Hell* (2011), which focuses explicitly on climate change, and John Hillcoat's 2009 film adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's award-winning novel *The Road* (2006), which is set in the aftermath of an unspecified global disaster – Weik investigates what visual strategies give these films their particular emotional force. As her analysis demonstrates, the films' location is a crucial component of these strategies, as place becomes something like an agent rather than just a setting for the unfolding plots. Hillcoat chose the wintery surroundings of Pittsburgh with its ruined infrastructure of an earlier modernity dominated by the coal and steel industries as his filming location, complementing it with scenes filmed around Mount St. Helens in areas devastated by the volcanic eruption in 1980. To increase the sense of ruin and gloom, the director of photography deliberately underexposed the film, whereas Fehlbaum with equal deliberation overexposed his so as to portray a world dominated by too much heat and sun exposure. Shooting in forests of Corsica and Bavaria severely damaged by fires and beetle infestations, respectively, Fehlbaum equally aims to translate present-day ecological devastation into the imagined future of his film. In both cases, place turns into an actively hostile force with which the humans have to contend in making their moral choices. But, Weik argues, while both films successfully explore the material context for such choices, they do not aim to present a political vision in the way other works on climate change do – Fleck's *Maeva!* would serve as one example. In Jameson's terms, by disconnecting otherwise realistically presented sci-fi futures from the present, they block a reading of the present as a causal seedbed of the future.

If Weik's analysis foregrounds the formal importance of setting in environmentalist film, so does Andrew Hageman's exploration of Fritz Lang's science fiction classic *Metropolis* (1927). Given its focus on class conflict and mechanization, and

its paradigmatically urban setting, *Metropolis* may seem like a difficult work to approach from an ecocritical perspective. But by including Thea von Harbou's original novel as well as Rintaro's later animated version in the analysis, and by focusing on some of the details of the urban space in Fritz Lang's film, Hageman shows that questions of nature subtly shape the plot's texture. Taking an approach informed by the Frankfurt School concept of *Ideologiekritik*, Hageman rejects the most obvious ecocritical argument, which would focus on the absence of nature from the completely built environment of Lang's city, and how this absence might structure labor conditions and the ensuing conflict. Rather, Hageman takes three spaces – the pleasure garden, the subterranean hall of machines, and the inventor Rotwang's antiquated house – and examines how they expose ideological fantasies and contradictions in the capitalist world of the city. The garden, he argues, highlights not so much the absence of nature as our ideas and desires about it, and the way in which they function within a capitalist system: "Nature is an ideological apparatus of capital," Hageman claims provocatively (62). The machines in *Metropolis*, following similar lines of argument, do not serve any evident productive purpose, but rather show the human body in its mechanized contortions, even as the narrative upholds ideas about dignity of labor that are meant to gloss over the realities of what the workers undergo in the hall of machines. And Rotwang's medieval dwelling in the midst of a hypermodern cluster of buildings foregrounds the paradox of capitalist Joh Frederson's secret reliance on his knowledge, as well as providing a reminder of an alternative urban space that predated the fully mechanized city. Environmentalist visions of the social world, and by extension ecocritical readings of literary or cinematic works, Hageman proposes, are misguided if they focus on the definition of nature and its human uses outside of a consideration of the economic system that produces both. Hope, in the end, lies not in an acceptance of Lang's final happy reconciliation between exploiter and exploited, but in the fact that the workers in the film were able to imagine an alternative life once and might be able to do so again, and next time pursue it in a way that does not smoothly reintegrate them into the system. "Science Fiction, Ecological Futures, and the Topography of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*" therefore focuses in the end not just on the strategies that make the film's settings convey ideological meaning, but on the ideology of ecocritical interpretation itself.

Luis I. Prádanos's essay, like Hageman's, focuses on the political arguments of environmentally oriented science fiction, but engages them at the thematic level. Prádanos surveys the history of science fiction as well as of environmental thought in Spanish letters, highlighting that environmentalism in Spanish literature often goes hand in hand with an explicit critique of global capitalism. Against this background, he focuses on three Spanish science fiction novels that were all published in the year 2011: *Lágrimas en la lluvia* [Tears in the Rain] by the well-known novelist Rosa Montero, *Oxford 7* by Pablo Tusset, and *El salario del gigante* [The Giant's Wages], the first novel of José Antonio García, who publishes under the pseudonym José Ardillo. While these three works differ quite markedly in their styles and their political vision, Prádanos shows, they share a narrative structure that seeks to establish networks of connection between different characters and to highlight structures of interdependence. All of them also

share a political vision that is deeply critical of the pursuit of continuous economic growth that neoliberalists in various countries promote even in the face of limited ecological resources and signs of crisis.

If Weik and Hageman explore how spatial settings shape representations of ecological crisis, and Prádanos takes the consideration of such crises thematically to the global level, Anderson and Otto zero in on the question of genre, with Anderson's focus on the writing and Otto's on the reception of science fiction. Anderson investigates how two recent Latin American science fiction texts, the novella "Uriel" (2006) by Ecuadorian writer Santiago Páez and the novel *Waslala* (1996) by Nicaraguan Gioconda Belli, combine the generic template of Anglo-Saxon narratives of space exploration with the Latin American genre of the *novela de la selva*. Both story templates draw on a colonial imaginary of the New World. Clearly, a good deal of British and US-American science fiction structures its stories of the conquest of space and the exploration of alien planets on the colonial enterprise. The *novela de la selva*, which usually features a protagonist who ventures from the city into the jungle and back, transforms the colonial genre of the explorer's *crónica* into postcolonial critique. In combining these two genres with the motif of time travel and the question of barbarism, Páez and Belli use the *novela de la selva* as a critique of the colonial assumptions underlying a good deal of Anglo-Saxon science fiction.⁵ In this vein, Belli transplants her native Nicaragua into the future under the name "Faguas," erasing its identity even as she lets the names of other nations stand, while Páez turns Ecuador into a wholly fictional state in his text – both strategies that hint at the authors' broader engagement with how the roles of their home countries are usually envisioned in accounts of the Latin American past and forecasts of its future. If the imagination of space is as much at issue here as in Weik's and Hageman's essays, Anderson emphasizes its national and geopolitical dimensions: "The future itself, these sci-fi works suggest, is a territory already bristling with national flags," he provocatively claims (104), and science fiction becomes a way of putting such territories back in question.

Otto shifts the question of genre to the reading and viewing process of works concerned with the future. Focusing on Frank Schätzing's German bestseller *Der Schwarm* (The Swarm, 2004) and the English novelist Liz Jensen's *The Rapture* (2009), Otto explores what it means to read these books as thrillers or as science fiction novels. In a thriller reading, Otto argues, ecological crisis is merely the point of departure for a dramatic and suspenseful plot that does not in the end invite its readers to reconsider the present from the perspective of the future – as we saw earlier, the hallmark of science fiction as Jameson conceives it. It is the strategy of extrapolation that establishes the connection between present and future, and Otto suggests that such an extrapolative reading can recuperate the critical environmentalist thrust even of works that mostly foreground ecological threats for their purely narrative effect. Unlike the other essays in this issue, Otto thereby links science fiction to ecocriticism centrally through the act of reading rather than through its composition.

⁵ For more detailed explorations of the connections between colonial exploration, settlement, and science fiction, see Abbott and Langer.

Basak Agin Donmez' essay on Turkish writer Özlem Ada's *Embriyogenesis* (1997) takes the ecocritical investigation into different territory. The two stories that *Embriyogenesis* consists of, "Hisse Senetleri" (Share Certificates) and "Çaya Yetiştirilir" (You Can Be Ready for the Tea Party), investigate human identity and agency in futures shaped by gene design and the power of the inanimate. The protagonist of "Hisse Senetleri" is not a human being at all, but a robot who keeps two humans as her pets, while "Çaya Yetiştirilir" revolves around a gene designer's relationship with a lab assistant who is herself the artificial product of gene design. Donmez reads these stories in the framework of recent "new materialist" theories of agency, namely those of Karen Barad and Stacy Alaimo, to show how Ada conveys "a fluid sense of the intermixtures of organic, inorganic and technological agents in our future" (133). In Donmez' reading, Ada presents a posthumanist vision in which humans dynamically interact with other organic and non-organic species, no longer either the only or the primary category capable of shaping such interspecies relations and to make decisions in the face of risk scenarios. An ecocritical reading of Ada hinges on this innovative turn toward the portrayal of interspecies communities.

The broad geographical range of the science fiction works discussed in this issue – from Ecuador and Germany to Turkey – shows how widespread the genre is today outside the areas it was most closely associated with in the twentieth century, England and the US. Environmental dimensions, as the analyses presented here show, affect the most varied dimensions of these texts and films, from the choice of setting and the thematic role of ecological crisis to the presence of nonhuman characters, as well as the role of the environment in producing certain kinds of affect and particular modes of reception. Each of these effects, in turn, frames what kind of use a particular text might have in catalyzing environmentalist awareness or action. Several of the essays show that some authors and directors deliberately use the generic tools of science fiction to enhance environmentalist awareness or to criticize some components of environmentalist politics, whereas others, on the contrary, use the high visibility of ecological problems in the public sphere merely as a launchpad for suspenseful plots or compelling futuristic scenarios. Awareness of environmental crisis, in other words, is sometimes the end and sometimes just the means of science fiction narrative – though the ecocritical readings in this issue, sometimes against the grain of authorial or directorial intention, seek to recuperate even those elements of ecology that have been relegated to the status of mere plot engines.

Both of the temporal perspectives of science fiction I described earlier – the implicit understanding of the present as the history out of which a certain future developed, or the present itself as the realization of a future that was earlier anticipated in literary, historical, or sociological visions – structure the works under discussion in this issue. The Jamesonian approach to the present as past is most clearly visible in works that engage with pollution or climate change by way of futuristic "cautionary tales" about the potential consequences of our current socio-economic structures and policies. But the focus on contemporary scenarios of pollution and social conflict as the material for futuristic visions (as in the *Doctor Who* serials discussed by Jørgensen) or

the choice of real present-day places as the settings for disasters to come (as in the films discussed by Weik) force viewers to perceive the present as a – mostly dystopian – kind of future. While one approach usually predominates, both perspectives at times combine in a particular work, such as Fehlbau's climate change film *Hell*. Both perspectives, in quite different ways, seek to make the present available for critique and transformation – in the case of the works under discussion here, particularly a present in which nature has been transformed and reshaped by humans all the way from the gene to the planetary atmosphere. In this context of the Anthropocene, as it has come to be called over the last decade, ecocritical readings seek to unearth in the invention of eco-futures reimaginings of the ecological present.

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