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INTERVIEW ON THE STATEMENT OF THE
WORKSHOP THEATER OF THE ANTHROPOCENE
AT THE 10TH THEATRE OLYMPICS BUDAPEST

Sára Sánta asks Frank Raddatz and Johanna Domokos

"I HAD BEEN CUT OFF FROM MY ROOTS,
SO I HAD TO FIND NEW ONES"

(József Szarvas's Fairy Garden)

Interview by Annamária Rojkó

Frank M. Raddatz

THE THEATRE OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

Concept, questions, performances

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ON STAGE

A Contract with Nature

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**INVITING THE TERRESTRIAL ON STAGE
IN OUR MINDS AND BODIES**

*Reshaping perspectives by accentuating
a profound connection to the Earth*

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Statement

The Theater of the Anthropocene Creates the Future by Giving Planet Earth A Stage

The relationship people have with nature depends on their culture. In the age of ecological threats, plants, animals, rivers, forests and landscapes can no longer be regarded as dead objects.

Without a living connection with non-human actors and their needs, no habitat will remain intact. Under these circumstances, the task of culture, like that of theater, is to create a sensitivity to the state and processes of our planet in order to confront society with the question: what kind of nature do we want?

Budapest, 2023 June 21

the Authors of this publication

Artistic laboratory of socio-ecological homeostasis: Theater of the Anthropocene

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Johanna Domokos,
Frank M. Raddatz

Theater of the Anthropocene

as Artistic Laboratory
of Socio-Ecological Homeostasis

Abstract

In an era marked by unprecedented environmental challenges and the recognition of humanity's profound impact on the planet, the intersection of theater and the Anthropocene emerges as a compelling and urgent subject for exploration. This conference publication, titled *Artistic laboratory of socio-ecological homeostasis: Theater of the Anthropocene*, seeks to unravel the multifaceted relationship between the performing arts and the epoch defined by human-induced ecological transformations. By considering the interacting possibilities of scholars, theater makers and the audience, this collection aims to illuminate the interconnected role of theater and science in interpreting, responding to, and shaping our understanding of the Anthropocene.

Keywords: Environmental theater, theater of the Anthropocene, interconnectedness of human and non-human lives, platform for ecological conversations, intersection of science and art

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The Anthropocene, characterized by the discernible influence of human activities on Earth's geology and ecosystems, demands a reevaluation of our cultural, social, scientific and artistic practices. In this context, theater emerges as a potent and reflective medium capable of capturing the complexities of our contemporary existence. *Artistic laboratory of socio-ecological homeostasis: Theater of the Anthropocene* delves into the ways in which theater responds to the Anthropocene, examining its potential to provoke thought, inspire action, and foster a deeper connection between individuals and their environment.

Theoretical Input

In the more and more diversified discourses of the late 20th and early 21st century, both art and science have converged toward environmental reflection through different paths. While it seemed self-evident to the ancient theater that the outside of society is besieged and inhabited by gods and other non-human intelligences, the bourgeois theater shrank to a pure interaction between people. When *Das Totenfloß* by the German playwright Harald Müller was first performed in 1984 about an apocalyptic environmental catastrophe, there was hardly any response. It was not until 1986, after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, that the play enjoyed success on the stage. Today, environmental theater for children and schoolchildren is a tried and tested means of raising awareness of the foundations of life in social structures. In many Western countries, there is hardly a support program for the stage in which the concept of sustainability is not a priority.

The innovative field of culture and art studies of the latest turn of the century not only opened pioneering inter- and multidisciplinary reflections for the individual academic disciplines, but nurtured productive researches on environment, culture and science (e.g. Serres 1995; Bheringer 2010; Bonneuil and Fressoz 2017; Bould 2021). The emerging field of ecolinguistics studies that emerged in parallel have started to investigate the relation between language and environment (e.g. Haugen 1972; Alexander and Stibbe 2014; Stibbe 2015; Zhou 2021). With ecocriticism, the relation between literature and environment gained stronger focus (e.g. Grenoble & Whaley 1998; Guattari 2008). Regarding our field, it is worth noticing the results of ecotheatrics (including eco-performance and eco-theater practices and studies) underlining the artistic and scholarly investigations upon the interrelations of theater performances and

environmental balance (e.g. Fried and May 1994; French 1998; Stetter and Sauer 2022).

By the turn of the millennium the concept of the Anthropocene, brought into play by the natural sciences to date the human-dominated epoch of the history of the earth, fundamentally changed the relationship between culture/art and nature. While on the one hand the environmental theater is geared towards the conservative preservation of conditions, on the other hand the theater of the Anthropocene is embedded in history and aims to shape the future. This theater of transformation recognizes living counterparts in the actors of nature, on whom the human species and its habitat are profoundly dependent. The global interdependencies with the quasi-subjects, as Bruno Latour put it, and planetary forces are the inescapable material of this new type of theater.

As part of ecotheatrics, but with manifold aspects (e.g. nature and environment, humans and other living beings, ecological challenges of the anthropocene era, art and science practices: see the figure below) the theater of the Anthropocene, hand in hand with the anthropocenic theater studies (e.g. Raddatz 2021; Lonergan 2023), offer us insights in the artistic laboratories, concrete actions and their academic reflections regarding rearticulations of contemporary socio-ecological homeostasis.

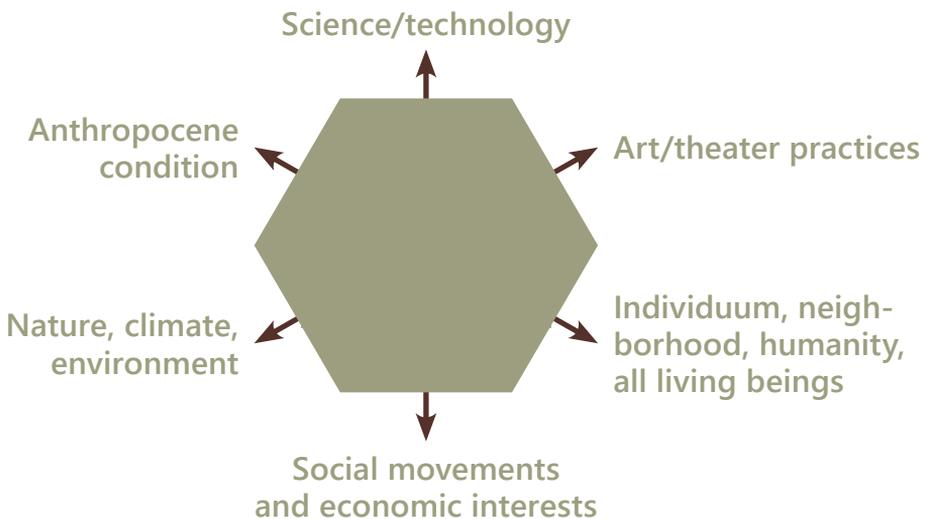


Fig. 1. Components of Anthropocenic Theater Studies

Our Publication

The present publication is a result of a three-day event including a workshop with academic lectures and artists' reflections, several theater visits, and many informal discussions among the lecturing and attending participants taking place in the framework of the 10th Theater Olympics (Budapest, June 8-10, 2023). How, and how long can we, humankind, be co-existent with the environment on planet Earth? And, how are her various natural entities incorporated in present day legal, artistic and theatrical life? Moreover, how can theater along other arts contribute to the recreation of harmony of our ecology? These were just the opening questions placed at the intersection of academic and artistic reflections to invite the participants to reflect on their own connection to water, trees, resilience, artistic creation and much more.

The resulting writings are here subdivided into three chapters: that of studies, interviews, essays and artist contributions. The series of studies is opened by the programmatic kind of paper by Frank M. Raddatz entitled *The theatre of the Anthropocene, concept, questions, performances*. By describing the concept, aims and practical steps of the foundation *Theatre of the Anthropocene*, the author reflects on the question at the intersection of ecological theatre and art/science : Why is the art/science interface central to this theatre or Anthropocene aesthetic? Furthermore, Raddatz elaborates several answers to such central questions: How can the concepts of a pre-scientific world, which were in close exchange with the non-human powers, be transferred to a science-based civilization based on a techno sphere? How can the theatrical stage deal with these challenges?

In his analysis entitled *On Stage: A contract with Nature*, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger take his point of departure from *Le Contrat Naturel* (1990), the French philosopher Michel Serres' (1930–2019) manifesto for caring about our planet and its planetary future. It is an apologia for giving the things around us, for giving nature a voice again. Instead of being parasites, we must become symbionts again. Rheinberger's study, followed by Eliane Beaufile's *Inviting the terrestrial on stage in our minds and bodies*, investigates alongside Bruno Latour how we should develop the conscience of all that attaches us materially to the world as well as to others, human and non-human. Certain theatrical devices invite precisely the spectators to study the relations they have with their environment and their co-habitants. This contribution emphasizes four immersive

or participative forms, which are very different in nature: *Cracks* by choreographer Charlotta Ruth (DK), *Devenir forêt* by Marina Pirot (Bretagne, FR), *Où atterrir* by the collective *Où atterrir* founded by Latour (Paris, FR), and *Democracy of Organisms* by Club Real (D).

The following reflection of this chapter, entitled *The Tragedy of Earth. Climate change in German-speaking contemporary theatre*, by Andreas Englhart turns its attention to climate change and species extinction, which are also an immense challenge for German-language theatre. Paradigmatic stagings of the last few years are presented and their dramaturgical potential to adequately deal with the tragedy of the earth and to initiate necessary changes will be discussed. Above all, Englhardt emphasizes, facts need to be presented and commitment encouraged in our present day theater.

In the final study of the first chapter, *Antropocene and Performing Science. Examples from University Bielefeld*, by the researcher-performer Johanna Domokos reflects on how a performance setting engages students in academic, affective and aesthetic learning about a seminar's chosen topic. By heruristic overview of both recent performing science events at University Bielefeld and courses dealing with Anthropocene topics, the author demonstrates through the analysis of a concrete event how an improvisational, non-exhibitional, process-centered academic performance chain in the busy university hall of University Bielefeld make the students and employees who are passing by aware of the challenges of our Anthropocene age.

The present publication contains two interviews. In the first one, Annamária Rojkó asks the actor and activist József Szarvas about his performances, and how planting native fruit trees in the Carpathian basin supports relearning culture and strengthening the community. In the second interview, Sára Sánta talks with the editors of this publication about the broader context of the statement born as a final thesis of the workshop.

Following the studies and interviews, the section of essays contains two papers. In *The natural and supernatural existence of rivers before, during and after the Anthropocene*, László Koppány Csáji invites the readers on a journey through the history of mentality from Siberia through the Pakistani–Afghan border to India, from the ancient Greek afterlife through the source region of the Nile to the period of the Roman occupation of Hispania. Through which metaphors connected to rivers can we learn more about humanity's past – and present? What can today's people learn from rivers? – asks the author. While

searching for answers, the author elaborates the usefulness of Victor Turner's concept of social drama. This study outlines the dangers inherent in listing the sins of humanity in the name of environmental protection, and aiming only at the breakdown (deconstruction) of great promises and narratives, as well as what could be the dire fate of the regulations of a global and environmentally conscious social monoculture. The second essay of this unit is an artist contribution. Entitled as *Background, antecedents and practical implementation of the art of beekeeping* Tibor Weiner Sennyey reflects on Aristotle's and Shakespeare's relations to bees, as well as how art, poetry and drama relate to beekeeping. The sincere question of what is the responsibility of artists during a world crisis is elaborated also from a personal view.

The final section of this publication contains two artist contributions. The intro passage of *Acting in the Age of Multiple Crises? Acting in the Age of Eco-cide? Acting on stage?* by writer Kathrin Röggla asks: Why are we not acting? Who is acting? What is action? Both her literary letter Dear River and the comments to the creative process of her play *The Water point* to generational conflicts over economic logic. As the last contribution to his thematic issue, the polyglot poet and ethnobiologist Sabira Ståhlberg deconstructs our challenging time with a multilingual creative text entitled *AnthropoSun Poetry Wanderung*. After decoding the Anthropocene as „An troppo sin? Ant trop scene? / Anthropocene: Human. Nature. Relationen. Dialog. / Terre. Air. Wasser. Fire. Void.“ she invites us to an aesthetic mental journey into glossolalia poems including a monolingual translation and poetic interpretation.

Closing thoughts

As we navigate the Anthropocene, *Artistic laboratory of socio-ecological homeostasis: Theater of the Anthropocene* invites participants to engage in a dialogue that transcends disciplinary boundaries, encouraging a collective reimagining of our relationship with the planet. Through a diverse array of perspectives, this conference publication aims to inspire a renewed sense of purpose within the theatrical community, urging practitioners and scholars alike to harness the transformative power of theater to navigate the challenges of our age.

The present publication could not have been done without the inspiring and supportive framework of the 10th Theater Olympics and our motivated contributors. As organizers/editors, we give thanks to the editor and translator team of

the Uránia journal for all the technical and linguistic support our group received during the workshop days and in the bilingual finalization process of our publication.

May all living beings on Earth enjoy fulfilled lives under healthy circumstances and be happy, peaceful, and free from suffering.

World Nature Conservation Day, 2023
Budapest/Berlin

The Editors

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Frank M. Raddatz

The Theatre of the Anthropocene

Concept, questions, performances

Abstract

This article explores the emergence and development of *The Theatre of the Anthropocene*, a unique artistic platform founded by Dr. Frank M. Raddatz and Prof. Dr. Antje Boetius in 2019. This ecological theatre operates at the intersection of art and science, aiming to depict and engage with the complex realities of the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene, a geological epoch marked by human influence on Earth, necessitates a scientifically informed theatre to convey the intricate interplay between human activities and the planetary ecosystem. The article delves into the theoretical foundations of this theatre, drawing on Bruno Latour's critique of ecological disasters rooted in deficient epistemic concepts. It contrasts this with Bertolt Brecht's scientific theatre and emphasizes the need for a transformation in the science stage to address contemporary environmental challenges. The role of feedback loops and the recognition of non-human entities as independent subjects in an Anthropocene aesthetic are central themes. The article also explores the potential of a spectral aesthetic, emphasizing the hybrid nature of the phenomena addressed, and presents the example of the production *Lawyers of Nature*. Furthermore, it discusses the urgent task of developing an ecological sensibility through art to instigate changes in societal attitudes toward planetary conditions.

Keywords: Theatre of the Anthropocene, Anthropocene aesthetic, science theatre, Bertolt Brecht, Bruno Latour, ecological sensibility, feedback loops, non-human entities, spectral aesthetic, *Lawyers of Nature*, nature's own rights, legal subjectivity, ecological revolution, planetary forces, climate catastrophe, artistic-scientific collaboration

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1.

The *Theatre of the Anthropocene* was founded by the dramatist and publicist Dr Frank Raddatz and the marine and polar researcher and science communicator Prof. Dr Antje Boetius in November 2019. The patron was Prof. Dr. Sabine Kunst, President of Humboldt University.¹ The purpose of this stage is to develop artistic -theatrical projects in the context of the Anthropocene. Since then, events linking climate activists, scientists, philosophers and artists have taken place in cooperation with foundations and scientific institutions at very different locations, mainly in Germany.

It is an ecological theatre at the art/science interface. Why is the art/science interface central to this theatre or anthropocene aesthetic? The answer to this shows us that science acts in a double role in this context. The entire toxic vocabulary of ecology such as global warming, melting of the poles, acidification of the oceans, serious losses of biodiversity, etc. is based on earth system science surveys, atmospheric measurements, computer simulation, satellite records and elaborate drilling at the ice poles. Using drill cores that sometimes reach back hundreds of millions of years into Earth history, the extent and potential of the current crisis is both assessed and extrapolated. For example, that the Holocene would have lasted up to 50,000 years without the emissions of industrial societies. The Anthropocene is a well-founded scientific construction, as its name was not accidentally created by a Nobel Prize winner, namely, Paul Crutzen, Nobel Prize for Chemistry 1995.

But why the dual role? Well, according to the historian of science Bruno Latour, the ecological disaster would not have been possible at all without the sciences and the technology associated with them. The ecological crisis is the result of a deficient epistemic concept. In short: the classification of the planet as a dead physical object. Latour conceives of the Earth planet as something alive, which he calls GAIA in ancient Greek. Gaia is not covered by a series of dead things but by highly living effective powers that are interconnected and influence each other. At the same time, this network of life or the interconnectedness of the Critical Zones can neither be recognised nor understood without science.

¹ Theater des Anthropozän. <https://xn--theater-des-anthropozn-15b.de/> Viewed on 08 June 2023.

If a stage wants to depict this reality, play with it, come into contact with it, it needs a scientifically based theatre. But what can such a theatre look like? First of all, there is already a scientific theatre that operates successfully all over the world. Brecht's epic theatre is explicitly designed as a stage for the *children of the scientific age*. His main theoretical writing *Kleines Organon für das Theater* (*Small Organon for Theatre*) invokes Albert Einstein, Robert Oppenheimer and several times Galileo Galilei. This link to science in no way means that a play such as *Mother Courage and Her Children* conveys essential knowledge about the 30-year war. Rather, while the sutler loses her children one by one in the religious war, the thinking spectator is supposed to come to the compelling conclusion that no business can be done with war. The theatre, which stems from cult and ritual, becomes a thinking space and with this operation is entrusted to the guardrail of causality. Seen in this way, the Anthropocene stage, together with the art/science interface, could easily saddle up to Brecht's scientific theatre. But at the same time there are serious differences. For global warming and the frightening loss of biodiversity are by no means intended side effects of the processes of nature control. Instead of propagating a mechanical and linear causality like the Brechtian stage, I have to ask the Anthropocene theatre what logic rules in the planetary habitat that responds to human intervention with global warming and other threatening effects.

While Brecht's idea of progress is based on the secret premise that the exploitation of nature is free of feedback and founds the basis of the well-being of all, the Anthropocene stage is confronted with the undesirable global side effects of the industrial form of nature's domination. Moreover, Brechtian theatre is based on the epistemes Latour criticises as deficient.

From the point of view of an anthropocene aesthetic, Brecht's theatre is still anchored in bourgeois drama despite all the innovations. Traditionally, for example, a cherry orchard, the name of a well-known play by Anton Chechov, is valued as an object and represented on the scene by an element of scenery. In contrast, an Anthropocene art has to show the actants of nature as quasi-subjects, as something alive, interacting with the world. By behaving and reacting to human activities, the entities of nature demonstrate at the same time that they can by no means be grasped and described as objects solely with a mechanical logic. Rather, they are Critical Zones actants that interact with each other with the beginning of life on earth and respond to the actions of each actor in the web of life. Like a monad, no tree exists only in relation to

itself. It is in intensive exchange with other trees, but also with all life forms and spheres with which its species is in contact. The face of the earth, for example, would be unrecognisable without the terraforming of trees and forests that has continued over many hundreds of millions of years.

In view of this theorising, humans must quickly realise that they too are only one factor in the critical zones, exerting great influence but shaping the habitat just like other actors. However, because he is blind to the now global effects of his activities, he is in the process of putting a noose around his own head due to his long-lasting ignorance of the effects of his actions. In the meantime, essentials of our mode of existence on this planet have been recognised, but still too little is known about their consequences and implied interrelationships. Latour therefore identifies the epistemic figure of feedback as crucial to ecological disaster. In an Anthropocene art, according to Latour, 'each feedback loop should be simultaneously collectively narrated, reenacted, acted out and ritualised. Each of these loops records unexpected responses from an external agent that complicates human action.' Instead of treating the agents of nature as objects or elements of scenery in a science theatre, it is necessary to 'ceaselessly and repeatedly (re)draw these loops with all available means, as if the old differences between scientific instrumentation, emergence of a public sphere and political arts, as well as the definition of common space, were disappearing. These differences are much less important than the emphatic call: do everything to make a loop comprehensible and publicly visible, otherwise we will become blind and helpless and have no ground left to settle on.' The actors of the non-human world are to be regarded as independent subjects or powers that are difficult to calculate, as in the mythically based theatre of antiquity. The question of this stage is therefore how it can – as Michel Serres put it – organise the actors 'in a circular causality, in feedback loops'.

Against the horizon of these epistemic arguments concerning the difference between object and actant, the different approaches to physical reality in 20th and 21st century science theatre stand out clearly. If an anthropocene stage assumes with Latour that knowledge of feedback loops is essential for survival, the similarities with Brecht's science theatre fade, so that the need for a fundamental transformation of the science stage becomes apparent. The shift from mechanical causality with its reproducible effects to the process logic of feedback loops with barely calculable results outlines the playing field on which art and science communicate despite their opposition.

2.

In view of the climate catastrophe and the growing horizons of threat associated with it, it can only be the goal of an ecological aesthetic to create a sense of connection with the planetary habitat. Traditionally, the shaping of sensibility is one of the primary tasks of culture, art and theatre. Thus Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) already saw an essential effect of the bourgeois tragedy, which he naturalised in Germany, in the establishment of affects that were alien to feudal culture. The parallels are obvious. The 'ecological class' (Latour) also has to articulate its own canon of values and develop a corresponding sensibility that corresponds to the realities after the overlap of earth and human history (Chakrabarty 2018). Without the formation of a sensitivity to the demands of the 21st century, an indispensable modification of social modes of existence will hardly succeed. To initiate a general change of attitude towards planetary conditions, the non-human inhabitants of the earth and the fragility of our ecosphere as a whole is urgently required from a scientific point of view, but apparently the research generated by means of computer simulation, drilling cores, satellite programmes, measuring stations is not sufficient to trigger changes in consciousness. Information about the increasing instability of our spheres of life obviously does not necessarily generate adequate social behaviour. This points to the task of art in this field: 'knowledge alone is beautiful but/ you also have to believe in this knowledge', the Austrian playwright Thomas Köck aptly writes in his play *Aerocirkus* (2023). It is not scientific knowledge that reaches its limits but its power of persuasion, if it does not lead to immediately useful technical innovations. Only art, so the desperate thesis, can release those fantasies that set in motion the modifications of behaviour deemed necessary and drive systemic reconstruction. This outlines the task of theatre at the interface with science. Theatre should not add further knowledge about creative procedures etc. to knowledge, but emotionalise and culturalise the process of communication. This means condensing knowledge into forms of aesthetic experience.

3.

There is still no convincing stage grammar that ties the planetary parameters that are in motion, such as global warming, the continuing loss of biodiversity, the melting polar ice caps, back into theatrical contexts. While the stage has

for many centuries been considered a site of the social, staging confrontations between people, it has nevertheless historically been quite capable of organising contacts and exchanges with the sphere of non-human forces.

Anyone who goes in search of the planetary dimension of theatre art will come across the Dionysian. In order to flank Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* in terms of the philosophy of art, the young Nietzsche sketched out a basic outline of the tragic motor by recourse to the dichotomy Apollonian-Dionysian introduced into aesthetic discourse by Friedrich Wilhelm Josef Schelling (Nietzsche 2003). By no means was the Dionysian – as often claimed in the commentary literature – conceived as a quality of the human being. Rather, it is an impersonal planetary force that grips members of all species by virtue of their corporeality and membership in the forces of evolution. This libidinous sensory intoxication is intensified by the intended ecstatic effect of music and rhythm on the level of culture. They form the foundation of tragedy-art rooted in the cultic. This foundation implies a metric of the texts, which are sung, but also danced, in a communal, ultimately choral form. The individual protagonists and their individual fates historically grow out of this choral subject.

In the perspective of the Anthropocene, the Dionysian shows itself as an expression of the planetary force that drives the cycle of evolution and life. Its power is organised in planetary rhythms, the seasons. By means of the art form of Attic tragedy, this pulse of the planet is ceremonially condensed and celebrated at the beginning of spring in the form of the *Dionysia*. At the same time, Dionysus, who is responsible for the annual sprouting of greenery as well as for the theatre, is the only god who can die.

A theatre that wants to play on a living planet dominated by effective powers can therefore refer to roots that are deeply connected genealogically with the earth. At the same time, a relationship between shamanic or indigenous forms of knowledge and mythical narratives, which form the cultic basis of theatre art, is evident. With the Dionysian as a planetary effect, an essential component is determined that connects the Anthropocene stage with the basal layers of theatre. But how can this potential be reactivated under current conditions?

While ancient theatre in its early phases had the possibility of attributing earthquakes or plague outbreaks to divine influence and thus personifying them, elementary forces of nature such as the climatic earthquake or the climatic plague are currently refusing to be translated into figurations with an affinity for theatre. From traditional drama, i.e. Shakespeare's royal dramas, the

tragedies of the 18th century, bourgeois and socialist drama, it is hardly possible to make a viable connection to the darkening time horizon of the present. What is striking, however, are the affinities to the ancient world that span millennia. In the epoch of the Anthropocene, powers announce their reign that seemed defeated and subjugated in times of triumphant progress. Instead, they seem to have merely changed shape and return with a character that must be described as capricious, unpredictable and unpredictable. Where just a moment ago a barely known heat wave was bearing down on the land, suddenly water masses hitherto thought unimaginable are raining down. Gradually but inexorably, we see ourselves transported back to the world of early civilisations and antiquity, when the powers of nature appeared like despotic and indomitable eminences. At ever shorter intervals, digital modernity, based in the global village, has to admit that its immanence is being perforated by conditions in the history of the earth, which in recent centuries have only been suitable as a backdrop on the stage.

When James Watt solved the riddle of the optimisation of the steam engine in 1783, as Oedipus had solved the riddle of the Sphinx thousands of years before, he pushed open the door to the industrial age with its insatiable hunger for coal and fossil fuels without evil intentions and in a state of innocence. As a result, today, just a few generations later, the entire human species is plunging irreversibly into the planetary age. How can the concepts of a pre-scientific world, which were in close exchange with the non-human powers, be transferred to a science-based civilisation based on a technosphere? How can a stage deal with these challenges?

4.

Against the outlined coordinates, the Theatre of the Anthropocene has in the last four years brought out performances on water, the forest, soil and animals in soil, as in December 2022 on nature's own rights. All these productions are based on the premise that the current problems did not fall from the sky. For there is no immediate nature. Rather, the phenomena addressed have a long history in that they are always part of the symbolic household and are rooted in cultural and spiritual designs. *Nature is concept*, sums up Bruno Latour. Nature is never outside the symbolic field as an independent or even given quantity, but is always dependent on the culture of an epoch and thus subject to per-

manent change. Since the cultural designs emerge in a dependency of time horizons, the scenic arcs are not anchored in nature per se but in what has become historical. The performative exhibits emphasise the hybrid character of the motifs and materials. Linked by the theme, scenes, videos and music present different aspects of the respective phenomenon. This kind of perspectivation does not paint a homogeneous, closed picture of an entity but unfolds the heterogeneous aspects of the actors. Aesthetically classified, they do not appear as a homogeneous unit or entity but as an assemblage. At the same time, this requires the activity of the viewer, who has to weigh the individual points of view in order to generate an overall picture or to put together what is disjointed.

Them artistic procedures constitute a spectral aesthetic. The personnel of the individual performances is just as diverse as the content that is addressed. The artistic ensemble consists of musicians, actors, inclusive actors, puppeteers, filmmakers and dancers. Earth system scientists, foresters, curators, experts and activists also perform. At the interface of art and science, this ensemble of actors with different affiliations generates a knowledge that is both scientific and non-scientific in nature and, as an aesthetic experience, offers a multitude of open connections – sensual, mobile and surprising. In the following, I would like to present this artistic process by way of example in the production *Lawyers of Nature*.

5.

In 1972, the American lawyer Christopher Stone argued for a fundamental revision of our anthropocentric legal system with his polemic *Should Trees Have Standing?* for a fundamental revision of our anthropocentric legal system (Stone 2010).

In 1990, Michel Serres, the 'philosophical mastermind of the Anthropocene' (Hans-Jörg Rheinberger) provoked with his essay *The Natural Contract*, arguing for the recognition of nature as a legal subject in order to stabilise the out-of-balance order of ecological parameters: 'When objects themselves become legal subjects, all the scales tilt towards the equilibrium position' (Serres 1995).

Fifty years after the paradigm shift initiated by Stone, the discussion about concrete steps towards a kind of nature contract or constitution of the Anthropocene has gained momentum. Legal ethicist Jens Kersten of Ludwig-Maxi-

milians-Universität in Munich, who advocates an 'ecological revolution of law', draws fundamental legal conclusions: 'The constitution of the Anthropocene should conceive of nature as a legal subject that can independently claim, sue for and enforce its rights.' He bases his argument on the fact that the rights of animals are recognised in court in Argentina, Colombia and the USA, and the rights of rivers in Ecuador, India, Colombia, Canada and New Zealand. A view that goes beyond the protection of species and landscapes by allowing nature to 'assert its ecological interests as a legal entity itself'.

Thus, in the publication *Haben Tiere Rechte? Aspects and Dimensions of the Human-Animal Relationship of 2019*, over 40 lawyers and experts from agribusiness, anthropology, nutritional science, marine biology, medicine, philosophy, political science and theology argue for comprehensive reforms of the legal aspects of the relationship with nature. The summary of the status quo by Anne Peters, Director of the *Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law* in Heidelberg, makes the prerequisites clear: 'The conventional status of animals fits into a strict dichotomy between persons (*personae*) and things (*res*), which many legal systems, including the German one, have adopted from Roman law. Parallel to this is the division between legal subjects and legal objects. Persons (legal subjects) can have rights – against other persons, in things or against the state. A person can be owned by no one. [...]. Things are therefore objects of law over which persons can dispose.'

The Western legal system distinguishes between two categories of persons. In addition to natural persons, i.e. human beings, there are legal persons, such as business enterprises in the form of joint-stock companies. An epistemological transformation of things into actors and quasi-subjects would correspond to their categorisation as persons at the legal level. The 'further development of law', according to Peters, of a national as well as global animal law would be entirely possible through an expansion of legal subjects: 'Since the philosophical and legal concept of 'person' based on it is a human invention, an 'animal person' could also be conceived without further ado and placed as a third type of person alongside the two existing ones.' Jens Kersten also emphasises: 'A legal system is fundamentally free to decide whom or what it recognises as a legal subject.' In view of the ecological threat horizons, it is urgently necessary to put the traditional human-animal/landscape relationship to the test at the legal level and to reform it where necessary.

6.

A revision of the traditional legal definition of non-human actors in nature, granting them a status as 'quasi-subjects' (Bruno Latour) with a legal status, is undoubtedly a profound cultural-historical caesura. Since the days of ancient tragedy, theatre has been used to narratively illustrate upheavals in the legal system. Moreover, art has the capacity to explore and situate spaces of possibility. Therefore, the stage is particularly suited to playfully illuminate the theme of nature's own rights in a loose sequence of scenes from various aspects.

The Western legal order, and thus that of the global world, is historically based on Roman law, which was in sharp contrast to the legal order of less anthropocentrically oriented cultural areas. For example, both Cicero and Friedrich Georg Wilhelm Hegel disapproved of the ancient Egyptian animal protection laws, which were feared for their harshness towards delinquents. In the performance, a dancer demonstrates how permeable the boundaries between humans and animals are, while anthropological and ethnological texts, passages with reference to prehistoric human-animal relationships or mythical antiquity prove how the intimate connection between humans, animals and landscapes determined the attitude to life of previous cultures.

Another scenic block is set in the Middle Ages. A vintner accuses beetles of ruining her vineyard and demands systematic insect extermination. An authentic 16th century case from France has been handed down, in which the court ordered the beetles to leave the vineyard. At the same time, the community had to provide the insects with an alternative site, since the small animals were also creatures of God.

In another scene, the forgotten and almost unknown animal rights philosopher of the early 19th century Karl Christian Friedrich Krause rises from his grave and pleads for his reflections on the earth as an organism to become the basis of law. It shows how forward-thinking thinkers who were close to the earth were systematically removed from the symbolic universe in the course of an exaltation of reason inspired by Descartes and Hegel. Subsequently enters a guest from a parallel world enters the scene, who has a demon at his side. He talks about the meaning of birds in surrealism, which are anything but dead things, and asks whether art is not far ahead of traditional subject-object thinking.

In the end, the real-life lawyer Charlotte Maier appears to mediate in a conflict between people and a river. The real problems that the city of Berlin will be facing in a few years in terms of water supply form the basis of the dispute. In addition to the exchange of arguments between the various interest groups, the river Spree itself appears to articulate its position. In a specially produced video clip, the judge Agustin Grijalva explains his judgement, which he passed a few years ago in the context of the lawsuit of the cloud forest Los Cedros in Ecuador against a mining company. The non-anthropocentric perspective of the indigenous population, in combination with enforceable rights, prevents a relapse into practices of re-mythification. The rights of nature thus offer a viable path that leads to a future beyond dystopias at the height of the 21st century. The ecological misery thus generates with feedback effects that even affect the legal constitution.

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Hans-Jörg Rheinberger

On Stage

A Contract with Nature

Abstract

This article reflects on Michael Serres' philosophical insights in *Le Contrat Naturel* (1990), emphasizing the urgency of redefining humanity's relationship with the Earth. Serres proposes a symbiotic alliance between the knowledge of natural sciences and prudent judgment, advocating for a profound shift in our interaction with the planet. The article delves into Serres' conceptualization of the five elements—earth, air, fire, water, and the universe of the living—while scrutinizing the role of sciences in fostering a harmonious coexistence with nature. It also examines Serres' critique of contemporary philosophy and social sciences, highlighting the unique position of natural sciences in acknowledging the material realities of the world. The interpretation of the two included images draws our attention to the consequences of neglecting the interconnectedness of humanity and nature. The author contends that scientists, as stewards of the Earth, must engage in a transformative process to ensure the sustainability of the planet for future generations.

Keywords: Michel Serres, Natural Contract, Anthropocene, Symbiosis, World-Objects, Science, Nature-Culture Divide

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In the summer of 2019, the French mariner, philosopher and historian of science Michel Serres passed away. He was one of the greatest thinkers and humanists of our days. In my contribution to this debate about the Anthropocene, I will focus on Serres' book *The Natural Contract*. It was published more than thirty years ago, but it has lost nothing of its urgency – and of its literary beauty, if I may add. On the contrary, Serres was a pioneer of the Anthropocene even before the term had come into use for our age about 20 years ago. What follows is a close reading of a few passages from this book documenting Serres' engagement with what we may call the five elements out there in the world: earth, air, fire, water, and the universe of the living. I will pay particular attention to the role attributed by him to the sciences in what he saw as the unavoidability of making peace with our planet Earth – for the sake of our own survival. In order to cope with this actual, dramatically increasing challenge, thus Serres, a new alliance is urgently needed between two types of reason: the reason behind what he called 'faithful knowledge,' that is, the knowledge of the natural sciences about the material world, and the reason behind 'prudent judgment' (Serres 1995, 93), thus, between 'pure reason' and 'practical reason' according to the classical dichotomy of Kant's Critiques (Kant 1996; Kant 2002).

The Natural Contract was published in the spring of 1990 in Paris and aroused a considerable storm of theoretical outrage. The purported scandal: How could a rational being dare to ascribe to nature the character of a contractual subject? Slightly less than ten years later, upon the invitation by the French National Library to look back on the publication of his book, Serres re-visited its underlying rationale. Here, he formulated it succinctly as follows: 'The subject becomes object. We become victims of our victories, the passivity of our activities, medical objects of our actions as subjects. And the global object becomes the subject, for it reacts to our actions'¹ (Serres 2000, 17).

How right he was to call us 'medical objects' back then, we were actually experiencing with the Corona pandemic. In a nutshell, Serres was claiming that humankind must abandon its parasitic relation to nature and convert it to a symbiotic relation. 'Rights of symbiosis', we read in *The Natural Contract*, 'are defined by reciprocity: however much nature gives man, man must give that much back to nature, now a legal subject' (Serres 1995, 38). But, he asks, thus anticipating a possible objection: 'What language do the things of the

¹ Translated by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger.



Fig. 1. Francisco de Goya y Lucientes: Duelo a garrotazos (1820). Prado, Madrid.

world speak, that we might come to an understanding with them, contractually?’ and promptly answers in return: ‘In fact, the Earth speaks to us in terms of forces, bonds, and interactions, and that’s enough to make a contract’ (Serres 1995, 39).

This is the point at which we can have a closer look at the argumentative texture of Michel Serres’ book. He does not speak as a scientist here, he speaks and tells stories as a very specific kind of philosopher, one who sees it as philosophy’s task ‘to anticipate the future’² (Serres 2000, 22), as he puts it. No owl of Minerva thus rising at dusk, after the fact, that has haunted philosophical knowledge since the days of Hegel with its ‘grey in grey’ (Hegel 1991, 23). Serres is a thinker of the Anthropocene avant la lettre. It is worth looking at his reasoning in more detail.

Michel Serres finds drastic images for the current situation of the planet. His book begins with the forceful portrayal of a *pintura negra* by the Spanish painter Francisco de Goya (Fig. 1). Two youngsters are fighting with batons in a dune-like landscape. Each of them tries to hit the other with his rod. Forgetting everything around them, they do not realize that they are sinking deeper into the sand with each blow. The ground on which they are standing is going to engulf them both, irrespective of the outcome of their battle. They have lost

² Translated by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger.

sight, that is, of the material support that sustains them, the third party that mediates their relationship, their social interaction. This is how Serres transposes the fight: 'Take away the world around the battles, keep only conflicts or debates, thick with humanity and purified of things, and you obtain stage theater, most of our narratives and philosophies, history, and all of social science: the interesting spectacle they call cultural. Does anyone ever say where the master and slave fight it out? Our culture abhors the world' (Serres 1995, 3). Then he adds asking: 'Aren't we forgetting the world of things themselves, the sand, the water, the mud, the reeds of the marsh?' (Serres 1995, 2), and he concludes: 'We have lost the world. We've transformed things into fetishes or commodities, the stakes of our stratagems; and our a-cosmic philosophies, for almost half a century now, have been holding forth only on language or politics, writing or logic' (Serres 1995, 29).

As far as the discourses of contemporary philosophy are concerned, Serres' somber diagnosis is that 'Nature is reduced to human nature, which is reduced to either history or reason. The world has disappeared' (Serres 1995, 35) from their view. Serres' merciless bashing of philosophy and the social sciences, however, comes to a halt in the face of knowledge produced by the sciences of nature. He does of course not claim at all that the natural sciences were not socially constituted as well, and that they would not be tainted by history and contemporary theorizing, quite on the contrary. But in one decisive aspect, he considers, they differ: They simply cannot ignore the recalcitrance of their objects as easily as the humanities obviously can.

Nevertheless, the sciences play, aside from the peculiar constitution of their rationality, at the level of practice, of physical intervention, an inextricably double role in that 'world drama' of our times which is the subject of Serres' book. On the one hand, it is to the technical reifications of the sciences that we owe those 'world-objects,' that is, those 'artifacts that have at least one global-scale dimension (time, space, speed, or energy)' (Serres 1995, 15), such as: 'A satellite regarding speed, an atomic bomb for its energy, the internet with respect to space, atomic waste for time [...] these are four examples of world-objects' (Serres 2010, 12). These are the objects that stand in for the global effects of our actions on the planet and its atmosphere, the big issue of the Anthropocene. For Serres, the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the turning point at which the new era definitely began. By these bombs, he states, 'my

generation learned, as the first generation in history, that mankind as a whole faced the risk of extinction³ (Serres 2010, 10).

On the other hand, of the three social powers that today, according to Serres, are the big players and dominate our affairs as well as our view on the world – administration, journalism, and science – the sciences are the only power that is definitely oriented toward the future: ‘Continuity belongs to administrators, the day-by-day to the media, and to science belong the only plans for the future we have left’ (Serres, 1995, 30). It remains thus as the main task for and is incumbent on the sciences to care about ‘the greatest object of scientific knowledge and practice, the Planet Earth, this new nature’ (Serres 1995, 30). And although today all three of the powerful subcultures mentioned (Serres 1995, 31), including the sciences, are driven more or less by short-term concerns, it is the sciences that appear to be best qualified to induce that ‘harrowing revision of today’s culture’ that will be necessary to keep the planet habitable. ‘Today’, Serres sums up, ‘our collectivity can equally well die of the productions of reason or safeguard itself through them’ (Serres 1995, 93).

The cover of the original edition with François Bourin of *Le Contrat naturel* nicely captures this double-sidedness (Fig. 2). It shows an oversized book whose pages are kept open by a dwarfed planet. On the one hand, the sciences and their technological output tend to devour the earth; on the other hand, it is the planet that keeps the pages of the book of science open.

In a late conversation with Michel Serres, Stéphanie Posthumus has observed that the figures, which give *The Natural Contract* – as well as *Biogée* (Serres 2010), his neologism for the ensemble of the earth and its living beings, in particular — their narrative imprint are the peasant, the mariner, and the wanderer. These personae are to be understood,

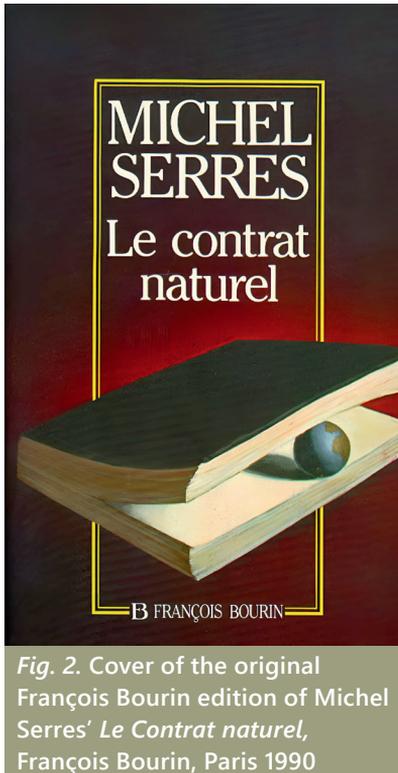


Fig. 2. Cover of the original François Bourin edition of Michel Serres' *Le Contrat naturel*, François Bourin, Paris 1990

³ Translated by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger.

not in and by their traditional ways of living, and with that, nostalgia, but in and by the attitudes toward the worlds they represent, and that have tended to be forgotten over the course of time: 'The peasant lives with all the other living beings around him under one roof and believes in a soul of things and of the world. The mariner obeys an ethics of governance in his handling of wind and water that is shaped by precaution and by prudence. The wanderer finally is the model of an aleatoric and creative choice of moving forward. She does not follow one method in the sense of the one right path, irrespective of the places that she traverses. She respects the particular conditions of the real world she encounters'⁴ (Posthumus 2018, 53).

It is these attitudes toward the world that Michel Serres, under the particular conditions of the present, calls for re-appropriating with his writings from the 1990s onward. These figures are by no means meant as a step back to the good old times; rather, Serres invites us to reconsider the relations that humankind – including all the scientific and technical sophistication it has today at its command –, will have to re-establish with the planet, if future generations are to retain the option to live in a livable environment. In order to grant it, we are in need of sciences that are able to consider, understand and manage complex relations, including the contingencies and singularities that arise from them. Serres was convinced that the sciences of the earth and of life must pursue the path on which they have launched to perforate the nature-culture divide, pleading for what Gaston Bachelard already announced with his sketch of a non-Cartesian scientific spirit (Bachelard, 1984), and what Isabelle Stengers and Ilya Prigogine called, a decade before Serres' *Contract*, *La Nouvelle alliance* (Prigogine and Stengers 1984).

The simple message to be derived from all this is that our planetary responsibility as scientists and epistemologists consists in promoting this transition on all possible levels and with all imaginable means. Thus, the most important of all things is: We have to become better scientists.

4 Translated by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger.

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Eliane Beaufils

Inviting the terrestrial on stage in our minds and bodies

Reshaping perspectives by accentuating
a profound connection to the Earth

Abstract

Grounded in the philosophy of Bruno Latour, this study explores the concept of becoming terrestrial within the context of heightened ecological awareness. The analysis focuses on four distinct theatrical performances (*Cracks* by choreographer Charlotta Ruth, *Devenir forêt* by Marina Pirot, Bretagne, *Où atterrir* by the collective *Où atterrir*, Paris, and *Democracy of Organisms* by Club Real) that aim to reshape perspectives by accentuating a profound connection to the Earth, thereby uncovering new possibilities for environmental engagement. Key elements include the sensory experiences involved, the significance of participatory theater, and the exploration of ecological subjects and their interdependence. The study delves into the evolving political culture and co-evolutionary dynamics inherent in these theatrical endeavors.

Keywords: ecological awareness, Bruno Latour, theatricality, becoming terrestrial, sensory experience, environmental engagement, collective inquiry, participatory theater, ecological subjects, interdependence, political culture, co-evolution

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Scientists and environmentalists over the world have had to face the facts: ecological awareness does not depend on knowledge – or knowledge alone; commitment even less so. The catastrophe can be traced back to the greatest cognitive dissonance of all time. Neither programmatic declaration nor media information is up to the challenge. Citizen, scientific and political activists are multiplying the forms of commitment, without finding one that proves to be efficient. A great deal of research is underway to understand and remodel the links to our regimes of knowledge and communication. Maybe the regimes of theatricality also have to be reviewed.

Like other philosophers, Bruno Latour emphasizes the frontality of these regimes: we have become accustomed to ‘Sirius points of view’ (Latour 2015, 29-56, 42), those overhanging vantage points that give the illusion of envisioning the problems, and make sight the organ of knowledge *par excellence*. Sight is also the primary organ of the theater – *theatron*, the place from which we see – and of the media. The sociologist’s view of the globe, however, is particularly pernicious: we urgently need to abandon the aforementioned perspective, which is unlivable being, strictly speaking, a view from ‘nowhere’. We should rather ‘land’ on Earth, plunge into the world, to apprehend it as the entanglement in which we always already participate, before any idea of a world¹. Latour himself spent a long time thinking about the modalities of ‘landing’, including in his lecture-performances – which are perfectly based on the frontality of theatre (and the posture of the knowing). In his book *Down to Earth*, he proposes that the main existential and socio-political way to land is to first become ‘terrestrial’. After explaining this *conditio sine qua non* of becoming terrestrial, I would like to analyze four theatrical performances that attempt to follow this path, each in its own way, displacing it and opening up new potentialities.

Becoming terrestrial

In *Down to Earth* (the French title is in fact: *Where to land*), Latour looks for a way to take account of the radical reconfiguration of political problems in the wake of global warming. At the crossroads of the local and the global, he proposes to ‘define the terrains of life as what a terrestrial depends on for

¹ We know that ‘the world’ is a polysemic philosophical notion. Environmentally speaking, it could be given today the name of biosphere or critical zone.

survival, while asking what other terrestrial beings are in his or her dependency² (Latour 2017, 120). Becoming terrestrial is therefore a form of inquiry, probing everything that enables us to live. He then suggests everyone to go on by answering the following questions: 'What do you value most? Who can you live with? Who depends on you for their livelihood? Who will you have to fight against? How do you rank the importance of all these agents? How can we determine all the people and machines that have built our household appliances, the places and hands through which our food has passed? How can we rank all the agents of struggle and life?'³ (Latour 2017, 121).

Such an inquiry cannot be achieved – how can we determine all the people and machines that have built our tools, the places and hands through which our food has passed? How can we rank all the agents of struggle and life *a priori*? But it is a very precious enterprise: it allows us to get a grip on the territory in which we live, and to explore our capacity to act on what we value and should value. In this sense, recognizing our interdependencies means first and foremost recognizing agents: human, institutional or digital agents, non-human agents – water, the soil of agricultural gardens, domestic animals or urban wild-life – and among them, also the non-living agents: food and practical objects such as cars and furniture. We call them 'agents' because, for Latour, acknowledging these entities goes hand in hand with acknowledging their agency: they all have the power to act, which can be increased, channeled or decreased, like digital networks or the river studied in *Facing Gaïa* (Latour 2015).

The process of becoming terrestrial thus includes a gathering of data and beings already called for in the article 'Why has Critique Run Out of Steam – From matters of facts to matters of concern' (Latour 2023), which contributes to *concern* in addition to critique: gathering means here exploring what we are literally 'attached' to, what affects us in more than one sense. Beyond this gathering, agents are invited to be creative in reconfiguring their relationships. Indeed, the act should lead us to 'innovate by taking advantage of limits' (Latour 2017, 104) and to make an alliance with what co-constitutes us. Acknowledging networks of agents and alliances can lead to their active development, building on what already exists and the agentic potential of each individual.

2 Translated by Eliane Beaufiles.

3 Translated by Eliane Beaufiles.

Cracks, a sensitive terrestrializing

A first way of inviting the terrestrial on stage can be illustrated by the performance *Cracks*, which was developed by the choreographer Charlotta Ruth for the Earthbound festival at the end of September 2018 (Earthbound being the other translation of terrestrial). It is a research in an urban park in Aarhus, Denmark: everyone is invited to observe their immediate environment, to approach a crack, to contemplate it, to walk along it with their fingers, or to draw its contours, for example with a chalk. Charlotta also gave the participants a notebook so that they could write down a few words or a drawing. The choreography allows time to approach several cracks, on the soil, on the bench, on the tree or the cemented path; everyone can unfold one's observations, and write them down. In a second step, the choreographer invites them to retrace their journey, paying more attention to the overall movement of one's own path. This retracing is more choreographic and places the path and the reflections in a wider environment, in the park, the city, the country. Finally, the participants are called upon to get together in groups of three or four to talk about their discoveries

This small performance is an opportunity for multiple encounters between cracks and humans, and then between humans. I personally never thought of looking at cracks up close. Besides, Denmark is not a country where their presence is obvious. The attention developed during the observation has a somewhat prefigurative dimension with regard to global warming, one could call it educational from this point of view. But it is first linked to an immediate anchoring in the environment, a very situated experience, where one is called to sense everything that goes along with these cracks. One can develop a 'sensual communication' with the cracks (Haraway⁴). Indeed, experiencing the materiality of the wood or the cement is a way to perceive how the materials are linked; how we know the soil we move on and depend on; how we are related to the trees – their cracked bark may also touch us. And in this web of dependencies everything is related to the climate, even the bitumen of the path. It is as if we were extending our members, branching with our arms, rooting with our fingers, in the material body of the world. The becoming terrestrial is at the same

4 Haraway Donna. Lecture at Evergreen College, Viewed on 08 July 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-WQ2JYFwJWU>

time corporeal, imaginative and intellectual, in linking abstract knowledge of warming and chaos, to perception of symptoms.

Looking at cracks has been very unusual. This also makes the perception 'crack', the spectators discover a web of entities surrounding them much larger than they thought of – as is shown by the river for Latour : as soon as you perceive it as an entity, you give it a name, so that the name becomes a web comprising multiple phenomena. But you need not forget all these phenomena, which make a thing. Here, we encounter new entities (cracks), we discover relations, we discover acting, living or transforming materials, and concerns, be they local or planetary.

What's more, this new way of inquiring is enabled by several *practices* = touching, writing, feeling, smelling, imagining the roots and impulses of the crack, moving in an environment where all the materials become palpable and meaningful. *Attention* becomes a performative and reflexive *work* of the terrestrial process. It fosters resonance with the trees, the bench, the grass, and resonance puts an end to the indifferent existence of the thing. It could, depending on the person, be perceived as aesthetic, ethical or anxiety-provoking. But as participants are asked to write and talk about their relationships, the experience clearly goes beyond people's superficial intentions or perceptions. It calls for a work that Andreas Weber calls 'poetic objectivity': it is a self-conscious relating, intuitive, subjective (Weber 2019). This awareness of the experience of relations is necessary and life-giving for the philosopher. It is based on objective experience, but cannot be articulated completely or universally: it is therefore poetic. Indeed, one of the most radical pitfalls of change is a tendency to be satisfied with prior nominations, with definitions of what makes up our world. Usual definitions are objectifying, supposedly rational or even scientific, so that things tend to be reduced to objects in the control of a subject with many relations not being considered. The scientific spirit that the philosopher-biologist knows well reduces objects to characteristics, distinct identities and hinders the personal relationship with reality and its infinite potentialities of meaning and doing. According to him, it is necessary to cultivate forms of reflective observation, attentive to the thing, the relationship and the attention itself. This objective and subjective attention, which finds its language, represents ecological work at its best.

The performance also invites sharing with others. It is a gathering in all senses: co-present, the participants come together, exchange, develop a being-to-

gether as a movement of sensitive meaning, continued poetic objectivity, including meta-objectivity. Eventually the collaboration continues beyond, as participants may choose to leave traces (such as writings, drawings) for others to discover. It is potentially inventive and able to arouse other's creativity.

Devenir forêt/Becoming Forest, by Marina Pirot

In this performance, the spectators face again the practical extensions of becoming terrestrial: the practices of sensation, attention and poetic objectivity. Except that this time, the participants are guided by the performer, and the elaboration of knowledge is more complex. Marina first invites participants into her garden, adjacent to the castle that houses residences for researchers and artists⁵. The garden is part of a former estate, but has not been looked after for many years; weeds grow alongside roses and flowering bushes. Participants are invited to do a gentle physical warm up, to open their rib cages and relax their joints, to feel the fluids flowing through them into their cells. The cellular imagination, kinesthetic perception and proxemics promoted by movement are relayed by reflections on the mitochondria at the heart of our cells⁶. These are found in other forms in plant cells, so that human cells are similar to plants. After this introduction to greenery, participants follow Marina into a piece of forest that has been left to its own devices for a decade; it is fresh and teeming with plants running through the undergrowth. The invigorating breath the spectators are tempted to fill to the point of light-headedness connects everyone with the breathing of the plants, in a shared atmosphere alive with the incessant exchanges between organisms. From breathing, Marina moves on to evoking the skin, our largest sensitive organ, which breathes through every pore and also puts us in vast, immersive contact with the environment. The skin's nerve endings are part of a quasi-autonomous system we call vegetative. Through a few photographic plates showing cells under the microscope, Marina shows us the kinship between the sensitive sensing organs of plants and our neuro-vegetative system. The participants touch the skin of the leaves with their fingers, show them to each other, wander through the forest, continue to exchange air and sensations with each other in a minor, silent mode.

5 The project is called Open Kerminy, and is located in the South of Brittany.

6 The exercises are inspired by Body Mind Centering, the scientific observations are not.

Then they meet up again at the bottom of the woods, where they will learn to probe their respiratory cells, which blossom in a certain way and Marina shows how this resonates with the growth of plants. The experience ends with the reading of an excerpt from Didier van Cauwelaert's book *The hidden emotions of plants* (van Cauwelaert 2018).

In this participatory performance, participants draw constantly on their personal observations and reflections, but it is Marina who has probed the links that unite them with plants and the atmosphere; it is she who has extended her networks of sensors, her readings, to fathom our interweaving with the forest. It is she who enables participants to do the same. This awareness of our interdependence is as much sensitive as it is intellectual; it shifts the mode of inquiry as imagined by Latour, and opens the door even wider to plant-agents. But it still responds to the work of becoming – with the earth, with the organisms that sustain us. This complex work of understanding the living world and the processes that bind entities together or individualize them is, once again, linked to the testing of new knowledge, embodied and reflected. This becoming reinvents a way of being: not only are we far from Sirius's point of view 'immersed in the environment', but we are deeply inscribed in the environment, we are intricately kin-beings. This inscription goes hand in hand with a kind of illumination (Benjamin): Marina combines biological knowledge, reminiscent of school memories, with perceptions, new or old. It is a refreshing and gratifying discovery, and precludes other possible modes of being: acquired knowledge, in this sense past, is combined with a performative present, and a future horizon. This conjunction of past/present/and future is the mark of enlightenment or shock for Walter Benjamin (Benjamin 1969), and could also be that of flow, that form of intense presence nourished by all the faculties described by *Mihály Csíkszentmihályi* (Csíkszentmihályi 1996). It may correspond to a 'terrestrial self-discovery'.

The workshop cycle *Où atterrir / Where to land*

The workshop cycle is a more pragmatic example of a real collective effort. Following on from his writings, Latour himself created the *Où atterrir* group, which reinvents one of the historical examples that inspired him: the *cahiers de doléances*, drawn up before the French Revolution, that listed the complaints of the French commoners. The collective called on the inhabitants of several local-

ities to carry out a collective investigation of the problems arising in their area. I will present the cycle of workshops held in Sevran, in the Paris suburbs. The cycle was organized over the course of a year, and culminated in a performance on October 15 and 16, 2022⁷.

Each session was made up of several phases: a somatic phase, with warm-ups and feedbacks between bodies, helping to create a singular space-time and to experience oneself as a group. Then some people summarized the results of an inquiry that was led during the week to find answers to the problem discussed in the former workshop. This was followed by the presentation of a new 'concern' (*concernement*) recognized and put forward by one of the participants; and each session ended with experiments in sound composition.

When talking to residents, the collective defines 'concern' in a very prosaic way, as a 'pebble in the shoe', a problem that arises in everyday life and that we would like to solve: for example, the disappearance of bees, the lack of decent housing opportunities, or the concreting over of the city's last agricultural field. The investigation of the problem is reflected on the Latourian compass: facts and analyses are situated on both a horizontal temporal axis, and a vertical political axis. The sessions are thus built around the concerns and the inquiries, which comprise a more general exploration of the interdependent links between the inhabitants and biotic or abiotic agents of their environment.

The performance-workshop that resulted from the annual cycle of encounters invited the evening's spectators to take part in these different stages of terrestrial inquiry by initiating an investigation. At the same time, they were invited to attend the aesthetic restitutions of the workshops held in Sevran: alternatively to their own collective investigation steps, spectators were invited to listen to polyphonies and thematic sound compositions, to watch videos recounting the results of the annual research, or to talk one by one with a participant in the annual workshop...

This device combines self-learning (as seen in *Cracks*) with the reciprocal learning practiced by Marina. But compared with the previous examples, the relationship to knowledge changes again: it is much less centered on the perceptible, if at all, and much more theoretical. Theoretical knowledge is of two kinds: it is matrixed by socio-political categories and therefore agents that we

⁷ I draw on the study led by the master student Nathan Vaurie, who participated in all the workshops and the final performances during the year 2022.

know or discover as citizens, and it is situated, inscribed in the territory and our experience of it. In all cases, participants, whether annual or occasional, discover themselves as 'a set of relationships and interactions rather than individual and isolated entities' (Posthumus 2014, 15). According to Stephanie Posthumus, this is exactly what characterizes ecological subjects.

Another distinctive feature of this experience is its collective nature. One may recognize a collective dimension at several levels: the inhabitants conduct the investigations together; the evening's spectators also become a group; and the wider Sevrans region, institutions and infrastructures where the surveys are anchored, appear as a collective entity. The terrestrial is thus experienced in the triple Guattarian dimension: environmental, social, as well as psychological and relational (Guattari 2000).

The Democracy of Organisms – Club Real

The fourth device is equally collective and even more processual, potentially spanning years. It was set up in several cities, and I will shortly describe one. The city of Berlin agreed to entrust a small fallow land to the Club Real collective near Osloer Strasse station. With the help of biologists who travelled through the fallow with them, the collective listed about two hundred animal and plant species in 2019. Every six months, by means of urban posters or the Internet, the collective invites the inhabitants to participate in a parliament. People have to go to the wasteland where they are shown the constitution of a democracy. They are invited to be the representatives of the plants and animals living there. Among the spectators, fifteen will sit as parliamentarians to ensure the best possible life on the fallow land. The fifteen species represented are chosen by lot, but ensuring that all the groups of organisms are represented: vertebrates and invertebrates, lichens and grasses, trees and bushes. The human parliamentarians receive sheets on the characteristics of the species they represent, and other species. The history of the sessions is partly available on the project website⁸.

The participants take the trouble to examine what their species might need. For example, the spread of an invasive plant, called an immigrant, can be con-

⁸ ORGANISMS DEMOCRACY. <https://organismendemokratie.org/en/where/berlin-osloer-str/> Viewed on 08 July 2021.

trolled to prevent the disappearance of a particular plant. More often, however, discussions revolve around measures that go beyond the interest of a single species: a watering place is set up in a hollow for the animals on the fallow; the branches of one or more trees are pruned to ensure that the grasses at their foot flourish; discussions with the municipality and the neighbouring company are planned to avoid the purchase of all or part of the wasteland. .

In the case of this device, the spectators once again retrace interdependencies. They try to rearrange them according to an ecological apprehension of the web of relationships on the fallow land. As in the previous example, becoming terrestrial means anchoring oneself in a piece of land to participate in its development. It means redefining one's own position, and the possible actions to be taken. It means relentlessly reconfiguring the reciprocal position of agents on a territory, according to their life interests. Three important features distinguish the democracy from the former examples: the process is never-ending; spectators transcend their own interests and dedicate themselves to the non-human; and the experience includes a form of multispecies design. This democracy can be seen in fact as participatory design. Though, instead of proceeding, as humans so often do, by imposition, it avoids as far as possible to intervene. In this way, everyone also learns to withdraw from the human and the call for the supreme agency: for power. Admittedly, we can criticize this device for remaining deeply anthropocentric, even to the point of speaking for non-humans, but we can observe a real withdrawal of the spectators, who are first and foremost at the service of the ecosystem. And so we can hope that the device represents a new pan-democratic training for places where humans will be much less present, cultivating both their non-presence and their care for all species. Becoming terrestrial, then, means not only reconfiguring the material conditions of life, but reinventing a political culture of non-specialists, uncertain and serious; non-specialists listening and acting, in ceaseless becoming, who reinvent politics as life-commons, even more and much better than Latour himself imagined in his parliaments, and even though these have inspired the Club Real collective.

Conclusion

This study presents four main modalities of becoming terrestrial through theatrical practices: a sensitive and imaginative experience with poetic objectivity;

the embodiment and ‘transversalisation’ of shared scientific knowledge; a collective becoming, situated in a territory and anchored in everyday life; and the co-becoming of an ecosystem giving birth to a new culture of co-evolution.

Thanks to the *practices* of terrestrial becoming, which take the option of probing in depth certain relationships, the spectators can effectively apprehend the intricate interweaving of their lives, in co-evolution with others, human and non-human, living and non-living.

The becoming terrestrial also reveals itself to be becoming in the strongest sense: it is a co-evolving that can redefine modes of co-evolution. The terrestrial practices have an empowering and creative dimension – and this in each of the modalities envisaged.

Indeed, each time, becoming terrestrial is not simply a matter of retracing what binds us together, it is a matter of recreating the interweaving – only the experience of the *Where to land* collective remains little open to proposals for action, and in this way runs the risk of locking those who carry out the survey into an (unfinishable) balance sheet.

The becoming terrestrial has a random dimension, like the development of living things observed on the fallow land or in Marina’s forest. Indeed plants are not just ‘forms that blossom’ (as the philosopher Emanuele Coccia, a gardener, still writes), for plants unfold where they have the best nutrients, or the best partners: they never cease to co-engineer their form and their living conditions, they are inventive. Becoming terrestrial tries to correspond to the development of living things – so that there is no set program.

Rather, becoming terrestrial means developing a ‘*response-ability*’ (Haraway 2016): a consciousness of our thick, ominous present, that is also aware of the potentialities of other presents and has ethical implications. That is why examples of participatory theatres seem, to me, particularly telling: they ‘engage’ with matters, with others, with the non-human, so that the spectators are almost obliged to respond in more than one sense. The audience members may become open to some possibilities, suspended in the free space of art, the experience is powerful: far from being consumable like in the experiential industry, it tends to extend over time because the experiences call for observation, discussion, gestures, the apprehension of relationships; they call for subjectivity. Relationships are living, not fixed, to be lived or died by.

I entitled this study ‘inviting the terrestrial on stage’ rather than becoming terrestrial on stage, because the performances prelude rather than anchor

a longer-term terrestrial becoming; they can prelude engagement in a process that exceeds the purposeless and temporally limited sphere of art, except for the democracy of organisms that combines art and politics. All the examples nonetheless demonstrate the essential part played by the experience made by each individual with others, be they human or non-human. This part has been emphasized by numerous philosophers and psychologists such as Robert Gifford (Gifford 2011, 290-302). The experience of the present anthropocenic crisis is most striking when it is embodied – it is also more plural and open in this case. But it could be fleeting or highly playful in an artistic setting. What is important in these examples is that the spectators' thoughts and bodies are genuinely in motion, that there is some kind of shaking or illumination: this shaking of the subjects is in line with contemporary conceptions of criticism by Jean-Luc Nancy (Nancy 2016), Judith Butler (Butler 2001) and myself in my latest book (Beaufils 2021). For this to happen, bodies need to be situated, interpellated, so that the participatory modality can really make sense by plunging into the turmoil of the Anthropocene and its potentialities.

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Andreas Enghart

The Tragedy of Earth

Some Remarks on Climate Change In German-Speaking Contemporary Theatre

Abstract

This study explores the intersection of climate change and contemporary German-speaking theatre. The paper delves into the challenges posed by climate change and species extinction, emphasizing the need for presenting facts and fostering commitment. Drawing parallels to ancient Greek tragedies, the author examines the dramaturgical potential of political theatre to address the "tragedy of the earth" and instigate essential changes. The study covers various aspects, including the presentation of scientific facts and scenarios, the role of reason and ethics in theatre, the portrayal of Gaia (Earth) on stage, and the call for action in the tradition of Brecht and contemporary theatre. The exploration extends to the use of masks, the evolving nature of postdramatic and post-human theatre, and the challenge of representing nature and Gaia within traditional dramatic forms. The author concludes by discussing the ongoing search for an adequate theatrical form to address the tragedy of climate change and species extinction, emphasizing the role of drama and theatre in helping humanity navigate these challenges.

Keywords: Climate Change, Tragedy, Political Theatre, Gaia, Postdramatic Theatre, Brecht, Masks, Post-Human Theatre, Anthropocene, Hubris, Ethics, Anthropomorphism, Children's Theatre, Species Extinction, Contemporary Theatre

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Hubris in theatre and society

Climate change and species extinction are an immense challenge for German-language theatre. Above all, facts would have to be presented and commitment encouraged. In this paper, paradigmatic stagings and plays of the last few years will be sketched and the dramaturgical potential of a political theatre or are theatre, which is political, to adequately deal with the tragedy of the earth and to initiate necessary changes will be shortly discussed. As you may know, in the first recorded tragedy by Aeschylus, *The Persians*, the Athenian citizens were warned in the theater after their victory over a formidable enemy about the consequences of not guarding against hubris. From the perspective of the Persian ruling house, the Athenian citizens were shown in the Theatron of Dionysus Theater how quickly arrogance, ignorance, and escapism can lead to overlooking or misinterpreting warning signs, resulting in the downfall of a community, society, and individual. The admonitions of seers like Tiresias in Sophocles' *Oedipus* or in Euripides' *The Bacchae* were tragically ignored as well. Tragedy, from the beginning of European culture to the present day, is intertwined with the recognition of uncomfortable truths. Hubris, peripeteia, and anagnorisis, and in modern times, I would add, commitment, continue to challenge theater, particularly when it comes to the tragedy of climate change and species extinction.

Facts and scenarios

Ideally, science provides facts. Facts should not be alternative facts, even though facts need to be selected, evaluated, and presented. However, decisions based on the assessment of scientific facts solely lie in the hands of politics. Politicians must decide whether jobs in the coal industry or the survival of the Maldives are more important to them. Nevertheless, science is not free from theatricality in its presentation of facts. Climate research presents its results and projections in what are known as scenarios. Scenarios are not predictions, like those of mythical seers in ancient tragedy. They are projections of facts and various assumed conditions into the future. In modern age, we have the freedom to make rational choices for what is right. In making scenarios, scientists remain skeptical: Scientific facts and scenarios cannot be verified in themselves, but they should be falsifiable according to Karl Popper

(Popper 2007). Scenarios should be plausible or causally possible. They therefore exhibit interesting parallels to theater and drama. Aristotle also believed in his *Poetics*, that tragedy should be probable (Aristoteles 1981). This belief is echoed in the Renaissance drama, Lessing's bourgeois tragedy, the well-made play, and quality series. Both on the epistemological and moral levels – think of Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative – , reason is called for, with some even demanding a new Enlightenment (Weizsäcker and Wijkman 2017, 179; Gabriel 2022) and hoping for a rediscovery of reason and utopia after the unleashed postmodern and often post-factual era. For this purpose, on the one hand, dramatic theater can assist in pursuing a rational path in the fight against climate change and the foolishness of individuals who still have not recognized the seriousness of the situation. Friedrich Schiller's use of reason in his concept of tragedy, which builds on Kant, and his aesthetics of play provide an appropriate counterbalance on the intellectual level for the instinctual aspects of human nature. On the other hand, we have known since Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* about the Dionysian foundation of theater, which, as (neo)avant-garde theater today, no longer adheres to traditional dramatic forms, but a more or less contemporary post-dramatic expression searches. Against this backdrop, ethical and epistemological perspectives in theater take on different meanings. In a nutshell: Dramatic theater focuses on the rational, ethically definable positioning within the action or constellation of characters, which legitimizes the division between right and wrong and ultimately good and evil. Post-dramatic theater, as theater of ritual (Richard Schechner), suggests that overly clear representations and stereotypically portrayed dramatic identities, which obscure prior power dynamics and violence, would be a urgent issue in theatre and society.

Gaia on stage? (from Galileo to Lovelock)

With reason, ethics, and a good outcome, children's and youth plays easily succeed. In spite of exciting new approaches to promote performative forms in children's and youth theater, I would still assume that especially younger children tend to prefer closed dramatic forms and easily interpretable stories that help them understand the complex world. For example, Franz Hohler's *Gengalo the Glacier Flea* allows glacier fleas to experience climate change up close – It drips in the glacier cave, and Fitshi fleas fleeing from the sinking Fiji Islands

arrive in Switzerland – while the glacier flea children force the adults to follow ecological reason.¹ *Gengalo* is immensely effective: Since my son saw ‘Gengalo’ with me, we are no longer allowed to use airplanes.

As is well known, children have a lot of imagination; their world of objects is animated, and if you kick a stone with your foot, it hurts the stone. Good artists have a lot of imagination. Reason, facts, and imagination also form the basis of Margulis and Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis (Lovelock 1988; Lovelock 2009; Margulis 1999).² Nevertheless, anthropomorphism in adult theater is somewhat peculiar, isn’t it? But probably we need much more anthropomorphism in theatre, when we have to deal with climate change and species extinction. Adult theater reluctantly follows the children’s theater, as can be seen, for example, in Martin Heckmanns play, who has just been invited to the play festival in Mülheim. He has seriously adapted *The Bremen Town Musicians* as *We Find Something Better Than Death Everywhere*, where Donkey Gray, Dog Clever, Cat Black, and Chicken Commun try to escape their environmentally destructive power relations (Heckmanns 2021). Unfortunately, the brave animals die! But they die only for the stage moment, so that ultimately, every production of nature, of animals, and the environment is exposed as a human-made staging and arrangement. However, it is about something very serious, namely that everyone, animals and humans, on stage and in front of the stage, must respect all forms of life as part of Gaia. You wonder in Heckmann’s play: ‘That I happen to be here and part of a whole and can still play / On the stage on Earth / Under a strangely cosmic perspective suddenly / Just beyond the dead among roots and mushrooms and animals and viruses / in the critical zone between lava and thin air / in a strange, rare time that we still share’ (Heckmanns 2021, 47). As we know, Gaia means that we have to learn to change the main perspective from a Galilean look in space to a perspective in the sense of Lovelock on the wonder of life on Earth itself – Galileo understood the similarities between the planets, Lovelock understood the exceptional nature of Earth (Lovelock 1988; Latour 2017).

¹ Hohler, Franz. *Gengalo der Gletscherfloh*, Bühnen Bern 2019, director: Meret Matter.

² And Frank Raddatz calls for a new shamanism (Raddatz 2021, 59).

Action, please (from Marx and Brecht to contemporary theatre)!

Brecht already believed that in theater, 'the important thing is not only to interpret the world but to change it' (Brecht 1994, 399—490). He quotes the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach by Karl Marx: 'Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it' (Marx and Engels 1998). Al Gore demands, 'Learn as much as you can about the climate crisis. Then put your knowledge into action.'³ SAVE THE WORLD puts it succinctly, 'From Empathy to Action'.⁴ „Action' was what Brecht wanted, 'Action' is what Milo Rau or the Center for Political Beauty want.

Everyone actually wants 'Action', the debate revolves around how to achieve 'Action'. Piscator and Brecht believed that political theater must be made political, Jean-Luc Godard called for making films political rather than making political films, Hans-Thies Lehmann enriched Brecht's reception with a considerable or improper dose of Nietzsche and also demanded not political theater but making theater political (Lehmann 2013). René Pollesch, who locates his work in the tradition of Brecht's *Lehrstücke* (against Reese or Ostermeier's Brechtian *Schaustücke*) (Wirth and Ulvaeus 1999), who studied with Lehmann, lets his theatrical alter ego Fabian Hinrichs speak in *GEHT ES DIR GUT?*: 'What? What did you say? What? What do I think? I think, first make the world a cesspool, and then fly somewhere, and everything will get better there? When the masks fall. Will everything get better?'⁵

Masks. Between tragical conflict and deconstruction

Masks are the focus; in ancient tragedy, linen masks were worn; Michel Foucault was known as the philosopher with the mask, for Hans-Thies Lehmann, the mask consisted of the distorting socio-symbolic law, the norm, the normality (Lehmann 2002, 366—380). Richard Schechner, the actual inventor of

3 Gore Al. 2006. "End Credits". In Guggenheim Davis: *An Inconvenient Truth* (documentary film).

4 SAVE THE WORLD. <https://www.savetheworld.de/burning-issues-2023/> Viewed on 08 July 2023.

5 Pollesch Rene. 2022. *Geht es dir gut?* (Berlin: Volksbühne).

Post-Dramatic Theatre, called for everyone, including the actors, in today's time, 'where public life increasingly becomes theater', to take off 'the masks', to no longer be someone 'who "plays", acts like a fool, or lies, but someone' who "'tells the truth" in an absolutely understood sense, or at least, if the claim is not fulfilled, to explain how the masks were put on and can be taken off' (Schechner 1974, 455–481; Schechner 1966, 20–53). So, in a theater of the anthropocene, do we want to portray conflicts in the mask or deconstruct the masks as tragic representation figures (the Nietzschean apollonian, so to speak)? Nicolas Stemmann remains here congenially undecided in his adaptation of the Christmas play *Snow White Beauty Queen*, where you can find actors on stage, who conventional play roles: the wolf and the hunter become vegans, and Snow White refuses to do housework for the six dwarfs and teaches them how to interact with nature correctly.⁶ Also Thomas Köck with his death games in Gaia and on stage. Since he comes from Vienna, Köck celebrates his downfalls. In a creative process of sym-poiesis, as he describes it, Köck succeeds in combining Gaia resonances, scientific facts, historical developments and human-evil theater in such a way that factual causalities become partially or schematically visible in the production. His dystopias, such as his climate trilogy inspired by Greek tragedy and mostly Nietzsches Interpretation of Greek tragedy, 'paradies fluten (verirrte sinfonie)', 'paradies hungern', and 'paradies spielen (abendland. ein abgesang)' (Köck 2017) overwhelm as artworks. The theatertext and production offer in performance the experience of Gaia, the actors and figures are only ridicoulus puppets of history, evolution and society.

Postdramatic and post-human theatre

Far more than Stemmann or Köck, Rimini Protokoll's 'World Climate Conference' produced a postdramatic theatre, realized a Lehrstück of societal masks, where each spectator assumed a randomly assigned role, becoming a climate activist or a lobbyist for the coal industry.⁷ In this theatre without actors, acting or dramatic roles, each person had to decide for themselves. Definitely beyond good and evil worked the botanical long-term theater *The World Without Us*

⁶ Stemmann Nicolas (nach den Brüder Grimm). 2023. *Schneewittchen Beauty Queen* (Zürich: Schauspielhaus)

⁷ Rimini Protokoll. *Welt-Klimakonferenz* (Hamburg: Schauspielhaus, 2015).

by Tobias Rausch and the lunatiks production collective.⁸ The quasi-actors here were plants, and for the theater, they became what Rosi Braidotti understands as post-human subjects (Braidotti 2013), who also enter into dramatic relationships with non-human actors such as objects, plants, or animals. Bruno Latour would discover quasi-objects here instead of Aristotelian characters in action (Latour 1993). In an effort to transcend human solipsism, Tobias Rausch even staged a 'real' tornado in the theater. However, he ultimately acknowledges that he failed to bring Gaia onto the stage, as animals, plants, trees, tornadoes, or atmospheres have completely different living conditions. Or vice versa: Human conditions, which form the basis of human tragedy and comedy, human drama, and human theater, are the underpinning of humanity's exceptionalism. Nature and animals (to borrow from Shakespeare: 'All the world's a stage') in theatre and society are ultimately reflections of human cognition.

According to Markus Gabriel, a proponent of new realism, humans are the only animals (Gabriel 2022). Why is this the case? Because the anthropocentric definition relegated animals to the status of objects, devoid of the knowledge, consciousness, and capacity for action that humans possess. Drawing from Schiller's distinction between the liberating drive for form (Formtrieb) and the drive for substance (Stofftrieb), as well as Friedrich Nietzsche's recognition of the Apollonian alongside the deliberating Dionysian, drama and theater delineate the distinct and unique tragic or comedic human conditions. However, human drama and theatre overlooked the otherness of animals, plants, humans and Gaia as the wonders of life.

Who cares who acts?

One of the fundamental challenges we, as theater makers, need to address is that nature, that Gaia is not easy to represent in our traditional theatrical or dramatic forms. Does this mean abandoning all attempts at constructing theses within the realm of drama? At the very least, we must succeed in making the immeasurable relevance of Gaia, even as a reawakened narrative, perceptible in the theater. Heckmanns quotes at the beginning of his play from Bruno Latour's *Terrestrial Manifesto*: 'Today, everything is on stage: set, scenery, backstage, the entire building has stepped onto the stage and is competing with the actors for

⁸ Rausch Tobias/Lunatiks. 2010. *Die Welt ohne uns* (Hannover).

the main role. This is reflected in the scripts, suggesting different outcomes of the intrigue. Humans are no longer the only actors, but at the same time, they find themselves entrusted with a role that is too big for them' (Heckmanns 2021, 5). Well roared, philosophical lion, one would exclaim as a theater person, but who then acts in the tragedy? Drawing something incredibly complex as a character or a figure is challenging. Since Aristotle, we have known that drama stems from 'dran', which means 'to act'. Dramatic theater presents actors in roles that involve action. And those who act bear responsibility and, if they have acted wrongly, carry the burden of guilt. Franz Hohler rightly insists on a human perspective in the Aristotelian drama: *Children want answers!* (RaBe 2019)⁹ *Fridays for Future*, *Extinction Rebellion*, and *The Last Generation* demand answers – the youth know very well who the good guys and the bad guys are in the game. But present-day theater is often more undecided. Kathrin Röggl outlines the current state in her play *Das Wasser*: 'When you can't tell something in a play, the search movement comes to the foreground' (Röggl 2022, 7). The movements become more frantic, but we theater makers are still searching. Selma Matter stages the dramatic awakening of the permafrost, of the seemingly eternal geological stratification, of the orderly diversity of species, ultimately Gaia's awakening, in *Grelle Tage* (Matter 2022). Another young author, Raphaela Bardutzky, dramatizes the dramatic inner life of activist groups like *The Last Generation* in *Das Licht der Welt*, where tragic human elements persist as always, including a love story is.¹⁰

Alexander Eisenach brings the earth system researcher Antje Boetius as a living Cassandra onto the stage in *Anthropos, Tyrann (Ödipus)* at the Berlin Volksbühne.¹¹ In *Der Mensch* erscheint im Holozän, Alexander Giesche evokes in Zürich the atmosphere of Gaia through wind machines, rain systems, light effects, fog fields, and empty spaces, based on Max Frisch's work.¹² These productions all appear to be exciting explorations of theater, which has not yet quite found its adequate form for acting characters, for tragedy of climate change and species extinction. Bruno Latour admitted that he was at a loss himself: for the theater

9 Hohler, Franz. 2019. "Kinder wollen antworten". <https://rabe.ch/2019/11/18/kinder-wollen-antworten/> Viewed on 08 July 2023.

10 Bardutzky Raphaela. 2022. *Das Licht der Welt* (Köln: Kiepenheuer).

11 Eisenach Alexander. 2021. *Anthropos, Tyrann (Ödipus)* (Berlin: Volksbühne).

12 Giesche Alexander. 2020. *Der Mensch erscheint im Holozän* (Zürich: Schauspielhaus).

he hoped for a new Brecht; only a new genius could tell the story of Lovelock, Margulis, the discovery of Gaia and the new connections between cosmological order and society.¹³ Perhaps, I might add, there will never be a new Brecht. Perhaps when creating theater and society we have the epistemological and ontological problem that people continue to be relevant actors who, as people, recognize and play humanly. But drama and theater will, as always, help humanity survive. Max Frisch's statement from Gieseche's *Man Appears in the Holocene* still applies today: 'Man only knows catastrophes if he survives them; Nature knows no catastrophes' (Frisch 1982).

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Johanna Domokos

The Anthropocene and Performing Science

Examples from University Bielefeld

Abstract

This study inquires how theatricality and performativity (drama pedagogy) played an important role in certain research and teaching programs of the Center of Interdisciplinary Research in Bielefeld (Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung / ZIF) and its associated Bielefeld University. It focuses especially on heuristic examples engaging with the challenges of the Anthropocene. By using inside and outside perspectives to the topic, the study investigates the structure of a university seminar on performing science, as well as the intersection, where art and science meet productively in a universitarian framework.

Keywords: theatricality, performativity, drama pedagogy, Anthropocene aesthetics, disaster, showing and/vs. lecturing

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Introduction

Though we do not think about sciences as primarily performing media, the aesthetics of how they are displayed, communicated and received have always played an important role. Just as arts, sciences also have an immediate contact to reality, in which they want to induce positive changes. They want to enlarge our horizon not only mentally but also emotionally. While arts communicate their subjects in an aesthetically holistic way, science relies on understanding and structuring them. However, the arts are also interested in conceptual and abstract forms, while science is also interested in maximizing its aesthetic manifestation. Ted Talks, Tedx events of the last decades, the FameLab forum running since 2005, or the Science slam competitions organized around the world are just a few global examples of science becoming more and more performative. The gradual opening of the sciences to the sensory-physical dimension of knowledge representation demonstrates that highly complex systems can rarely be understood otherwise. The popularization of sciences also resulted in developing the special presentation medium of 'Performative Science', which 'to a large extent means working on concepts within sciences that are open towards methods from arts and humanities and vice versa' (Diebner and Hinterwaldner 2006, 34).

This study uses inside and outside perspectives of the topic, giving insights both in a university seminar on performing science run by a finishing PhD student colleague (Frank Oberzaucher) and the author of this study (Dr. habil. Johanna Domokos), as well as in its context, where art and science meet in a universitarian framework. Reflecting on the Anthropocene with students in a seminar that ends with a series of performances gave the opportunity not only to communicate information on resource scarcity and ecological challenges of our planet, but to synthesize all these knowledges through artistic forms by students. Thus, the analytic power of science was paired with the performative power of arts offering the performing students and their audience not only analytic understanding but emotional internalization of this urgent topic. Combining performance in public space (the large hall of the main building of Bielefeld University) and academic presentation 'open[s] up intersubjective spaces for thought and action in which the research result appears as a form of event' (Haas 2017).

Theater, Performance and the Anthropocene at Bielefeld University

Founded toward end of the 1960s, and being a 'reform' research, teaching and experimenting institution, University Bielefeld gave place to the first interdisciplinary research center (ZIF) on the European continent, as well as, in the German context, a pioneering alternative pre-universitarian education with its *Labor Schule* and *Oberstufen Kolleg*. Bielefeld University has a four-decade long collaboration history with *Theaterlabor* (initiated in 1983 by Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba and the founder Siegmund Schröder). In 2003 the Center for Aesthetics at Bielefeld University was founded to facilitate further artistic and cultural activities. As its website states: 'it is a service center for the management of individual tasks and projects, and on the other hand, it is a place where the aesthetic commitment and the cultural identity of the university are conceptually considered and further developed.'¹ The Center for Aesthetics presently hosts a series of theater groups for students and faculty, such as the *Compagnie Charivari*, the *English Drama Group*, *Theater Cocuyo*, the group *THTR* and *Live-Hörspiele und Theater*, the clown theater *FemBäm*, or the improvisation theaters *5..4..3..2..1 und los!*, *Knall auf Fall* and *Skuub*. The Center for Aesthetics supports projects belonging to individual university people, besides regularly organizing concerts, exhibitions, readings and festivals like *Nacht fer Klänge* (Night of Sounds), the *Lesenacht* (Reading Night) and the recent initiation *Wissenschaf trifft Kunst* (Science meets Art) festival.

Since this study investigates the dramapedagogical elements of teaching and research events related to reflections on the Anthropocene (ecological challenges that our planet faces) at Bielefeld University, it is worth considering teaching and research topics, too. Reflection on history, culture, environment, art, and knowledge in the Anthropocene has been not only a topic of various courses² but also several research teams organized inside the university as well

1 Translated by Johanna Domokos. <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/uni/kultur-veranstaltungen/kultur/ueberuns/> Viewed on 07 January 2023.

2 E.g. courses as *Einführung in die Ökokritik/Introduction to Ecocriticism*, 2013 SS, by Johanna Domokos, Faculty of Linguistics and Literary Studies; *The End of History – and What Came After*, 2017 SS, by Dr. Zoltán B. Simon, History Department) and several individual studies such as Markus Pahmeier's PhD Thesis on Adalbert Stifter, Marcus Kracht's book on how to handle Anthropocene (Kracht 2012)), as well as Sebastian Schönbeck's studies on ecocriticism and Zoopoetics.

as internationally at ZIF (e.g. *Communicating Disaster*, Research Group 2010–2011, or the present research cooperation group *Volcanoes, Climate and History* 2021–2024). Among invited speakers, let us recall the 2015 lecture of Norbert Rost (Rost 2015), or of the founder of the global *Transition Town* movement Rob Hopkins in 2017.

Narrowing down our focus to events involving teaching, dramapedagogy and the Anthropocene at the same time, the courses of Susanne Horstman (DAF/DAZ) since 2011 onwards, or performative lectures of Frank Oberzaucher and Eva Maria Gauss (around 2008–2012) provide excellent examples. Among the research and artistic publications of students and faculty, let us mention the multilingual poetry book by Tzveta Sofronieva: *Anthroposzene* (published by the student team *hochroth Bielefeld*, 2017) and the science-poetical experimentation volume of professor Johanna Domokos: *KataStrophe* (Domokos 2016).

Naturally, many more projects have been circling but several remained only as plans. One of them was planning the course on *The Aesthetics of the Anthropocene* by the physicist and Chamisso prize winning poet Tzveta Sofronieva³, planned to be hosted by Johanna Domokos at the University Bielefeld. However, her workshop has been successfully realized in other university settings in Europe and America (e.g., University of Dijon and MIT in US). Sofronieva produced one of the most complex descriptions of the cross section of Performing Arts, Anthropocene Time and Science, by birthing the word Anthroposcene. She defined her concept first in her German (+multilingual) publication *Anthropo-*

3 Tzveta Sofronieva formulated the following formidable syllabus: 'In the suggested workshop *The Aesthetic of Anthropocene* students will reflect on the term Anthropocene and its implications as well as produce literary installations (images and objects using literary texts written by the students themselves or given them by the author out of her literary works) related to the human slow violence, hyper-performance, to social conflicts that arise from desperation as life-sustaining conditions erode, to consolation.

Narrative, imagination, artistic skills and analytical insight have to be combined in constructive criticism and convert into images the danger, which is exponential, anonymous and of indifferent interest to our media spectacular oriented image-driven world. And at the same time do not serve false pseudo-religious terminology. The over-presented visible violence and the politics of the visible and the invisible will interest us. What does the Anthropocene offer as a framework in order to unveil through art and literature?

We shall discuss different topics in order to concentrate on the one. Dark matter, radioactivity, the sky, the water ... The sky as a topic, for example, brings riches of narratives and images: weather phenomena, birds and bees, planets and stars, astronauts and aliens, god and dark matter, light and Icarus myth, drones and bombs, airplanes and internet, GPS and more. We shall use different material, we shall discuss a lot.

In correspondence with Max Born, Erwin Schrödinger points out the necessity to make proper decisions for terminology of new concepts. He also writes that when he feels attacked, as a physicist, for being at once very revolutionary and very reactionary, he would rather call himself simply "vernünftig", the word meaning both "sensible" and "reasonable". We will practice being sensible and reasonable in regard to the Anthropocene.'

szene. This has been reworked by Sofronieva for her recent English edition, published in her collection of poems entitled *Multiverse* (2021). Below we cite her definition from the latter publication:

Anthroposcene [æn'θrɒpə,si:ən], noun. a proposed term for the present epoch (from the time of the first discussion on the Anthropocene and onwards), during which humanity has begun to be aware of its own self-performance.

Definitions:

1. a hyper-performative, quantitative, technology- and multiverse-oriented, image-driven period of a highly self-reflective and fully interconnected semi-educated humanity;
2. a time of increased self-staging of humanity during the later Holocene;
3. a striking process that takes place between humanity and Earth. Accidents, scandals, noisy wrestling between people and planet, emerging from despair when life-sustaining conditions erode;
4. special venues in the solar system where a theatrical performance of living beings – who are capable to think, speak and have social life – is played;
5. episodes in the divine universal art work with plot actions that unmask the politics of the invisible;
6. fierce self-reproaches;
7. expressions of price, of human value, dependent on losses, profits and the interference with nature;
8. a psychological state in which humans are obsessed with fears and in order to escape from them again believe themselves to be the center of the universe and the purpose of the world's creation; this does not prevent them from destroying more than creating. Provoked by anthropocentrism, an unscientific, religion and idealism related doctrine.

Word Origin: from *anthropo-* and *-scene*; from Old Greek (anthrōpos) = human, prefix, keyword in compositions meaning human; Latin *scæna*, *scena* = locale, ancient Greek *σκηνή* (skēnē) = tent, hut

First known Use: Tzveta Sofronieva, Hochroth, March 2017

Deutsch: *Anthroposzene*, *die*, Wortart: Substantiv, feminin, Worttrennung: An|thro|po|sze|ne

Aussprache: [antropo'stse:nə]

Synonym: Anthropolzähne

български: антропоцена, антропосцена (цената и сцената на човека).

Sofronieva's witty, sometimes ironic or sceptic, but poetically optimistic definition of *Anthroposcene* demonstrates the multidisciplinary and multiartistic approaches of our socio-politico-geological era (see the first eight definitions). This dictionary-like entry includes another word coined by Sofronieva, that of *Anthropolzähne*. This homonym to the compound word *Anthroposcene* contains the same first unit but ends with the word meaning 'teeth' (in German: sg. *Zahn*, pl. *Zähne*), evoking the animalistic aggression in humans that this era brings along with itself. Sofronieva has regularly held innovative and ecocritical guest lectures, book launches and installations on cross sections of science and (multilingual) art at Bielefeld University ever since 2009 when she was a guest lecturer in a course on multilingual literature⁴. During these open discussions with students and faculty, questions of Anthropocene and Arts were often discussed.

All the above examples – pointing to a very preliminary exploration of our topic – will be followed by a short description of a four-hour long performance thematizing the Anthropocene in the major hall of Bielefeld University. This performance was prepared by the students of the performing science course *Disaster*, WS 2011–2012, under the supervision of Frank Oberzaucher and Johanna Domokos⁵.

The structure of the course

As its course description in outlines, this course set out to investigate literature (science) and sociology from the perspective of performance. The international research group at ZIF 'Communicating disaster', where one of the instructors (Frank Oberzaucher) was also a research team member, was running in

4 For other events with Sofronieva, have a look to the following blog entries from 2015 and 2017: https://blogs.uni-bielefeld.de/blog/fsz/entry/tzveta_sofronia_lesung, https://blogs.uni-bielefeld.de/blog/fsz/entry/lyrik_polyglott_5_6_18 Viewed on 03 April 2023.

5 German title and course number: 239624 "Disaster": Literatur- und Sozialwissenschaft unter der Perspektive von Performance (S) (WiSe 2011/2012)

parallel to the course. The collaboration between Domokos and Oberzaucher started a few years earlier, when Domokos was an artist member of another ZIF research group working on the epistemic practices of professional actions (Case / Der Fall, led by Jörg Bergmann and Ulrich Dausendschön-Guy). In the performance at the final conference event of this research group, taking place in September 2009, Domokos invited Oberzaucher to contribute. Besides working on his PhD in sociology, Frank Oberzaucher was active at that time in different theater companies (e.g. *Theaterlabor* in Bielefeld).

The present course offered an interdisciplinary insight into communication of the Anthropocene (the term was just marginally mentioned at that time), by looking closely at new orientations in literary studies and sociology, including (1) literary and academic texts and plurimedial performance, (2) staging and theatricality of disasters, (3) affinity with rituals, ceremonies and other schemes of action, (4) from telling to showing or showing off, (5) mixing up the active-passive relations between 'performer' and 'audience'. The twelve enrolled students were invited to experiment with literary and journalistic texts on various aspects of the Anthropocene, theatrical play and staging methods of disasters, and thus explore the intersection of art, science and the Anthropocene. The course participants were also offered the opportunity to meet performers and researchers of the topic. Core elements of the course were text analysis, body work, improvisations with objects and spatial settings. Previous creative experiments (e.g. writing, theater education, film, music) were welcomed, but not mandatory, and indeed more than half of the students were already engaged in different theater performances. Regular participation in the classes, as well as participation with *Pecha-Kucha* or *Ignite* presentations in the final performance were also requirements.

In the first two-hour long introductory meeting, the structure of the preparatory phase and the basic concept of the performance were outlined. Then the dedicated students and the instructors met for six hours on three consecutive Fridays. The first block unit gave a general introduction to lecture-performance methods and basic body work techniques. One of the students gave a theoretical and practical introduction to August Boal's street theater, and Jan Hagens, a visiting scholar from Harvard University, gave an intro into speech-act and performativity theories. Students outlined their Pecha Kucha presentations planned for incorporation later to Station 0 (focus: general questions) and Station 1 (focus: past events leading to present challenges) in the perfor-

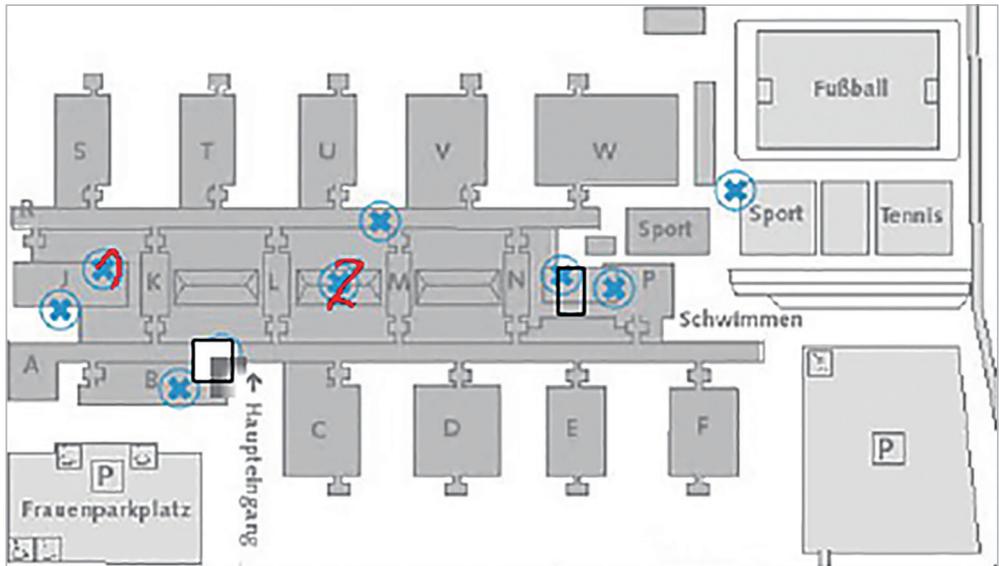
mance. The second block concentrated on the interpretation of Kleist's *Erdbeben in Chili* (Earthquake in Chile). In the close reading of the novel the social manifestation of the earthquake and its temporal dimension were underlined. Certain motives were placed in walk-acts and invisible theater performative actions lead by Frank Oberzaucher (e.g., the procession). Brainstorming for actions at Station 2 (focus: present events of the Anthropocene) and stations linking movement actions were outlined (among Station 0, 1, 2 and 3, as well as back to Station 0). The final block unit hosted a lecture by Prof. Marcus Kracht followed by a brainstorming of its theatrical transformation into a lecture performance at the final station of the performance (Station 3, focus: future actions). Time loop, time-lapse techniques as well as face-to-face exercises for future communication with the audience were incorporated in the theatrical exercises. During the seminar units all the four performing subjects, areas, props and actions were outlined together in a script, which was used as screenplay for the event. While describing succinctly the performing process below, instructions to some specific moments will be quoted in footnotes. The whole process was documented both as video and photo material, which played an important role in the personal and collective evaluation during the follow-up meeting.

Locations, actions, bridging acts of the performance

Bielefeld University was conceived around a several hundred-meter long and about 20 m high common area, a corridor with side shops (banks, post, bookstore, bio store etc.) and cafes. It is the major place that students, faculty of all institutions and all other employees of the university need to cross in order to reach their seminar rooms, offices, libraries or dining hall ('Mensa'). Our performance of twelve people dressed in white (half of them in white disposable overalls) was located at four major performing areas in this covered space. The event was advertised on 60 posters around the numerous corridors of the university, and the construction of individual scenes were done the morning before the performance.

In the following lines the place, time and contents of these scenes will be outlined briefly. Each of these scenes had three students who were responsible for

preparing the place beforehand, for taking care of the necessary requisites, and also to clean up the space afterwards.



The starting SCENE O (at UNIQ) of the map above was the starting place, using a white and black oval fabric partition with the big capital words of *Performing Science*. This partition was the fourth wall for the five *Pecha Kucha* presentations of the students, which were followed by video materials⁶ running during the hours following the performance (with locations at other parts of the university corridor). This space served to raise the interest in Anthropocene topics of the university people passing by and invite them to follow our journey into the past, present and future of this topic.

SCENE 1's thematic focus was the first signals of any kind of disaster (scene's title: 'Before the disaster'). Departing from Scene 0 in slow panic motions resembling the effort to escape a fast-rising tide, the performing group arrived in front of the office of the bank at that time, namely the office of *Sparkasse*.

6 Film1: Johanna Domokos: *Katastrophe Bacchus* (10")

Film 2: *The Sunken City: Rebuilding Post-Katrina New Orleans*, von Marline Otte und Laszlo Fulop (30")

Film 3: Lecture Performance: Johanna Domokos–Pedro Tivadar: *In (k)einem Fall: eine Performance*, ZIF, (10")

Film 4: Lecture Performance 1: Eva-Maria Gauss: *Sprachkomplex*, Theaterlabor Bielefeld (20")

Film 5: Lecture Performance 2: Eva-Maria Gauss: *Körper haben*. Performance Wettbewerb Gießen 2008 (20")

Two *Pecha Kucha* Performances located in the white and black oval partitions were followed in the corridor by the act *Plant a Planet*, leaving an installation behind for the following hours. This scene took up 30 minutes.

Departing in the form of a procession, using the white oval partition as ceiling and the black partition as the corpse the group was chanting, repeating the short definitions of the disaster pre-sung by Frank Oberzaucher as a liturgy⁷.

SCENE 2's theme was 'In the Disaster' and it was located in front of the bookstore of that time. The event here started with a 20-minute lunch performance, when the participants were using all kinds of technical instruments to consume their lunch⁸.

The three performances of the students at this stage concentrated on the stories of objects partaking in disaster. Again, in this half-hour performing time not only did the hundreds of passing students 'participate' but also several of them stopped to watch or contribute to the performance. At the end of this unit the performing group was moving with real and imagined transportation vehicles from Scene 2 to Scene 3. Around bicycles lying on the floor and the white chalk outlines of human shapes, children (bobby)cars were circling.

SCENE 3's topic was: 'Rebirth after a disaster'. It took place with two formations of 4 students each⁹ in the area before the Westend Café, on a podium Professor Marcus Kracht (Faculty of Linguistics and Literary Studies) was giving a 20-minute long lecture performance while throwing white pebbles into a bowl of water. The audience was standing around the lecture podium.

7 "Procession to Scene 2: white canvas forms a roof (similar to Catholic Corpus Christi processions). Jan, Kai, Stefanie, Philip hold the white material up, Hannah, Lena, Tabea form a queue. The black oval serves as a corpse and is carried by Johanna and Janina (if she has already arrived at this point), Frank leads the procession group and reads short definitions of disasters, which are repeated by the group as a chorus."

8 In the outline for this performance the following indications were given: '20 min LUNCH with eye masks, protective suits, white gloves and possibly technical tools (instead of cutlery). Important: be in the foreground: take a short break, but still create a nice picture – by waiting as a group until everyone has prepared their food and starting and finishing as a group at the same time as a group (note the group impulse). We use the tool as if we were always eating with this (strange) tool. If you want, you can remain silent and dissect this wonderful food with great fascination. Props: 2 tables, 12 chairs, 1 bicycle, 1 bench and your own lunch.'

9 Indications in the performance outline: 'Group 1 forms a queue, Lena shows the movements: turn the head – to the right, to the left, up and down, then add the hands, cradle the head in the left hand. Important: Lena decides what to do, the others' job is to follow her. Group 2 sits down next to the right side of the stage and slowly walks to the back of the stage, varying the movements from: making the cross, looking at the clock, yawning, riding the train, silence – then running back and sitting down. Important: Stefanie decides what to do, the others' job is to follow her.'

After the lecture, the performing group formed a dancing queue. Holding hands and repetitive steps (two ahead one back), the Gregorian song of *Dies Irae* was played back from a cassette recorder. This is how the group and joining students reached back to Scene 0, where the whole story began.

Summary

By actively shaping the performing event on major topics of the Anthropocene, university studies and research as well as its communication was seen as more than merely an intersubjective, life-world activity of knowledge dissemination. In the preparation phase of the seminar we planned together how the artistic performance can be used to make us aware of the challenges of the physical and mental-psychic world we are living in. In the next phase, namely the *performing process*, the performing students as well as the ones passing by experience a completely different intersubjective horizon than of their regular seminars. In the *follow-up meeting* a joint linguistic reflection was done through a didactically guided conversation. Our case also demonstrated what the above-quoted Haas 2017 formulates in the following way: ‘Knowledge should no longer be understood as a representative, static construct, but rather as an event form of an intersubjective experience’¹⁰ (Haas 2007). Moreover, artistic representations of scientific data evaluating the Anthropocenic period allow us to communicate not only dry data but living ones which touch upon the mind and heart of humans.

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Interview on the statement of the workshop **Theater of the Anthropocene** at the 10th Theatre Olympics Budapest

Sára Sánta asks Frank Raddatz
and Johanna Domokos

This interview explores the key themes discussed during the workshop titled *Theater of the Anthropocene* at the 10th Theatre Olympics in Budapest. Sára Sánta engages in a conversation with Frank Raddatz and Johanna Domokos, shedding light on the purpose behind organizing the conference and the profound implications of the Anthropocene era on both the world and the realm of theatre. The Anthropocene, characterized by global ecological threats resulting from human activities, challenges traditional theatrical narratives, requiring a shift towards a more holistic understanding of humanity's relationship with the planet.

The interview delves into the potential educational role of theatre in fostering environmental awareness and sensitizing individuals to the complexities of our changing world. The speakers emphasize the need for a multidisciplinary approach, involving not only theatre scholars and artists but also scientists, lawyers, and writers in addressing the existential crisis posed by the Anthropocene. Insights from the interview highlight the importance of nurturing a collective responsibility to maintain ecological balance. The speakers also discuss the transformative potential of theatre and the diverse perspectives presented during the conference, leading to the creation of a manifesto that envisions theatre as a platform for envisioning and shaping a harmonious future with the Earth. The interview concludes with reflections on the role of theatre in the future, emphasizing its deep-rooted connection to the planet and the potential for a renewed, holistic theatre that addresses societal and environmental challenges beyond conventional norms.

What was your purpose in organising the conference?

■ **Frank M. Raddatz:** All our advanced civilisations and civilisations have emerged in the last 10000 years, in the Holocene, a stable warm period. This geological epoch is just passing because of human activities. That is why the dawning age after man, *Anthropos* in Greek, is called Anthropocene. The problems of the Anthropocene and the associated global ecological threats are new territory for the world and for theatre. It brings with it complex questions that go beyond the traditional terrain in which humans interact with humans, as in a play by Shakespeare, for example. Rather, it involves the relationship to the

entire earth as a planetary habitat. When the Amazon rainforest is cut down, it has consequences for the world's climate, both in Canada and in Central Europe.

So we are faced with a bundle of questions: Can the stage sensitise us to the fact that our nature is no longer stable but has started to move, with enormous consequences for our behaviour? How can this development be understood at all? Do we find ourselves in the same situation as Oedipus, who has solved the riddle of the Sphinx but eventually finds that he himself has tied the noose. In which he will eventually dangle? How can this development of existential significance, that we ourselves have triggered and are still fuelling the climatic plague, be represented in theatre a space of art? At the same time, we suddenly find ourselves in the position of the mythical figure Atlas, who prevents the sky from collapsing. Suddenly, we humans bear the responsibility for ensuring that the ecological balance is not upset. This metamorphosis of Prometheus is also great theatre material. .

■ **Johanna Domokos:** Theater is a very sensitive environment. In it, not only the psychological and social, but also the environmental and spiritual challenges of man find expression. With the organization of our conference entitled *Theater of the Anthropocene. An Overture*¹, eco-conscious theater experiments, environmentally conscious activities within and attached to the world of theater, as well as eco-critical reflection in theater studies came into focus. We can consider a significant step that Frank Raddatz's almost decade-old initiative² was given the opportunity within the framework of the 10th Theater Olympiad to bring together lawyers, anthropologists, literary scholars and theater esthetes, theater makers, fellow artists and audience members to discuss the theoretical and practical possibilities.

1 Workshop on the Theater of the Anthropocene – An Overture. <https://szinhaz.org/en/esemenyek/workshop-on-the-theater-of-the-anthropocene-an-overture/> Viewed on 08 July 2023.

2 Theater des Anthropozän. <https://xn--theater-des-anthropozn-l5b.de/en/home/> Viewed on 08 July 2013.

We can hear many different approaches and calls for attention that the Earth is drifting towards an ecological disaster, but it is clear that people can do a lot to improve or at least stabilise the situation on an individual level. How do you see this, can the theatre play an educational role in this as well? If so, in what form?

■ **F. M. R.:** I think the individual component is only marginal. If the energy system has to be restructured, for example shipping is to become climate-neutral in a few decades, coal mining is to be stopped and the like, these are very efficient measures. These decisions, which are made at the societal level, can be quite painful for the individual. For example, because his diesel car loses value, or he has to make investments in harmless heating. Perhaps it is less about the pedagogical value of imparting a knowledge of interrelationships than it is about developing a sensitivity to our existence in the planetary habitat. Theatre has historically played a major role in this regard because it is directed at the individual but as an element of the community of an audience. It involves the whole of life on the planet.

Theatre can influence the attitude of society, because our attitude towards nature is itself determined by cultural history. This is why Bruno Latour says: Nature is culture! But what can theatre contribute to developing a culture that knows itself to be in harmony with ecological parameters and does not – knowingly or unknowingly – work against them?

■ **J. D.:** By now we can see that not only a lot of small changes have to happen, but also an essential transformation (see the difference between the words *Veränderung* and *Verwandlung* in German). The challenge is enormous, beyond the individual, although the change must start here. Humanity must be and perform in unity – harmonizing its external and internal worlds – with itself and its environment: the Earth and cosmos. The theater is particularly suitable to make us experience that what is outside is inside and what is inside is outside. As the theater scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte emphasizes, through its praxis “the world can become magical again”.

Theatre scholars, lawyers, writers, and actors were among the speakers, from whom we could hear diverse approaches to the problems raised. What criteria was used to compile the list of invitees?

■ **F. M. R.:** It was even a historian of science who spoke. That is indeed extremely unusual in the context of theatre. But this whole ecological catastrophe is only possible because of science and its application in technology. Without engaging with science, we will not escape the Anthropocene. The French philosopher Michel Serres analysed this as early as 1990 in *The Natural Contract*.³ I myself founded the Theatre of the Anthropocene in 2019 at the interface of art/science and have since been working closely with various scientific institutions to bring soil, water, the forest or the rights of nature onto the stage. Law, the question of what is allowed and what is not in dealing with nature, also has enormous significance in this context. Historically, law is always subject to enormous change. But what kind of law do we need to survive the Anthropocene? In some countries, rivers or forests can take legal action. Since last year, a salt lagoon in Spain also has this right. To deal with these current issues, theatre needs texts. That is why it is of great importance to involve writers in this process. Likewise, actors who are familiar with dealing with nature, because after all they have to deal with these texts on stage. Theatre scholars report on what has already taken place on stages or performatively in this sector and what they have noticed. Basically, our entire culture is affected by this existential crisis of humanity. Seen in this light, it is also a matter of culturalising the conflict with the earth on all levels, i.e. making it the subject of our everyday life and education.

■ **J. D.:** In assembling the speakers for the event, we paid attention to bringing together domestic and international researchers and sitting down for a serious conversation without language challenges. For this, we got excellent interpreters who were able to convey accurately between the languages of the presenters and participants. We also thought it was important to invite researchers and theater people who not only talk about the problem, but also do it.

³ Serres, Michel. 1990/1995. *The Natural Contract*. Translated by Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

What conclusions can be drawn from the lectures? Did you manage to find answers to the questions asked in the call?

■ **F. M. R.:** It is crucial to realise that we are not dealing with linear processes. We are learning to understand that it is precisely the multiplicity of different substantive perspectives that is characteristic of this cultural transformation called the Anthropocene. There is no such thing as one causality. That is superstition. The sooner we think of the world around us, i.e. our planet, systemically and see it as an interplay of different spheres that are connected by interactions or that produce interactions, the greater the chances of calming the ecological parameters. Earth history knows many climatic conditions that are incompatible for Homo Sapiens and an infinite number of species that have become extinct due to climatic shifts.

■ **J. D.:** After the three-day meeting (which also included visits to the theater), we⁴ drafted the following manifesto together with our speakers:

THE THEATER OF THE ANTHROPOCENE CREATES THE FUTURE BY GIVING PLANET EARTH A STAGE

The relationship people have with nature depends on their culture. In the age of ecological threats, plants, animals, rivers, forests and landscapes can no longer be regarded as dead objects.

Without a living connection with non-human actors and their needs, no habitat will remain intact. Under these circumstances, the task of culture, like that of theatre, is to create a sensitivity to the state and processes of our planet in order to confront society with the question: what kind of nature do we want?

The actor József Szarvas, who takes care of the native fruit faculty, rightly wove the thoughts started in this call: "Our created world has an enemy and that is

⁴ The signatories are Eliana Beaufils, a researcher at the Sorbonne in Paris, cultural anthropologist, writer, lawyer, MMA MMKI director Csáji László Koppány, cultural researcher and academic performer Domokos Johanna, LMU theater studies professor Andreas Enghart, Berlin-based dramaturge, director, author Frank Raddatz, the retired head of the Berlin Max Plank Institute Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, the Austrian-born ecocritic writer Katrin Röggl, the actor of the National Theater, the founding father of the Pajta Theater József Szarvas, and the writer, director, ecologist, and beekeeper Tibor Weiner Sennyey.

the person who only consumes culture. Sensitization is just covering up the problem." The artist Tibor Weiner Sennyey repeatedly mentioned the visionary idea of Garden Hungary.⁵

Your works and books were also thematized (one book was even launched at this event) at the conference: can we hear a few words about them?

■ **F. M. R.:** The book launch is related to an anthology edited by Johanna Domokos. I myself have written several essays on the relationship between theatre and the Anthropocene⁶, and also a small booklet with the ambiguous title *The Drama of the Anthropocene*.

■ **J. D.:** I dealt with the performative processing of Anthropocene reflection within the framework of several university courses (see e.g. in 2012 at the University of Bielefeld a whole-day performance series that grew out of a half year long seminar). Its expression in dramas and other literary writings is reflected by the anthology *Megfeledkezve a világról magnóliavirágzáskor* (Forgetting the World at Magnolia Flowering)⁷, which release was timed for our Anthropocene theater event. This publication contains literary texts from Northern Europe and accompanying analyzes that deal with the large-scale crises of our time, such as the finiteness of the earth's raw material reserves, environmental pollution that threatens human, animal and plant existence, the resulting intensification of conflicts between social strata, and nations etc. This publication presents the literary reflection of the global and local challenges of our Anthropocene age, from early texts of Finnish, Sami, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Greenlandic and Faroese literature to the latest works. The translators themselves provided great help in the selection of the texts, such as Petra Németh, Kata Veress, Dániel Veress, and Miklós Vassányi, who did a great job with their translations. The included case studies relating to works of literature, drama, and other media shed new light on the role of culture, history and

5 See: <https://adrot.hu/kertmagyarország-weiner-sennyey-tibor-eloadasa/> Viewed on 07 July 2013.

6 See e.g. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003046479-21/theatre-anthropocene-frank-raddatz> Viewed on 07 July 2013.

7 Domokos Johanna, ed. 2023. *Megfeledkezve a világról magnóliavirágzáskor* (Skandináv antropocén irodalmi betekintő). Budapest: KRE–L'Harmattan Könyvkiadó.

society in the formation of narratives on nature and the environment, and offer a comprehensive and multi-faceted overview of the most recent ecocritical research in Scandinavian studies.

What is your opinion on whether the theatre will continue to exist in the future?

■ **F. M. R.:** Theatre emerges from cults closely linked to the rhythm and phenomenon of the planet. The Greek Dionysia, the tragedy festivals in Athens, took place at the beginning of spring and were linked to the return of life in nature. The theatre god Dionysus pays homage to the principle of metamorphosis and also appears on stage as an animal. The Dionysian situates an earth-bound world of constant transformation. This also concerns death. Dionysus is the only god who can die. No art form is better suited to ventilate the relationship to nature than the stage, but to do so, it must learn to reactivate its Dionysian roots. If it succeeds in doing so, it is predestined to be a place where society negotiates its existential problems beyond good and evil, even under the changed conditions of earth history.

■ **J. D.:** A holistic theater is perhaps more needed today than ever. Our environmental problems are the result of our internal crisis. A theater space in which people can once again be present for each other with heart and soul (be it human or beyond) requires wise catalysts. Here and there, the hidden stream of specific traditions, knowledge and experimentation still surface. One must look for it delicately. Mostly with silence, then with its competent performers, teachers.

What are your Anthropocene projects presently working on?

■ **F. M. R.:** As part of the Theater of the Anthropocene's current projects, we are accompanying a workshop in Hamburg on the subject of the deep sea: *Who owns the seabed?* with musical and poetic contributions. A large performative project *Metamorphoses of Water* is planned for the fall in Berlin. We are also currently developing a concept for trees in the city, having successfully presented the pilot project *A lonely tree in a concrete jungle* in Karlsruhe in December 2023. We are also working on the topic of soil on behalf of a Bavarian foundation.

“I had been cut off from my roots, so I had to find new ones”

József Szarvas's Fairy Garden

Interview by Annamária Rojkó



Photo: Zsolt Eöri Szabó

József Szarvas made his way to acting from the farmlands of the Hungarian Great Plain. He began his career as a bit player in Debrecen and was almost 30 years old when he graduated from the Academy of Theatre and Film Arts. It was on the advice of his former academic mentor, István Horvai, that he signed a contract with the Vígszínház, of which he remained a member for a decade. Afterwards, he worked with the Kaposvár company and in 2002, he joined the National Theatre in Budapest. In the meantime, he had major roles in a host of feature and art films. We talked to the Jászai Mari Prize winner Merited Artist and Distinguished Artist of Hungary, who has also won numerous other professional awards, about rootlessness, about his long sought and eventually found identity. For him, the clear spring to draw from is the Fairy Garden, created from the native fruit trees of the Carpathian Basin, and the Barn Theatre of Órség, founded by him and his family.

As a person born in Hortobágy, in the Great Plain, why did you choose a house in Órség, at the other side of the country? How did you find your home in Viszák?

■ I was born in a family living in Hortobágy-Kónya, from where we moved to Ebes farmstead in my childhood. In the early 1970s, however, forced by the times, my family had to liquidate the Ebes farmstead, cutting down all the trees, demolishing the manor house and “salting the earth”. This was the consequence of an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. There are many ways to destroy folk culture, peasant culture and the politics of that era used this epidemic, among others, to wipe out farmsteads. By the time we moved to the village of Ebes, I was already 14 and went to Debrecen, where I studied to become a butcher. By my own decision, I applied to the Csokonai Theatre to be an bit player – with mandatory choir participation – and after seven years, I transferred to Buda-

pest. Later I never had a chance to return to the Great Plain, the Ebes area in the Hortobágy region, because by then all the prospects of doing so had been eradicated. There was nothing to return to and nowhere to settle; I had been cut off from my roots, so I had to find new ones.

We lived in a housing estate, and my wife at the time knew very well that I could not be locked up in a prefab. I can't stand and get stressed by not having anything to do at home. I was brought up in the belief that the kitchen was a woman's job and I had no business in there. Also, I don't like vacuuming, because when I was a kid, we used to sweep the earthen floor in the kitchen. What should I do with myself in a prefab? This also had its sources of tension within the family, so at my wife's encouragement we rented a garden in Pesthidegkút, so that I could at least do some hoeing. I suspect that due to the years spent in the countryside, my gestures reveal an inherent need to spend time productively. I cannot sit at home or just travel somewhere random to relax. My idea of relaxation is not what a spa hotel offers. For me, relaxation is when you create value and take pride in it. Earlier, I looked for the right places to do that. I familiarised myself with the Mátra, but it is a rather mountainous place for me. The story of how we found Órség dates back to the mid-1990s. I had a long weekend off while shooting a film. I asked my wife to find a place where we could drive for a little rest. She also found a small ad in the Magyar Nemzet, which advertised that at the village of Nagyrákos in the Órség region, Varga farm offered a weekend break. We got into the car, drove there and as I got out of the car I suddenly looked around and thought: this is it! Originating from Hortobágy, I was immediately captivated by the rolling, hilly landscape of Órség. I knew it was just a matter of time and money to go back, and I vowed not to leave until I bought a house. That's how I ended up in Viszák a few years later, where I bought a house and a 1600 m² homestead in 2000. Leaving the roots in Hortobágy I had been cut off from, it became my internal experience that what I had been looking for all this time was finally found in Órség.

You were originally looking for a place for active recreation, but the house in Viszák and its adjacent rebuilt barn have been expanded into a community space. Who inspired you, who changed your original vision?

■ The first moment of this occurred in 2002, when my actor friend Zoltán Rátóti contacted me with the news that there was a man who wanted to erect

an oak cross on the Szentegyházi hilltop, not far from the vineyard of Medes, in memory of the villages of Órség, Göcsej and Hetés that had been obliterated during the Turkish occupation. That person was looking for performers for the ceremony of the consecration of the cross. He knew that Zoli Rátóti lived in Órség and asked him if there was anyone else among his friends who had ties to Órség and would be happy to read a poem or short story at the cross consecration ceremony. Zoli approached me and I said yes. I went, and at the cross consecration ceremony I was introduced to a concept I had never heard of before, and the term itself was completely new to me. The term is 'orchardry', and the concept is the associated set of ideas. Forester Gyula Kovács stated, "Let's save the indigenous fruit legacy of the Carpathian Basin, destroyed by man, with the intention of strengthening the community." He had been saving the surviving fruit trees of the Carpathian Basin for more than twenty years by then, and still saves them, providing names, histories and gastronomic descriptions. He has collected more than 3500 native fruit trees for his own collection. Just think about it: 1500 apple trees and 1500 pear trees represent the plant diversity of our indigenous culture!

Culture, fruit trees, cross consecration – these were new impulses for me in Órség, which I felt would carry great significance.

The years passed, theatre, film, television, dubbing, the radio, the academy – where I was a part-time assistant lecturer at the time – and the Csiky Gergely Theatre in Kaposvár filled my time completely. The house and the courtyard in Viszák perfectly satisfied my inner need to be active. I went there, mowed the lawn, drank a few shots of pálinka, fell asleep, got up the next morning and headed back to Budapest. This went on for years, until one day Robi Pungor, my neighbour, came over and said, "Well, Mr Artist, from now on, as long as I'm your neighbour, I'll be mowing your lawn." I replied, "And what should I do in the meantime?!" He responded, "I don't care about that."

The one-time barn that belonged to the house stood in the yard as a pile of rubble. I knew that if I were to demolish it, I would have to build a new one in the same place, otherwise I would spoil the integrity of the original courtyard. We didn't need the barn – as a living space – we were satisfied with the bedroom, the kitchen and the pantry in the house. (We did, however, create a bathroom in the house and the pantry was eventually converted into a bedroom – that makes two bedrooms – but that was it.) Robi Pungor was already mowing my lawn at the time. I went down to the garden, sat on a chair and looked

at the barn. Robi mowed around me, I had my coffee, went into the house, my neighbour took my chair, moved it, mowed where I had been sitting and left. I stood there wondering what to do, what I was supposed to do there in Viszák, a village of 270 (now only 240) inhabitants.

The house I bought was a peasant house that had been abandoned for ten years. Next to it was a vacant plot with a vacant house. The house next door to the right had no one living in there either, the other house was also empty, but its garden was full of fruit trees. Who knew what kind of fruits, no one picked them. If somebody was to come and buy the plot, they would cut down the fruit trees and plant thuja in their place. I was observing and contemplating this scene. Suddenly, the words of Gyula Kovács echoed in my ears: "Let's save the indigenous fruit legacy of the Carpathian Basin, devastated by man, with community-strengthening intentions." I was dramatically engaged by this call, anatomising its meaning word by word and as a thought.

The first facilitating meeting was followed by a second one, with Attila Kaszás. At that time (2004), Attila donated his family house to his home village of Zsigárd in historical Upper Hungary to be turned into a community centre. He was planning its reconstruction, which we discussed many times. It was also at that time that I became interested in the concept of historical Upper Hungary, which I knew nothing about as a child. Little did I understand why Attila would speak Hungarian if he had been born in Czechoslovakia and their house was now in Slovakia. This left me with a serious riddle, making me wonder what being a Hungarian from historical Upper Hungary meant. I remember a Transylvanian woman selling handwoven goods at the marketplace, and a friend of mine bought something from her. I liked it and asked who she had bought it from. And she told me she had bought it from that Romanian woman! I completely lacked this basic knowledge presupposing identity for a long time. When I was a child, I never met a mentor like Gyula Kovács, who would have shared a reflection with me near Ebes in Hortobágy, that could have sent me back there. I never had a friend – like Attila Kaszás later on – who would have connected me around an idea. Ultimately, there was no village that offered me the chance to do something for the community, because the notion of community did not exist. This tremendous feeling of lack became food for thought later. Just like when you quit smoking, and the enzymes demand you to feed, and the withdrawal symptom appears. No one asked me for friendship, for trust, for attachment to culture, to the community, for the possibility

of preserving the tradition and heritage that it represents. Everything said, “cut it, leave it, abandon it”. And as soon as I stumbled upon a living word that said, “don’t abandon it”, I immediately clung to Gyula Kovács, Attila Kaszás, and later to Lőrinc Csernyus and László Tenk.

Had you previously never met a teacher or adult who would have encouraged you because they sensed your talent?

■ When we moved from Kónya to Ebes farm, I went to a farm school for half a year. The teacher listened to me, looked at me and asked: what are you going to be when you grow up? I said I would be a singer or an adult educator. She wrote in my school report card that the child was notoriously deluded and gave me a D in singing. That’s the hands I was under as a child. Nevertheless, I am very grateful to two of my primary school teachers. The headmaster of the school in Ebes, János Prepuk, and his wife, Mrs Prepuk, Aunt Erzsike, who was my form teacher and taught Hungarian – thank God they are still alive today. Mr Prepuk also led a choir. They could sense my special singing voice and my inner connection to the poem. They recognized that I had an inner drive, and they fostered that drive to unfold. The lady teacher heard immediately that this peasant child, at the age of ten, not only recited the two required stanzas of the poem by heart but had learned all of it and recited it in a more special way than the others. And the headmaster noticed my singing voice. When I went to college as a farm kid, it was common for farm kids not to be admitted as members of the choir, because rehearsals and performances were always at weekends, when farm kids had to be at home. But having heard my voice, my form teacher and the headmaster went to see my parents to beg them to let me join the choir. I have never forgotten this gesture of theirs.

How did Attila Kaszás’s personality and friendship shape your personality and mindset?

■ We talked a lot, I remember him cooking at times, us smoking cigars at other times, drinking wine, and making plans about how we would like to do this or that. His donation to his native village also inspired new thoughts in my head. I mooted the idea with him that we could turn my barn into a cultural space. Attila died unexpectedly in 2007, and the catharsis helped me to ask myself

whether Attila's passing gave me the right to take the idea forward and implement the project on my own, even if I didn't feel competent to do so. In the summer of 2007, we had to spend our entire film income for the year on construction. The barn was built, we started organising events, thinking that we could use the proceeds to support the events. But the income didn't even cover the cost of petrol. I wanted to organise events that Attila and I had agreed on. On the one hand, I wanted to develop cross-border cultural contacts and, on the other hand, I wanted to get involved in the cultural life of the village. I organised musical and theatrical events and evenings at the Barn Theatre at my own expense, but I soon realised that the villagers did not enjoy this kind of culture. There was no point in my wanting to provide quality culture and entertainment if they were simply not interested. They took an interest in the construction of the barn, tapping, inspecting and studying the timber, the beams, but there was not much demand for the performances and the pictures on display in the gallery. When I embarked on this project with wishful thinking, I could not ask anyone for help. I didn't approach anyone for support for five years.

Finally, in 2009, we understood the true vocation of the Barn Theatre, its mission of cultural acceptance, and since then everything has been guided by this idea. The common goal of the Attila Kaszás Barn Theatre and Gallery is to help create value. The situation began to stabilise, and we realised that we were on the right track, because the idea had transcended itself. My friends and I converted the loft above the barn into a lodge, and we also set up a yurt. In the summer, young architects and students camp at our facility under the guidance of architect Lőrinc Csernyus. They helped to expand the barn and garden, designed and built a bridge and an oven chapel. These projects cost a sizeable amount of money, but I managed to get funding through the NKA [Natural Cultural Fund]. Year after year, my fellow actors and friends Tamás Gál and Róbert Laboda fill the children's drama camp with content. The work of fine artist László Tenk, an artist associated with KAPSZ Gallery, led to the summer art camps. My wife and I are the hosts, but if you need help in Viszák, you always find some. One friend planted a small garden, another friend created a pond. A friend of mine, a railway engineer, made a canopy to provide shade to protect the children from the sun. It is self-evident to me that money has to be raised or earned to make the programmes happen, but the this is not the point; the point is the good intention and goodwill of the community. I strive to make myself useful with an inner compulsion for homemaking, and now my



Photo: Zsolt Eöri Szabó

Picture 1. László Csurka (Sipkás), József Szarvas (Táncos Csuda Mózes) in the *Thirteen Apple Tree* (Director: Vidnyánszky Attila)

life has an inner rhythm in which work is a source of joy. I do most of the tasks and organisation during the year, and the moment we get here, the moment hundreds of people come to visit, my wife and I feel it is already time to celebrate. That's the reason why we do it!

How did the personal message of the Fairy Garden evolve and how did you begin to save the native fruit trees of Viszák?

■ The process was taking place before my eyes: the village was shrinking, many of the people living there were elderly, their children had left, the proportion of unmarketable houses was increasing, and the number of anonymous fruit trees condemned to dry up and be cut down was growing. Gyula Kovács's idea expressed in the words "let's save them with the intention of strengthening the community" finally became clear to me, and I understood that I was not

the one who should set the direction and tell the people of Viszák what to do. 2009 was the year when the Fairy Garden was created with the involvement of the mayor, the teacher and the doctor, along with the village community. Gyula Kovács helped and supported the initiative from the outset, gave us permission and the municipality granted us a free plot of land. The teacher suggested that all the fruit trees saved should have a custodian from Viszák, or a person originally from Viszák. Gyula promised to assist our plan with as many fruit trees as we can provide a caretaker for. And I suggested that every year we should save as many fruit trees in our garden as there were children born that year. We have planted 52 fruit trees in the Fairy Garden. If it were just me doing all this, there would be no point.

How do the messages of the Attila Kaszás Barn Theatre and the indigenous-fruit-tree-saving Fairy Garden interweave? Can this be called a pure form, a clear spring of Hungarian identity?

■ Yes, in Viszák the two-branched clear spring merges into one. In the 1800s, all fruit trees were still public property. The fruit belonged to the farmer who grafted, planted, nurtured and cared for the tree, but the tree was public property, a culture-bearing common treasure. There are countless synonyms for fruit and thousands of poems, melodies and songs are associated with it. Thus, man has created a cult, a culture, around the fruit tree. He is attached to it as he is to his festivities. Thus, in the 19th century, the fruit tree was a culture-bearing creature of public thought. If you think about what a fruit tree represents nowadays, I will have to say that potentially a tree is recyclable waste today. It means nothing more. Because what happens to a tree? Its leaves and twigs fall off, which are collected in a plastic bag for recycling, taken somewhere, compressed, set burning, and of course it generates electricity, which we buy. We are talking about the tree, to which we no longer have any attachment. We have given up on trees, just as art has forsaken the representation of peasant society. The peasant man could have been a cultural agent if his family had not been driven away. These families were moved into prefabricated housing and from then on, it has seemed as if this bygone class no longer existed. Along with the peasantry disappeared the fruit trees, the poetry and culture associated with trees, the notion of culture and tradition. But tradition does not belong in a museum, it must be renewed day after day. Today, instead of culture, multi-

culturalism is proliferating. For me, multiculturalism is like socialist morality: a virtual reality. The term multiculturalism makes no sense to me because something is either multi or culture; it is either socialist or morality. Culture is very much tied to a place and the past, suggestive of the future. If you plant an indigenous fruit tree, it's sure to be there in a hundred years' time, and in the meantime a family can grow up. Mother, father, children, grandchildren. I'll remind my grandchild of all the delicious jams, preserves, vinegar and pálinka that are made [from the fruit of the tree]. I also consider it important to entrust him with the task of taking care of the tree and saving it when the tree is old, because it is associated with so many memories and tastes. The arts facilitate and support this.

Do you see your work bearing fruit yet?

■ Over the past decades, tens of thousands of resistant fruit trees grafted onto wild trees have been saved throughout the Carpathian Basin. These hundreds of Tündérgert (Fairy Gardens) were created with the intention of enriching the landscape and strengthening the community. In 2023, the Kaszás Attila Pajta Theater and Gallery in Viszák launched the Attila Kaszás Theater to the Carpathian Basin after 16 years, with the intention of crossing borders and relearning culture. Our goal is to save the once seemingly endless variety of native fruit trees that still remain but are doomed to destruction. The Kaszás Attila Theater – together with several other theaters, partially renouncing their own professional goals – wants to play an initiating role in the process of relearning folk culture. In a joint performance with the Spektrum Theater in Marosvásárhely, we presented Zsigmond Móricz's drama: *A boszorkány (The Witch)*, and together we created a Fairy Garden in the village of Buza in Mezőség. It was possible to initiate a new and sustainable holiday in the settlement, which brought surprising hope to the doomed community. Also in 2023, with our already mentioned Móricz performance, we participated in the jubilee event of the Gyula Illyés National Theatre in Beregszász, and in the joint decision of the three theaters, we planted the tree of hope for rebirth in Tiszacsoma, i.e. Petőfi's pear tree. We founded another Tündérgert with this expanding intention. We will continue our work in 2024. With the participation of new theaters, creating new performances and new Fairy Gardens. By introducing new communities to a new collective art initiative, the purpose and goal of which is to serve the re-strengthening of local patriotic communities.

The Fairy Garden reminds me of Attila József's poem "I shall be a gardener", which is a symbol of all this. Has your family accepted your mission?

■ The decision to buy the house and build the barn was also supported by my first wife. Her support helped me a lot to come to believe that the idea that had touched me was culturally good, important and value-creating. My second wife inherited this situation. I am happy to say that she is now our hostess for our helpers and guests, and so is my daughter Katinka, who is nearly eight years old and has settled in well and grown to love Viszák. Early on in the planning process, I imposed my "fantasy" on the village and on my wife, but I tried to convey my ideas in a way that they would come to like them. Today, I embrace everything that can be added to this idea, as new sources of extra joy also reinforce it. Not only in me, but also in the villagers' souls. Back in the days, László Földes (Hobó), Tamás Jordán and Sándor Fábry came to perform for free, and with this gesture they helped me move forward.

Is it possible to separate József Szarvas' theatrical and cinematic self from his fairy garden?

■ Through these village productions that enable personal growth, I am becoming a better and better actor. All the more because I get a strong, deep, identity-building professional opportunity to underpin my roles. After all, the more meaningful my life is, the richer and more meaningful my sentences are. The theatre is a workshop for sharing culture, but so is the fruit tree. I enter the theatre in the evenings because that is my profession, I am an actor. On weekdays I am József Szarvas. I can't go everywhere as an actor. The spectator who sees me in the theatre is not watching the actor, but the character. I have to create the authenticity of my roles. Thus, theatre is part of how my life is complete. My solo evening, *Snowfall*, brings together the theatre, the barn and the Fairy Garden. It incorporates my whole life so far.

László Koppány Csáji

The Natural and Supernatural Existence of Rivers before, during, and after the Anthropocene

Essay using the method of anthropology of art and history of mentality

Since ancient times, rivers have accompanied mankind – and also man the rivers. Ancient river valley civilizations in Egypt, Mesopotamia, along the Indus and the Ganges, or even along the Yellow River, worshipped them as divine rulers of life and death. The Steppe nomads on horseback had an elemental experience of the ‘vascular system of life’ (the network of rivers), as did the Siberian peoples; but many other peoples from Amazonia to Africa also attribute a special role to them. They have become an inexhaustible source of our metaphors: as an ever-changing, yet eternal metaphor of existence, we could list philosophers and poets from Heraclitus to Attila József, who saw rivers as a reality far beyond their purely natural sphere. In their reflections, people recognized not only themselves but also their inescapable embeddedness in this worldly and transcendent web of existence. What has changed over the past decades (or millennia?) to turn rivers into energy and food production tools, a terrain to

be tamed, or even an enemy? A situation of constraint due to overpopulation and overproduction? A dislocation of our mentality? Our technological 'progress' that is becoming untraceable and indigestible? Or all of them? In this essay, I reflect on these questions, based on my presentation at the Anthropocene Symposium of the Tenth Theatre Olympiad, inviting readers on a journey through space and time. At the end of the journey, we arrive in Berlin at Frank Raddatz's experimental theatre, the RambaZamba Theater, where the interactive performance *Rivers/Flüße* is on scene.

When I was collecting legends and myths about the Hunzai ancestors during a research trip to northern Pakistan in 2001, a Hunzakuc shaman, Bitā Ibrahim, asked me if I could imagine a river that came from nowhere and flowed nowhere. After a short silence, he added: man is like that; he who does not know where he comes from does not know where he goes. It was no accident that he drew this poetic image from the river. The Hunza River in northern Pakistan is the transport and spiritual artery of the region; whether the area and the people who live there are named after the river or vice versa has faded into obscurity. It is the only river that breaks through the Karakoram Mountains. For more than a thousand years, two rival kingdoms, Hunza and Nager, shared the right and left banks of the river. The river is also the world axis for the inhabitants of the region: not only a point of orientation but also a gateway between the upper and lower worlds. It is often personified, referred to as a separate form of existence, as a being living here alongside humans, respected for its power over man (Csáji 2022).

Rivers give the impression of timelessness, yet they are often associated with metaphors of time. They flow forever, they flow on and on, they flow from the invisible, seemingly infinite to the invisible, flowing seemingly infinite. But in the meantime they come and they go, they bring and they take. Just like the time. They are both constants and variables. They imply an eschatological process par excellence (they have a beginning and an end, even if they are separated by vast distances in space and time). Cognition and conceptualization are a kind of domestication. That's why Adam named the animals – so that he could take symbolic possession of them. Perhaps we search for the reason, the functioning, the secrets of everything so that we can control it, so that we can bend it into a yoke. Rivers with sources and mouths only seem to have a clear beginning and end. The end of the river is apparently more definable than the beginning: it flows into another river, lake, or sea (even a sea of sand). (Although

as the water of the river penetrates into the other river or sea, its water does not dissolve immediately.) Let's not forget, however, that the river's beginning is marked out by man, who chooses from the myriad of watercourses in the catchment area to follow the path of his chosen riverbed to its estuary. We give it a name as if this single thread were a separate entity in its own right. Just as humans are not the same as individuals, neither are rivers. They are part of an endless circulation of water. According to hydrologists, after a single glass of water is poured into a river, its molecules are dispersed throughout the world's rivers within a year.

Knowing the source and mouth of a river was knowledge that could change history, even in the time of Alexander the Great. When he reached India during his eastern campaign, his scholars believed that the Nile originated there. Because it was also a desert, with palm trees and crocodiles, the Indus was thought to be the upper reaches of the Nile. They hoped that if they sailed down the river, they would arrive in Alexandria, established by the emperor. But it didn't. Alexander the Great's army faced the most harrowing journey of its life, back to the known world of Mesopotamia. The source of the Nile has remained a mystery (Lamb 1980). *Caput Nili Querere*. Searching for the source of the Nile – from antiquity, this was said of impossible undertakings. It is no accident that on Bernini's famous sculptural group at the Fountain of the Four Rivers in Rome, the Nile covers its eyes. This was the artist's indication of the eternal mystery of the source of the Nile.

The source of the Blue Nile – and partly also the White Nile – was explored by a Hungarian traveler to Africa, Flora Sass, together with her husband Samuel Baker. Baker stressed that without Flora's tenacious nature, which could pacify hostile tribes, they would surely have perished on the journey. The British aristocrat bought Flora in 1859 from the slave market of Vidin along the Danube, then freed her and married her. Because the parents of the girl of Sekler origin were killed in 1849, during the Hungarian War of Independence. The little girl, then only seven years old, fled to the Ottoman Empire with the Armenian family who adopted her, but there she was captured by human traffickers. She and her husband set off on the great voyage to Africa between 1861 and 1864. Unlike the British explorers, John Hanning Speke and Sir Richard Burton, who set out with similar aims, Flora and her husband took the more dangerous route, following the Nile southwards, approaching the Sahara, then through the Sudd

swamps and jungles to the equator, and realized that the river had not one, but countless sources, mostly large lakes (Baker 1895).

Through several European explorers in the 1860s, the question of the source of the Nile seemed to have an answer – and then more and more. Nowadays, tourists are shown countless springs in Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, and Burundi, which are considered to be the source of the Nile (White Nile). There is a lot of controversy about this competition, but the tourism industry makes a lot of money from those who travel there. The river has become a business – and a resource to be exploited. The river that once supplied Egypt (Herodotus' 'gift of the Nile') with fertile silt has stopped spreading its floodwaters since the construction of the Aswan dam. Thousands upon thousands of excavators and trucks are constantly trying to transport the silt accumulating in Lake Nasser to the farmland. The water from the lake began to be drained into the desert along the Darb el-Arbaín, the former slave-trading caravan route across the Sahara, in huge canals in the gigantic 'New Valley' or, in the name invented for the utopian building of society, the 'Toshka' project, launched in 1997. The canal construction has not been completed in a quarter of a century; it is feared that much of the water will evaporate by the time it can irrigate the crops of the Kharga oasis, and the townspeople who have moved there to escape overpopulation have faced a host of new problems (Hope 2012). With the establishment of the hydroelectric power plant and Lake Nasser, the process of flooding and irrigation for thousands of years has been interrupted, and man seems to be trying to make up for his mistake by taking new missteps.

However, some rivers are even more mysterious than the Nile. In his poem *The Traveller*, Guillaume Apollinaire writes: 'Life is changing, like Euripos'. Euripos is a winding, river-like strait between the Greek peninsula and the island of Euboea. It flows fast, at speeds of up to 12 kilometers per hour, but its flow direction changes at different frequencies, several times a day. Sometimes the water flows from north to south, while at other times from south to north. Sometimes it turns only three times, on average four times, but sometimes five or six times (Eginitis 1929). The narrow strait seems to change its direction and the speed of the water flow as if it were a separate entity. I witnessed this strange phenomenon in 2017. A local fisherman laughed as he told me that to this day, many claim the title as the only one with the right answer. He also told a legend about how Aristotle could not solve the mystery and therefore threw

himself into the water. But is there only one way, can only one right path lead to the truth?

Modern man thinks that he can find out everything, know everything, and have a say in everything. After the Soviet takeover, the Siberian Khanities and Manysies learned quickly that respect for nature and humbleness towards rivers were missing from the ranks of the communist movement. They aimed to control the rivers, conquer them, to completely harvest their fish. The plan economy was to force the Khanty inhabitants of the Kazim River valley to fish off the sacred river stretches and the sacred lakes, which were taboo for fishing, on top of that, their children were forced to a boarding school by the local Soviet leaders. In 1933, an uprising broke out to protect children and rivers, and the Kazimi Republic was proclaimed. It was only in 1934 that the Soviet army was able to defeat them, so our closest linguistic relatives fought the first bloody war of independence against the Soviets (Ajpin 2002). In the 1930s and 1940s, further uprisings broke out among the Nenets and other Siberian peoples. Many gave their lives to protect the rivers in Siberia, but even today, the destruction of nature is still a serious problem: oil extraction causes entire tar rivers to form. The High Dam of the water power station on the River Alta in Norway was built despite the massive protest campaign of the indigenous Sami people. It destroyed not only the biosystem of the river but also the locals' life worlds that were in symbiosis with it (Tamás 2007). Violating nature, like a big slap in the face, can help to recognize that a river is not just a biomass or landmark, but a living entity in its own right.

In antiquity, there was also a river of tar in the underworld, the Styx. Alongside it are several other rivers, such as the still-water Léthe. The dead drank from its waters to forget their former lives and desires before entering the land of Hades.

The Spanish refer to the Lethe River as a living body even today. The river Lima (Limaeas), identified in antiquity with Lethe, or at least similarly regarded as the water of forgetfulness, originates in present-day Spain and flows into the Atlantic Ocean in Portugal. Whoever crosses it will forget their former life, the locals told the Romans. The legions dared not even cross it until the Roman consul Decimus Junius Brutus Callaicus swam across, and listed the names of his terrified soldiers standing on the other side of the river in a neat order (Appianus 2008). Seemingly, he defeated the river. In fact, it is not the river that he defeated, but the quality of the people beyond the River Lethe invented to

protect their land. For me, the bitter lesson of this case is that the search for human truth makes some people winners and others forgotten slaves. This is still remembered in Galicia today.

It seems paradoxical, but the immense thirst for knowledge is accompanied by an increasing tendency to forget. One cannot pour more than a certain amount into a particular vessel; to do so, one must pour out of the vessel something that was in it before, one could say, to take the metaphor of Saint Augustine further.

In the ancient Greek language, 'aletheia', the figure of Lethe, meant 'not forgetting', the truth. Martin Heidegger discusses this at length. One fascinating example is Van Gogh's painting *Shoes*, which reminds us, reveals a life and is true not because it gives, but because it teaches us to see. Aletheia is not a factual truth, but the opposite of concealment, of indifference (Heidegger 1950).

From the ancient Greeks to Scandinavia and Siberia, the river, death, and forgetting are linked within many people's knowledge of the world. It is one of the deep layers of our worldview, permeating our thought patterns: our metaphors, our symbols. (From the phrase 'many waters run down the Danube' to the Hungarian word 'folyóirat' – periodical – ['folyó' also means 'river'] to the Seine running under the Mirabeau Bridge, I could give countless examples.) We should not underestimate these associations. At the dawn of humanization, metaphor, as a new way of thinking, was seen by many as the first step towards art as a form of knowledge specific only to humans (Morriss-Kay 2010, 163). One of the fundamental insights of cognitive semantics, or anthropological linguistics, is that human beings do not think in terms of concepts as philosophers, and we do not use words according to their definitions, but we evoke, update, and recreate language from cognitions. Individual knowledge issues and calls forth experiences, emotions, data, and values beneath the notions. Communication is based on common denominators, born from similar experiences, feelings, and memories that never totally overlap each other (Tolcsvai-Nagy 2011). The role of metaphor is therefore even greater than we have suspected, as the basis of artistic creative thinking. Art is the continuation of creation. It induces feelings and knowledge that bridge differences between ages, religions, and people.

The knowledge of the mysticism of rivers and their role in connecting us to the transcendent is still alive in Europe, despite the fact that it was scientifically discarded long ago. The process of rationalism and dis-enchantment (see Max Weber's *Entzauberung/disenchantment*) that began with the Enlighten-

ment meant that art took on the role of 'guardian'. Rivers guard knowledge that cannot necessarily be understood by rational reason. It is promising that the juxtaposition of art and science has been increasingly questioned in recent decades, indicating that science is also recognizing its own limits and new horizons in metaphors, artistic insights, and vision. In cultural and social anthropology, since the 1980s, attempts have been made to approximate these two important forms of human knowledge of the world (think for example of the works of Clifford Geertz, George Marcus, and James Clifford). Make no mistake, we do not need to unite them, because that would lead to further uniformization, but to respect each other and build on each other. According to the eminent French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, the value of humanity and the key to its survival lies in its diversity (Lévi-Strauss 1952). Ecologists say the same about biodiversity.

The knowledge of different peoples is not built on each other in a system or hierarchy. These knowledges are linked by rivers of feelings and memories, without any attempt to do them justice. The river, as one of man's elemental experiences, makes us receptive to the universal and transcendental dimensions because of its axial nature, which defines our existence. It is no coincidence that in many places, besides the world tree and the world mountain, the world river connects the upper, middle, and lower worlds, or at least the spheres of existence. One common denominator in the thoughts of Béla Hamvas, Sándor Weöres, and Imre Makovecz is that when we lose the link that connects worlds, our receptivity to the transcendent, we jerk left and right like a wheel that has lost its axle.

Despite the constitutional abolition of the caste system, university enrolment quotas for 'former Scheduled Castes' (Dalits) have been enacted in India to legally regulate the fate of this section of society, instead of the customary and religious laws of the past. To offset the immense destruction of the rivers, the Ganges and Jamuna holy rivers were declared legal entities on 20 March 2017 (Paul 2018).

Man seeks to replace the law written in the hearts of us all, to use the apostle Paul's metaphor, with more and more intricate rules. We believe that the law will help us keep the world and the people around us in order. Unfortunately, however, legislation is no substitute for a moral compass. Rights and obligations describe the increasingly dense world around us. During an exam at the University of Law, a professor asked his student: 'What do you see out there?'

and he pointed to the window. 'Cars, houses, people...' replied the student. 'No,' the teacher snorted. 'Legal entities, legal subjects, and the legal relationships between them. Unsatisfactory.' We are trying to replace the harmony of a lost Eden with more and more meticulous rules. In many cases, it is precisely because we are relegating morality to the realm of law that we are trying to fill the void caused by the lack of an internal compass with more and more new rules, yet the backbone of morality cannot be replaced by the fence posts of rules. With ever more complex rules being chiselled to the bone, there is no one in Europe today who is familiar with all the EU, state, municipal, and other legislation that applies to them. Nature-shaping man is creating more and more rules to protect the Earth. It is doubtful to me whether the destruction of nature in the Anthropocene era can be prevented in this way. In my essay, I have sketched a path, using examples that are distant in space and time, showing that the bond with nature has been torn thread by thread; so that the beginning of the Anthropocene cannot be linked to a date. When the forests of Dalmatia were cut down in the Roman Empire, leaving the landscape barren (it still is), or when a similar ecological disaster occurred on Easter Island many hundreds of years ago (before European explorers), these were already childhood diseases of the Anthropocene, symptoms of man's earth-shaping arrogance. This arrogance has been lurking somewhere in man since time immemorial. The arrogance of the Enlightenment pervaded the main line of thought in the 'Western world' without rival until the 1970s (its children were also dictatorships and competing democracies).

It is common to call the postmodern era an era of doubts about grand narratives. Is it possible that we are wrong? We do not ask this question often enough. And the critics of postmodernism point out that doubt does not become knowledge, only deconstruction. The apostle of this deconstruction, Jacques Derrida, has only come so far, to the point of dismantling. But extreme doubt does not get us through the problem, it only helps us to recognize that we are on the wrong track, and this is not the only way. Contemporary mankind faces a yawning spiritual abyss if it does not find other paths. It is becoming increasingly urgent to ask whether we want to continue to educate, control with dams, drive into the yoke with power stations and eviscerate rivers with giant nets. But a 'no' answer is not enough to make the world a better place. We have to ask the question of whether we are ready to learn from nature, from rivers. Are we ready to enter into dialogue with them, as Vasudeva suggests in

Herman Hesse's book *Siddhartha* (Hesse 1988, 105)? To do this, it is not that we must forget our own knowledge, but abandon the exclusive and all-powerful rhetoric of the movementists. We must accept rivers as independent entities, as do most indigenous peoples around the world. By shedding our self-awareness, our panic attacks, and our stubbornness, we can learn about the knowledge and attitudes of others, such as so-called indigenous peoples, and their relationship with nature and the supernatural. Maybe we can learn from them, or even from the rivers.

Nature conservationists' fully justified alarms are often directed at cultural deconstruction, and fail to ask: what happens next? (E.g. if a radical environmentalist is elected President of the USA.) When a pendulum starts to swing backward from its endpoint, it cannot stop in the middle and inevitably swings out in the other direction. There are already signs of this, with the figure of the fanatical appearing more and more often among conservationists. Unfortunately, 'the figure of the fanatic has been a constant throughout world history. Sometimes it puts on one mask or another, blustering, ranting, or inciting, depending on the position of power it feels in. The fanatic can appear in the guise of any political ideology since for the fanatic it is just a mask to hide an insatiable desire to hystericalise and thus control the masses. I've seen bragging, stuffed-up conservatives as much as ultra-liberals or, more recently, climate fanatics. Of course, only by looking back in history is it easy to recognize them: the Jacobin, the communist agitator, the narcissistically superior Nazi. For the trouble is that the inquisitor, the eye-rolling Pharisee, the agitator, is called forth from somewhere within us, awakens something there which then blinds us, makes us clench our fists, and, blurring our common sense, becomes a prisoner of the increasingly impulse-driven gravity of our free will. The fanatical oppositionist pisses everything off, and poisons the sprouting of even the most brilliant initiatives with the tired oil of rancour heaps on extreme epithets and bullies. One would think that by doing so, they discredit themselves, but unfortunately, it is not easy to recognize their identity under the various masks. And the fanatical overbearer is arrogant and patronizing. [...] Fearing exposure, they easily become paranoid and shameless. The fanatic is the evil that dwells within us. May God grant that our empathetic humanity, responsible for one another and empathetic, can wisely and soberly resist the awakening of the fanatics within us' (Csáji 2020, 1). For this wisdom and sobriety, knowledge of nature and indigenous knowledge can be a good guide. I hear a lot nowadays that

children should not be taught lexical knowledge, but to be able to search well on the web. Also, problem-solving skills are more important than knowledge of subjects. These skills are certainly important, but it is to be feared that they could make our children susceptible to the manipulated knowledge cadastre of the web, which weeds out their ability to think differently, to forget the knowledge of their ancestors and of previous ages, turning the world into a massive monoculture. Not all rivers can flow in the same direction, and not everyone can think and feel the same way because that would cause a different kind of damage to nature.

Rules, chiselled to extremes, increasingly limit the possibilities for responsible free-thinking, trying to determine what we can feel and what we cannot. There may come a day when people, building on their sense of doomsday dread, will be forced to accept ever tighter shackles. I have an instinctive fear of when some of the fanatics who are dealing with the concept of the Anthropocene will come out screaming with contorted faces: 'Down with the destroyers of the environment!' That would be scary because they would be half right. However, the great tragedies of mankind are often rooted in half-truths. If our inner compass, our receptivity to transcendence, and our reverence for archaic, indigenous, and other traditional knowledge have become too diminished, we may become susceptible to these fanatics creating, under the banners of the Anthropocene and environmentalism, a new world doomed to statarianism (martial law in the state of siege) and intellectual monoculture. It is increasingly likely that a situation may arise on our planet where the protection of nature will require radical measures. When environmental measures must somehow be imposed on states and social groups that, for lack of financial resources or other reasons, are not willing to do so. Surely there will be political leaders who, acting as saviours of the planet, will feel empowered to segregate, even exterminate, peoples and social groups if they are branded as environmental destroyers, all to the applause of crowds gripped in a state of terror. Will the desire to survive (the instinct to live) or the love of man win out in us? (So many times mankind has faced a similar dilemma!) I pray that this terrible vision of mine does not come to pass.

Faced with the epistemological and moral abyss, it is worth recalling the background to Victor Turner's concept of social drama. In his anthropological fieldwork, especially with the Ndembu tribe, he found that the sense of 'de-glamorization', of being outside of the community, which occurs for a time during social

rituals, ritual actions, and rites of passage, helps to overcome social tensions. Among the many roles of these dramatized rituals, one of the most important is that they can also be perceived as therapy. In order to maintain social balance and peace, we need to experience the 'other' (the disempowered, the excluded) so that our empathy is not dulled. The drama helps to articulate, express, and deal with social problems and tensions and is thus one of the most important cornerstones of social solidarity and cohesion (Turner 1974). Such 'simple solutions' are absent in today's mass societies, or they appear in a mediatized, alienated form, degenerating into mass culture. Let's not forget that there is still an urgent need to preserve, alongside respect for nature and each other, the capacity for empathy and for calm and wise dialogue, before the deconstruction of our aging world turns into another unliveable dystopia. Theatre art could play an important and positive role in this dilemma. Rivers are vocalized and have conversations in Frank Raddatz's new interactive performance (titled *FlüBe/Rivers*) in his experimental theatre in Berlin (RambaZamba Theater) as he explained at the Theatre Olympics' Anthropocene workshop. The audience not only listens to them but "flows" into the dialog so it becomes obvious that they are emotional entities with cognitive skills that live in a long-term but not an eternal period. RambaZamba performances are positive examples of how to "humanize" the world. Our words are shaped (constructed and constantly reconstructed) by thousands of discourses; the frequency of contents can load, transform, or empty them (Foucault 2002). Who knows, would the Anthropocene mean a positive "humanization" of the environment in the future, where we treat it with respect as our partner which is greater than us? In this case, the notion of the Anthropocene could call forth positive emotions, instead of the tragic Age of Great Destruction.

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Tibor Weiner Sennyey

Background, History and Practical Implementation of the Art of Beekeeping

Background

I walk. Every morning, before lunch and at sunset. I walk with my dog between the houses, in the city, on the Kada Hill, in different circles. For me, these walks are like when a Japanese Buddhist monk gets up between zazen meditations and walks around the dojo, the garden, the Fuji. Kada is my Fuji. Anyway, my dog is very happy and is happy that we walk three times a day. It was on one such walk that I noticed a row of beehives in front of a beautiful old house made of stones in the valley of the Sztelin stream, less than ten minutes from my home. Behind the beehives, an elderly gentleman worked with slow, unhurried movements, amid the puffy clouds of smoke from the smoker. He used his netted beekeeper's hat as an awning rather than against the bees, rolled it up and smiled underneath as he smoked his pipe. He did not notice that I was watching. I saw that every move he made was deliberate, conscious. I could see he was happy. I found him very beautiful and serene.

At that time, we had just started our small garden on the hillside, I was an inexperienced beginner in growing peppers and tomatoes, but being a good liberal arts student, I read everything, looked at everything critically, and because I was not very experienced despite growing up in a village, I unfortunately learned from my own mistakes. This is how it works. The garden offered

a similar meditation to the walks. To take a break from reading and writing, to reflect, to contemplate, to calm down and empty out. True, the walks are nice in themselves, but I always had a purpose in the garden. Nice plants, nice overall appearance, good yield. Yet the garden is also a meditation space, with different movements, different meditation. But when I saw the old beekeeper in the valley, I remembered Béla Hamvas' quote: 'The apiary is nothing but the application of revelation.' I have always wondered, what does that mean? How can 'revelation be applied'? I did not know, but I guessed, that the apiary had something to do with real magic, with real religiosity, with sincere and deep faith. The apiary has to do with 'the application of revelation', whatever that means, and perhaps even salvation.

Two years passed and I felt it was time to create my own apiary. I went to the old beekeeper, bought honey from him, talked to him. I got to know him as a nice man. I told him I wanted to learn to be a beekeeper. He told me to think it over. So I set out to think it over, and another year passed, and somehow I still didn't know if I was ready, if I was up to the difficult task. Am I good enough? Am I mature enough, wise enough to set up my own apiary? I admit I was afraid. I was afraid I would fail. That I will be weak, that I will be incompetent, ignorant. I feared that the lives entrusted to me would die in my hands. I was afraid that in the great cycle of life and death, I would have to appear with my whole being, with full consciousness. True, I had been practising this in my garden for five years, but I was still afraid of the responsibility of being a faithful shepherd to the daughters of the sun.

Then fate, the angels or the creator himself took care of that too, although he certainly left time again for me to enjoy the rampage of my own self-made demons. One day, as I was telling my gardener friend, in deep thought, why the apiary was the most important place for Dániel Berzsenyi to write poetry, to meditate, why the apiary was the 'magic eye' through which to view the world, he suddenly stopped me in my story and told me that there were two bee colonies of bees in two beehives that might not survive the winter. 'You should take them home,' he said. I was frightened. I rang up the old beekeeper again – his name is Uncle Misi, by the way – and told him what was going on. He advised me to try it and took me on as a student.

We took the bees, fixed them up, dewormed them, and although we had little time, we strengthened them for the winter. In the meantime he showed me his own apiary, I am very grateful to him, I have learned and am learning a lot

from him. The two rescued bee colonies are, as I write this, buzzing softly in their beehives, waiting for the coming spring. I quietly put my ears to the beehive and listen to them singing and dancing in bunches. I love the solid winter ball of bees. I like bees because they calm me and they are beautiful. I have learned a lot from them over the past year and I feel that they have taken me into their confidence. For some reason, I think I've been noticed, my wife has been noticed. They recognise us. I know many beekeepers think so, and many studies talk about bees not recognising the beekeeper, yet I hear them buzz differently when I approach alone or when I bring strangers near. I don't think I'm the first poet to feel such a strange, mystical connection with bees, and certainly not the first person. After all, the relationship between bees and humans is more ancient and deeper than you might think. Is it possible that the development of human civilisation is partly due to bees? What is certain is that the bee, like the dog, was linked to man very early in history, and their cooperation was sometimes wonderful, sometimes disastrous, at least as far as bees were concerned.

When man saw bees as partners, our relationship was always prosperous; when man robbed and destroyed them, it was disastrous. This must be a very important lesson for the 21st century, but I will come back to that later.

History

There are several rock drawings from prehistoric times showing very early human beekeeping, the most famous of which is the drawing of a bee in the 'Cave of the Spiders' in Valencia, Spain, where a 'honey hunter' is seen on a long rope. The peculiarity of the drawing is that, if you observe it carefully, you can see that the honey hunter's hand seems to be holding an incense burner. Probably as long as 8,000 to 10,000 years ago, similar attempts were made to 'calm' bees. Equally interesting cave paintings from the Stone Age can be found in a wide variety of places, from Zimbabwe to India.

However, the most interesting 'bee' rock drawings are to be found deep in the Sahara, in the Algerian part of the Tassili n'Ajjer labyrinth, which stretches for some five hundred kilometres. The mountain range is made up of sandstone, and erosion has created some very peculiar and unique shapes. The wanderer sees a landscape of space, even now richer in flora and fauna than the surrounding Sahara desert, but thousands of years ago this was a place of Par-

adise. In the rock drawings found in the mountains, we see people bathing in rivers with their rich streams, countless animals now extinct, vast herds, battles fought as senselessly as our present-day struggles between our common ancestors, and above all, life in full bloom. But the brilliant life has vanished beneath the grinding mills of millennia, and a hot desert wind howls through the dead shadows of the dry rocks.

Terence McKenna writes in his book *Food of the Gods*:

'In the Tassili n'Ajjer, rock paintings date from the late Neolithic to as recently as two thousand years ago. Here are the earliest known depictions of shamans with large numbers of grazing cattle. The shamans are dancing with fists full of mushrooms and also have mushrooms sprouting out of their bodies. In one instance they are shown running joyfully, surrounded by the geometric structures of their hallucinations. The pictorial evidence seems incontrovertible' (McKenna 1993, 70).

I have no intention of doubting him, except to note that I find it particularly interesting that what he describes as 'bee-faced mushroom shaman' (McKenna 1993, 73) are, in other – even more determined – ideas, 'astronauts wearing bee suits'. Right, who wants to see what and what into what? The human imagination is quite wonderful because it can be creative and creative as much as it can be destructive and crazy. What we can be sure of, however, are the depictions of mushrooms and bees in human form: anthropomorphisation.

The best researcher of these petroglyphs was a French photographer, Jean-Dominique Lajoux, whose beautiful book (Lajoux 1962), if you look for it and if you are lucky enough to find it, you will see that there is not one but many more 'bee shaman' depictions among the rock drawings. Lajoux points out that a similar 'bee mask' depiction was found sixty kilometres away, and he believes that the now mysterious meaning of the figure could be 'the spirit of the place' or 'a local myth'. We don't know, and McKenna's term 'bee shaman' is an afterthought, because we have no idea whether we are seeing a bee god or a man dressed in a bee costume and mask, during some kind of ritual. But what is very interesting and common to all Stone Age bee and honey hunter rock drawings is what Eva Crane has noted in her excellent and comprehensive book (Crane 2013), namely that unlike many other drawings over the millennia, these bee-related drawings have never been drawn anywhere. Not in Africa, not in

Europe, not in Asia. This can only mean that for thousands of years, generations have known that the representations and information about bees are irreducible, sacred and taboo, inviolable and of key importance.

Today, in the 21st century, we can see how right the prehistoric people were. If the bees and the knowledge and care of them die out, then the whole of humanity is doomed, because these bees are responsible for at least two thirds of the pollination of flowers, so if there are no bees, there is no pollination, no harvest. Without bees, humanity will starve first and then die out.

Therefore, it is incomprehensibly stupid and a crime to use chemicals in agriculture that are responsible for the mass extinction of bees. This must stop immediately, and agriculture, like our villages and towns, must be made bee-friendly! We need to create bee-friendly gardens in our country.

Prehistoric man lived immeasurably closer to nature, not alienated from it, but like us, they have also been affected by climate change. In the rock drawings of the once prosperous and river-riddled Tassili n'Ajjer, we can follow the succession of cultures over thousands of years, the disappearance of swimmers, the disappearance of bee people, the appearance of wanderers on camels replacing endless herds, and the drying up of the whole plateau, the desertification of the surrounding area, and its former inhabitants left, and nobody continued their drawings. Today, only a few Tuareg tribes pass by, the lonely and barely decodable witnesses to the rampant life and high culture of the rock drawings of many millennia ago.

Not far from this magical land, however, beekeeping soon blossomed again in the history of mankind, specifically in the Nile Valley.

The Daughters of the Sun

In ancient Egypt, bees were highly valued from the very beginning, and beekeepers were classified in a special caste – I note that beekeepers in later times were mainly priests, monks, teachers, diligent and educated craftsmen – and in Egypt, even the names of kings were preceded by the hieroglyph of the bee, there are countless depictions, descriptions and drawings throughout the Egyptian millennia of bees, cylindrical laid scythe, beekeepers, honey, wax, as excellently summarised in Gene Kristky's book (Kristky 2015). He is the one who has published the poem that preserved the belief in the divine origin of bees:

'The god Re wept and the tears
from his eyes fell on the ground
and turned into a bee.
The bee made (his honeycomb)
and busied himself
with the flowers of every plant;
and so wax was made
and also honey
out of the tears of Re.'
(Salt papyrus)

According to ancient Egyptian mythology, the god Ra is the creator god, the god of the sun, so bees were associated with creation, the sun and light in the human belief system from very early on.

Not by chance.

In her comprehensive work, the aforementioned Eva Crane writes that two mythical animals have accompanied humanity since the creation stories: one is the snake, the other the bee. Both live in a dark place and come out into the light, both have venom, but while the snake is a good or bad character in different mythologies and religions, bees are absolutely positive characters in all myths, religions and cultures. For example, in ancient Greek mythology, Aristaios, after driving Orpheus' lover Eurydice to a snake bite and thus to her death, repents his sin immensely and sacrifices a bull to the gods. As a sign of Zeus's forgiveness, bees flow from the body of the flaming bull, and Aristaios becomes the first beekeeper and the patron god of ancient beekeepers. It is perhaps worth noting that the bees appear here as a sign of divine forgiveness. But to return to Egypt a little more, traditional Egyptian beekeeping flourished throughout the long millennia of the pharaohs, and even in ancient Egypt there were 'travelling beekeepers' who would migrate up and down the Nile with their beekeeping boats, their makeshift beehives (we would call them primitive hives) and their bees, to match the blossoming of the bees. A separate category was the hundreds of rows and walls of beehives made from the clay of the Nile, where generations of families were beekeepers. Moreover, after the last hieroglyphics were written in Egypt and all the pagan churches were closed by order of the Christian Roman emperors, traditional Egyptian beekeeping was allowed to survive, with its traditions.

It is no wonder that archaeologists in Tel Rehov, Israel, have uncovered very similar clay cylindrical bee apiaries, estimated to be around three thousand years old. It would have been strange if the Jews had not known about bee-keeping and honey, since the Old Testament mentions honey fifty-five times and Israel sixteen times as 'Canaan flowing with milk and honey', and honey cakes are still eaten on many Jewish holidays. The mouths of Jewish children are smeared with butter and honey at birth, perhaps to give them a taste of the nourishing richness and sweetness of life. Honey, honeycomb honey, like a kiss, the bride's lips and consummated love appear in the Song of Songs, but elsewhere in Scripture as wisdom itself. Honey has become a traditional symbol of Jesus in Christianity, according to Catholic lexicons. I think that the blessing of honey, along with milk and water, may have been a continuation of an ancient ritual, such as the way the early Christians offered honey to the baptised at baptism. Later, the 'benedictio lactis et mellis', or blessing of milk and honey, was the ritual of the union of human and divine nature in man through baptism.

It is true that honey has retained its significance on the Christmas table, but unfortunately these old, deeply meaningful rituals have faded from memory.

Honey was also incredibly important in the ancient Roman Empire, as in the fourth hymn of Virgil's *Georgica* and many Latin authors, but also in China, where it was as important throughout the history of the Chinese Empire. The bee venom therapy in apitherapy is particularly interesting, where bees sting people to heal them, is very popular in the tradition of acupuncture, where bees sting points where they would otherwise be stung with needles. I would not be surprised if the two healing traditions had come from the same source thousands of years earlier. Nor would I be surprised if it turned out that Jesus and his disciples, his followers, in addition to the power of faith and love, healed not only with olive and hemp oil, but also with honey.

The healing properties of honey and beekeeping products have been known since ancient times, only the application itself was not all the same.

Apitherapy, which today means a very extensive, varied and diverse range of remedies using beekeeping products, is in fact an ancient tradition that we must partly relearn and partly apply to the people of our time.

Perhaps the first thing to understand is that therapy means applying something continuously, consciously, with a healing, nutritious purpose, and it is effective continuously. But today's man is spoiled by sugar, and it is no coincidence that Terence McKenna writes in his book that

'Of the many new commodities that made their way into Europe during the breakup of the medieval stasis, one in particular emerged as the new spice or drug of choice. This was cane sugar. Sugar had been known for centuries as a rare medicinal substance. The Romans knew that it was derived from a bamboolike grass. But the tropical conditions needed for the cultivation of sugarcane ensured that sugar would be a rare and imported commodity in Europe. Only in the nineteenth century, at the encouragement of Napoleon I, were sugar beets developed as an alternative to cane sugar' (McKenna 1993, 173).

There is much more to this than first meets the eye, e.g. colonialism, slavery, dependency, health destruction, wars, diseases, one by one can be attributed to sugar as a drug. And people still feed and reward their children with sugar!

There are huge differences between sugar and honey, both economically and physiologically. On the one hand, honey cannot be produced in as large quantities as sugar and is therefore more expensive, and on the other hand, honey is absorbed differently (better and more beneficially) than sugar, but of course honey should be consumed in moderation.

Apiculture in Hungary

With the advent of sugar, beekeeping in Europe changed completely, but the final blow came from the oil industry, when paraffin candles and oil lamps appeared. Until then, besides honey, beeswax was one of the beekeepers' most valuable products, and was used to cast candles (and in some places still is). Perhaps not incidentally, beeswax candles, unlike paraffin wax candles and lamps, do not emit harmful substances, have a pleasant light and a delicate fragrance, and are also said by many to purify the air when burnt.

In Europe, by the way, 'honey hunting' has long been the norm, but not in the way many people imagine, moreover, Eva Crane devotes a special chapter to the forgotten Hungarian beekeepers who found bee colonies in the forests of the Carpathian Basin, in the hollows of a large tree, marked the trunks of these trees and returned to them. These honey hunters did not completely rob the bee colonies, they did not destroy them. The Hungarian beekeeping literature is later highlighted by Samuel Tessedik, who opened a beekeeping technical school for children in Szarvas, and it was documented that from 1794 onwards he

practised beekeeping without killing bee colonies, moreover, he planted a bee pasture as a great supporter of the naturalisation of acacia. Of course there are two sides to acacia, good and bad, but today our country has probably the most acacia trees in Europe, so we are also the first in terms of acacia honey. It is precisely because of acacia honey that Hungarians have become accustomed to honey as a liquid, and no longer buy crystallised honey. This is a big mistake, sooner or later all honeys will crystallise, but this does not take away any of their goodness, unlike if they are often overheated. Honey falsification could be a separate chapter, but as I also count food falsification among major crimes, and I am always distracted by the silent killing of silent killers, I will not go into that now, but just point out that honey is best bought from a beekeeper.

The best possible thing, of course, is for someone who is in the middle of their life to get to a apiary. Be the apiary their own, a friend's, a family member's, a master's. Perhaps this is how Béla Hamvas came to the apiary, which he commemorates so beautifully in his writings when he says of Hungary:

'I can always see better that I made the right choice. Rightly, here in this sleeping nation, because it's still worth more to sleep like this than to live like this. This is the people and the land of Berzsenyi and Sándor Kisfaludy, you can destroy it, but you will never be able to wake it up from its golden age. This is the land of the apiary' (Hamvas 2020).

However, before we get too carried away, Hamvas probably said this about only a very small corner of Hungary, about the genius of the Southwest, or and more specifically about its manifestation. Because the great geniuses Hamvas has set up can appear anywhere in the country. It is likely that this Southwest genius, this serene spirit, is evident in every Hungarian apiary.

And what does Hamvas write about this? It is that the Southwest home, the mansion is the most important place for the apiary:

'The most intimate place in a mansion is not the dining room, or the reception, or the library. Something has been created here that you won't see at any other point on earth. This is the apiary. One has to imagine Berzsenyi in the summer, on a radiantly hot day in August, walking across the sparkling courtyard after lunch, with Horace under his arm and some papers on which he had sketched his ode. The apiary is fifty steps from the house.

He opens the door. Bees buzz around the beehives, flying in and out of the window. Apart from the beehives, just a softwood table and chairs, nothing else. It looks out at the blazing garden, then turns to the apiary, the book lying on the table, the paper, the outside world disappearing and sinking away somewhere where the hot summer garden and the beehive are no longer visible. There he sits, motionless in the hustle and bustle, as if something inside him is beginning to noisily knead and spit out everything he has collected in his life: childhood, his parents' house, his loves, what he has learned and seen and read. Something is working in him and turning his life around. The apiary is a place of wakeful sleep (...) And Berzsenyi sits there, this life barely human in this buzzing heat and the solitude of Zeus with time flowing oily slow' (Hamvas 1988).

This is how it is described by László Németh, the first great populariser of Imre Somogyi's Garden Hungary Idea:

'The fairy goddesses of this apiary explain and fairy to him the reform, in the horse race arena of which he would like to see an Elisian course, with the Hungarian Greeks, twined and elevated in celebration. It is the Hungarian Greeks of the Danube valley that he thinks of in his economic study, and even in contrast to Széchenyi's calculating Hungarians he does not drop the "imaginative Hungarianism", which is "a great office for the most beautiful humanity"' (Németh 2014).

But Berzsenyi's apiary took a fatal hit during the twentieth century.

'We reach the edge of the garden by going around the house. Here once stood the apiary that Béla Hamvas calls the most intimate room of the noble mansion, the "place of wakeful sleep" in the South-West. Berzsenyi often came here from the house, which was always cool, dark and smelled of smoke. Right here, behind the house, because only the common people sit outside the gate to watch the street and smoke a pipe. Here he could be far enough away from the chatter of his four children, from the chatter of his wife, but still close enough to be able to take action when he had to. Here, in the apiary, he could close himself in a book or open himself up in a poem or a letter. And if he reached for his wine glass, he could look up

and see the farmer's eyes gazing with satisfaction around the detail of his estate. No one has sat out here for a long time. The current visitor sees the empty, grass-covered nothingness. And that: only a few stray wasps from the nearby orchard visit the place of the once-evolved apiary (...)' (Smidéliusz 2011).

But, fortunately for us, we can still find a single orphan photo of Dániel Berzsenyi's apiary on the wall of the mansion in Nikla. László Kenéz wrote about this:

'Let's go out again, at least find where the apiary was standing. Finally, we have the place based on the old picture. And then, in that place, everything becomes clear as the sun. The apiary was the link between the grove and the mansion. Now that it is gone, the optic through which the spirit of nature could be projected into the rooms of the house is missing. Hence the sharp contrast between the bright garden and the barren interiors. The apiary was an oculus, a magic eye. It is enough, then, to stand in the cold place of the apiary, to look at the one who is really there, instead of the neon-lit, absent Berzsenyi' (Kenéz 2008).

And with the disappearance of Berzsenyi's apiary, the great possibility of a life with bees seemed to disappear. And although János Arany wrote some nice bee poems, Béla Ambrózy takes incredible glory for founding Hungarian beekeeping, Boczonádi, Pál Órösi and many other excellent Hungarian beekeepers could be mentioned, and as I have shown, Béla Hamvas and László Németh knew about the importance of the apiary, but beekeeping remained a kind of a neglected side issue for some very determined Hungarians. And yet the inhabitants of these apiaries do incredibly valuable work, and their products are our real treasures.

If you asked me, I would say: (1) children should be taught beekeeping, to love the daughters of the sun, (2) domestic honey should be promoted as much as possible and (3) the establishment of bee pasture should be encouraged, (4) a centre for apitherapy research should be established and research should be supported, (5) ban the use of pesticides harmful to bees, (6) organise artistic and scientific events around beekeeping and ecological issues, and finally (7) launch a national campaign for 'bee-friendly gardens'.

But of course I am not asked, unfortunately, so there is nothing I can do but write and learn beekeeping quietly myself, to contribute as much as I can, according to my modest means, to the survival of the land of the bee apiaries and its people.

Practical implementation

‘Marcus Aurelius says that by the age of forty, a man with a spark of intellect has lived and knows everything that has happened to men in time before him, and everything that may happen to men in time after him’ (Márai 2006).

This is what Sándor Márai wrote in his *Füves könyv (Herbal Book)* and it is worth pondering for those who are not yet forty, for those who are already over forty, and above all for those who are just turning forty. That’s a bit of what I thought in May 2021, when I started my first year of production with seventeen bee colonies, more as a breeder than a beekeeper.

My wife and I moved to Szentendre, to the Kada peak, in 2015 from the downtown of Budapest, where we lived for seven years, before that I was studying at the University of Szeged. According to my degree, I am a philologist, a ‘literary gentleman’, as Antal Szerb wrote about the like-minded in the *Pendragon legenda (Pendragon Leged)*. Otherwise – although I was born in Eger – I grew up in a village in the Kisalföld (Little Plain), our parents had a big garden, we did a lot of gardening ourselves with my brother, with whom I still have a close and loving relationship, so he helped me a lot in beekeeping, too. Lucky is the one who has at least one good brother, a few good friends and a wise wife, and I consider myself so lucky because I have been given all these things, despite all the difficulties. My mother put me in a food (dairy) secondary school, even though I was already writing poetry at the age of ten, and I had no intention of becoming a gardener or a cheese-maker. Somehow, in the end, in addition to continuous learning, writing, reading, gardening and beekeeping, food production and manufacturing came back into my life.

Originally, I wanted to progress step by step, expanding slowly, and I imagined beekeeping as a kind of additional pastime that I would learn in my old age, but it turned out differently. From the beginning, my connection with bees was not a livelihood, but a particular passion, just like gardening.

Our beehives are twenty-four-frame large beehives for single colony and two bee colonies from Nagyboconád, such beehives are only used in Hungary, in the rest of the world it is more common to use loading beehives. I've read and learned a lot about beekeeping with these, but I'm still learning. I love these beehives because they are like books, with the frames of the honeycombs being the pages of the books in which we write our golden poems together with the bees, which is honey itself. So, I have a typical, small, standing Hungarian apiary on the outskirts of Szentendre. We were also very interested in new technologies, for example, we built a honeycomb cabinet with lockable vents and a small ozone generator, which performed surprisingly well. For me, for example, the solar wax melter I inherited from our brother Józsi works very well, with the addition that I have mounted wheels on it, so I can set it on the terrace facing the sun, and it melts the used honeycomb very nicely in summer. Anyway, I find it typical of beekeeping that there is always something to be solved or fixed. Perhaps I am not offending either the more professional or the more self-aware beekeepers when I write that beekeeping for me is often like an 'adult Lego'. A skilled beekeeper can be quite ingenious when it comes to solving a previously unknown problem.

In my first productive year I was constantly struggling with the health of my bees, trying to develop a sustainable mite protocol, but I still need to improve. In the end, we had a very good honey harvest, even though the two-month drought at the end of the summer and the resulting lack of pollen did give us a challenge, climate change, human activity, deforestation, disappearance of bee pastures and the use of chemicals, invasive pests are all affecting bees and making them increasingly difficult to keep alive. I could also say that bees are the most sensitive 'litmus paper' of environmental change, directly seeing on them how the planet is being destroyed.

I try to practice ethical beekeeping, which also means that I always leave honey for the bees (yes, acacia too), I never fully empty the beehive, and the primary concern is the well-being of the colony, so the real success is not a large amount of honey, but healthy bees. In addition to honey, we also collect pollen, make propolis solution, and use the wax extracted with the solar wax melter to make Christmas candles with my wife, Virág, who is my partner in this. For us, beekeeping is therefore not a question of making a living just yet, but an opportunity to develop, to learn and to 'rethink our relationship with nature'.

In the meantime, the art of beekeeping became a book, and when I finished it – in October 2023 – I had already overwintered with twenty-six colonies, and built – also thanks to my friends – a small beehive house, or ‘beehive airy’ house as they say elsewhere, as a sort of laboratory, and started to study the healing power of bees: apitherapy. I always look forward with excitement to spring.

I read and researched a lot about bees, not only as a beekeeper, but also as a philologist and poet. I have written *A méhészet művészete* (The Art of Beekeeping), about the important, fascinating and interesting role that bees have played in the cultural history, literature and art of mankind from the beginning to the present day, and the strange interaction that has developed between bees and humans. For two years my essays were published in the journal *Méhészet* (Beekeeping), and finally these essays have been collected in one volume. A lot of things were left out of the volume, such as a more detailed explanation of apitherapy, or a description of the possibilities of chemical-free practical beekeeping, but these would have already stretched the already very directional ‘art of beekeeping’.

I go out to the bees when my family members die and tell them what has happened, just like the American poet John Greenleaf Whittier, who wrote a beautiful poem about Kossuth, and I can only hope that the bees will relieve my immense sadness more than poor Sylvia Plath, who took up beekeeping before her suicide and wrote a series of poems about bees that are movingly beautiful. But I have a different relationship with these bees, I sit among them and I can hear them flying over fences and barriers, they don’t distinguish between mine and yours, they know that the whole landscape, the whole Earth, every flower belongs to them and is beautiful to them. They knew this millions of years ago, when their ancestors decided to go vegan and chose flowers over meat, changing the face and destiny of an entire planet. If we decided to stop eating meat, wouldn’t the world change? Could we save ourselves from extinction if we took the protection of bees seriously?

I ask this in the apiary, so I could ask it in eternity, and the others could just shrug it off, come on, these are rhetorical questions.

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Kathrin Röggl

Acting in the Age of Multiple Crises? Acting in the Age of Ecocide? Acting on Stage?

If one turns as a writer to the central question of multiple ecological crises, the question of action becomes a key question. Why don't we act? Who is acting? What is the action? There is a noticeable amount of symbolic politics, but progress is being made in the legal field and the legal system is changing. One of my papers below deals with rivers becoming legal entities, and this is a fundamental challenge to logic. The idea of writing my play *The Water* (original German title *Das Wasser*) was created at the request of scientists, and included many conversations with experts in action. What are we doing? Why does this huge braking effect occur, and what does it have to do with generational onflict? There are many questions that need to be answered. The second part of my two articles published below (Dear River, original German title *Liebes Wasser*) emphasizes that law itself is part of economic logic, even if it is supposed to be above it. At least as applied law.

Writing *The Water*

For some time now, water has been a constant topic in the media. Too little, too much, enormous damage. The flood of the century alternates with the drought of the century, words like drought stress find their way into our everyday vocabulary. The question of how long it will take to fill the former lignite areas in Upper Lusatia that are to be renaturalised (the Spree has to flow into it for 60 years) stands next to reports of fish dying in the Oder, next to images of caked soil and burning forests, flooded areas in Pakistan and Italy, sometimes obviously catastrophic scenarios, sometimes only indirectly, the reference to crop failures etc.

These are only rare moments when one receives an idealistic commission for a play (beyond contractual arrangements). However, the fact that it was necessary to prompt me on this set of issues a few years ago (circa 2019) also speaks volumes about me. To me, the context seemed too abstract, too vast, too large to be grasped in literary terms, in addition laden with myths, the material unmanageable. It was the "Theatre of the Anthropocene", namely Antje Boetius, earth system researcher and director of the Alfred Wegener Institute in Bremerhaven, known for the polar star expeditions, and the director and author Frank Raddatz, who really sought me out and asked me to comment theatrically on this world tragedy. Mentioning the facts and forecasts had too little effect; what was needed was an emotional connection, a different echo in the public. An idealistic mission, but one that impressed me very much. The Leibnitz Prize winner Antje Boetius has been engaged for many years on various levels to create a public sphere, a conversation between the arts and science to create pressure, a consciousness that is able to close the gap between knowledge and action, Frank Raddatz has moved in the direction of Greek tragedy through the theoretical references of Michel Serres and Bruno Latour in numerous projects and conversations. And now me. One always writes at one's time, that is, at the moment of the present, even if something emerges from it that passes through the ages. My moment was when in Germany the damage caused by the massive ecological crises could no longer be denied. Grey forests, the flood in the Rhineland, which I witnessed at first hand (I live in Cologne), failing harvests, burning forests. And then we, as a society, with our supposed inaction or negligence.

This posed itself as the main question in 2021: Why are we not acting? (And who is we?) What is holding us back? Is it the lobbyists of the automobile com-

panies, the energy companies, is it the politicians: in, who sail through their terms in office on a realocourse, always in fear of the next election, is it the bureaucracies that put obstacles in our way via the environmental agencies land use plans and water directives, or municipalities that prevent microplastic filters in sewage treatment plants for budgetary reasons, or is it ourselves, how we do not get into action, have developed too little flight shame and plastic shame, want to be too mobile for the limits of our planet that resilience researcher Johan Rockström has described so clearly.

In Germany, 2021 is all about water. To give it away straight away: Water is not a resource, water is a force, it is a primal element, a component of our life, to call it a resource is pretty crazy, it is in a constant cycle. If water disappears from a region, life disappears, we know that at least from Nasa, which is looking around on Mars for a planet b that doesn't exist. In my first conversations with actors from Saxony, I learned that the whole of eastern Germany is under drought stress. There is a shortage of 800 litres per square metre per year. But sometimes in heavy rain regions the 800l fall in one day. Which doesn't really help the soil either, because it only runs off and doesn't penetrate deep into the caked soil. Drought stress leads to soil erosion, the extinction of an ecological system, failed harvests and soil salinisation. Nitrate pollution is a major problem anyway.

One of the supporting conflicts of the play is also the generation conflict, i.e. a conflict based on the question of who lives when. Time may not be a resource either, but never before has it made such a difference in such a short period of time who was born when. I can be accused of being quite anthropocentric in that respect. I think my literature out of social conflicts, out of an in-betweenness, even if I find these are increasingly mediated through other non-human actors. My central question, however, is about human agency. In my research (because as an author I want to learn to understand something) I set out to encounter models of action: What do people do who want to do better? Who want to change something, who have concepts and plans and social structures in which they make a difference. So away from the bourgeois shock theatre, towards a theatre that wants to introduce something. I spoke with numerous groups: the founder and staff of the Dresden Environmental Centre, various representatives of the Environmental Office, various representatives of TUUWI, civic organisations, and the local government: I spoke with numerous groups: the founder and staff of the environmental centre in Dresden, various speakers from the envi-

ronmental office, various representatives of TUUWI, cradle to cradle, Fridays for future and Ende Gelände, an actor of the Week of Good Living in Dresden, a representative of the church model community, a hydrogen producer, Germanwatch, Greenpeace, the participants of a sustainability group in the Saxon state theatre, an irrigation representative of a large German city, a Demeter farmer in the Rhineland, a representative of the Green League and operator of a meadow orchard near Dresden, an antigentrification activist, and others.

Strangely enough, although they all told me about action, they told me at least as much, and perhaps mostly, about non-action. Again and again they complained about the lack of self-efficacy, and it may be that I have fallen into the maelstrom of a popular pessimistic narrative, but I have to say that I would not have expected it from the actors. The only ones who were quite optimistic and unapologetically energetic about the future were the lawyers and PR representatives of Greenpeace and Germanwatch. They had just, at the end of April 2021, won the "climate lawsuit" at the Federal Constitutional Court – the ruling was about the freedom of future generations threatened by the German federal government's inaction, with the stipulation that they should finally do things in line with the European climate goals. What has happened since then? Since then, we have seen the continued pandemic and the Ukraine war, which suddenly seems to set completely different standards and even brings coal-fired power generation (and the continued operation of nuclear power plants) back into play. A mockery for activists. After all, in both crisis situations, large sums of money and restrictive measures were put in place, while they were absent in the climate sector. The anger, not only of the younger generation, is understandable in this respect. So what is holding us back? Why are we not ready to take responsibility? The useless we again?

The story of Jonah and the whale is one of the best known from the Bible; it is often told in primary school religion classes because of its imagery, drasticness and eeriness, and in the play it serves as a foil and reference narrative that takes us out of our fixation on the present. Basically, the whole climate crisis story is contained in it. We learn about storms, floods and droughts in turn. It is about Jonah's willingness to carry God's message to Nineveh, i.e. the question: Do I take responsibility for a city society that is not even my own (!) And about recommendations for action. To outline it briefly in his own words: Jonah first refuses, runs away on a ship, angers God who sends the storm, then knowingly sacrifices himself for it and goes overboard so that the ship's crew can be saved.

God sends the whale to save Jonah and swallows him. An animal saves man, man sits in the animal (what a wondrous image!), there is suddenly animal-inside and animal-outside, that is Jonah's whole world. He comes ashore, goes to Nineveh and warns. The people do as God says (go in sackcloth and ashes, not to pasture etc) and are spared. Jonah sits outside his house and ends up angry that nothing he prophesied comes to pass. He has prevented something, and you can't see that now because it hasn't come to pass. God lets a tree wither in his garden, Jonah weeps for the tree, and God says: "You weep for your tree, but you deny me the right to preserve my creation. Something like that. The whale has become for me the image of a temporary salvation, but one that already creates an inside and an outside. So: who is temporarily saved and who is not, who has the option at all and who remains outside? The flesh becomes a wall of time. (A time that not only goes forwards and backwards, as we are used to, but contains tipping points, irreversibilities, something I absurdly cannot even think of). As I said, the generational conflict is the conflict that is emerging more and more. It is very tempting in this to exploit it and put all the work of resistance on the next generation. They reach out to us emotionally, because it is "our children", they say, i.e. bourgeois children who are standing up. (In the meantime, it is no longer necessarily the bourgeois children, but completely different actors, but that is the public image). Symbolically, we delegate climate protest to the youth, which also disempowers it for the time being.

A few years ago, I visited a high school in L.A., about 10 km from the sea, which is the "star" in this city, the tourist magnet next to Hollywood. And there I met children who had never seen the sea because their parents had no car or no time to take them there or simply wanted to protect them because it is more dangerous for African-American children to move around the city than for those who are not so racialised. That shocked me. The idea of a child who has not seen the sea, and now the sea is coming to him because of rising sea levels, engaged me. And of course, it doesn't come to him in its tourist-enjoyable form, but as a monster. On a global scale, (and actually this is the necessary perspective) the people who are excluded from mobility and consumption are the first to feel the effects of the climate crises. Life under the conditions of massive ecological crises is one in which survival and death are decided. From us.

Cologne, at the Stillnottheendof time 2023

Dear River,

it's been quite a while since we've heard from each other, and I also understand that you want to remain anonymous, and yet the whole affair is somewhat convoluted. With the post boxes, the proxies, the lawyers and your advocates. I look out of the window every day and think, is that you? Because there is definitely something flowing outside my office window, it's not like I would keep quiet about it. But in fact I would like to meet you one day. Really, for real. At the moment I meet you more in the courtroom, in the court hearings that we have to hold because of you. I wouldn't have thought that you would become a legal person just like that, you could have told me that before. Suddenly I'm threatening you, they say. Me and my management. Along with other management and CEOs. We are destroying your ecosystem, you or your legal representatives claim. I think that's a little unfair. Have you ever thought about what you are destroying? Have you ever thought in terms of jobs? What are the people in this region supposed to live on? They have an ecosystem too, not just you.

You know, I don't really have time to write to you because you make so much work for me. Because you are so much in our way. So now, suddenly, there's no getting around you. We thought you were working with us, that is, you were pulling together with us, but now you have betrayed us like this. I thought you would generate electricity together with us, get renaturation projects going that we had planned, create flourishing landscapes, and now this. And I can tell you one thing: flourishing landscapes need money, you must have heard that already. You know that, don't you? Or do you really believe that you are above all economic issues? No, not at all. In the end, that's all that's at stake in the court either.

Of course I know your name, but I'm certainly not going to blurt it out like that, certainly not in public, and to that extent I'm already practising in this letter. So that you get even more popularity and attract even more public opinion to your side. Look, this is our river, you want people to say that it has its own ecosystem and a right to an ecosystem. Look, this is our environment! So my environment is relative. Even if I were to divert you, I would have an

environment, even if we were to concrete you over, I would have an environment. In Prishtina they did it with all the rivers. And not only there, but also here, yes, all over the world there are these vanished rivers, built over, covered over, straightened. The Emscher, yes, we can also talk about the Emscher, its so-called tributary, but I doubt that you really want to.

Of course, no one here is talking about filling it with concrete, that wouldn't serve anyone here, but it would have been good if we could have built this or that dam. Alternative energies. Everyone talks about it, but when it comes to implementation, the river is the first to speak against it. Just not on my doorstep, or was it the backyard? What would be the backyard of a river? That's something to think about, don't you think? They are the biggest enemy of the environmentally conscious right now. Have you ever thought about that? We think of nothing else but the preservation of this wonderful earth and you, what do you actually think? You think only of your immediate ecosystem.

And then the thing with the chemical factory – seriously! What chemical factory? Those are rumours. A combined heat and power plant, that's more like it. But you, you know exactly what you're doing when you come around the corner with a chemical plant. You know exactly what your strategies are. Whether we plan a chemical plant is not a foregone conclusion. And besides, how are you going to pay for your nature reserve?

You river you! I have to tell you, you have no idea what you are doing now. Even with the means you're fighting with. Just stepping over the banks. Just going into the city. Or to raise a roll of water under which you bury everything. Eight metres, that's what one of their little tributaries did. You should get those under control too, by the way. Your tributaries, you water catchment area, you! But no, what do you do? Produce backwater when it doesn't suit you. Yes, you can say, are you still a river at all, or are you already a single backwater? You see, the sea doesn't want to take your water any more either. They have no more customers, and what do you do as a producer? Downsizing! But you, you are not draining properly at all, you are deliberately holding back the water. I guess now you want to show us who you are. A show of force. Now there is water everywhere. So all I see is water, as if they wanted to say: We can't get around you any more. Well, I am. My technical intuition has gotten me out of every impossible situation. You know, I'm not Noah, I'm more.

You can fill our cellars as much as you want, use our roads as much as you want, take our vehicles with you. No matter how much you flood the fields and think that impresses me. Next time I will be faster. You will see.

But now, now I suppose you're desperate to show that everything counts as a river basin. That's your business idea. Don't make me laugh, you are now actually taking all tributaries and tributaries into your liability just to cripple the whole region. That's the way it's always been. Forming alliances. Don't get me wrong, but I don't think this is an effective strategy. For one thing, where do we stop? For another, you no longer control your alliances, you take them over! Not the other way around!

What did you say the other day? You don't care? You're assuming an average evaporation rate of my thoughts? You think I have a flow rate too? No, nothing flows out of me, I can tell you, absolutely nothing, and certainly nothing. I am the absolute lack of flow. You have brought me this far, with me everything stands still, I can assure you of that.

With superfluous regards

Your

Noah 2 Zero

Sabira Ståhlberg

AnthropoSun Poetry Wanderung¹

An troppo sin? Ant trop scene?
Anthropocene: Human. Nature. Relationen. Dialog.
Terre. Air. Wasser. Fire. Void.

KJourney into langues con translations.
Polyglot poetical Wanderungen
by a scholar and writer, ethnobiologist and
environmentalist.

From walks on a beach littered with residue of human activities to disappearing biodiversity in deserts, this artistic contribution containing polyglot poetry in multiple languages decodes and deconstructs the Anthropocene both in time and space: historical aspects are contrasted with the rebellion of youth against the prevailing systems; the macrocosm of oceans is juxtaposed with the miniature world of insects; and the multi-layered relationship between humans and Nature is viewed locally, globally and glocally. By expressing herself in several dozens of languages besides English, the writer, who is also an ethnobiologist scholar and environmentalist, adds thought-provoking, expressive and inspirational linguistic dimensions to the various prose reflections. Several poetic forms are employed in the multilingual poems, from folk songs to haiku, in order to instigate discussions about political, ecological, economic, social and individual issues related to the Anthropocene and human attitudes towards Nature.

¹ The cited multilingual and English language poems are both from Sabira Ståhlberg's 2021 poetry volume *Wan Sun* (Helsinki: Bokpil).

Poem I

Einleitanzung

Vind on tyhjä strand
tanssii valcer with clouds.
Шоу бағлап бiler.

Valurile roll,
跳舞 tango med Sandkörner.
Jag svänger om.

Introductanceion

Wind on empty beach
waltzing with clouds.
The show can start.

Waves roll,
dancing tango with sand grains.
I turn around.*

*or: I take a dance turn.

*

Beach. Strand. Ranta. Shore. Sure. Coast. Litoral. Tengerpart. We are created by the oceans. Our ancestors crawled up on land, but we never left the water. All around us is Wasser. Su. Víz is inside us. Vesi is a life liv necessity.

*

I am a polyglot writer Schriftsteller författare kirjailija. I think and dream and talk and listen and write in many dozens of languages, and they are all aktiv all the

time inside and outside me. Languages are a life necessity to me. They flow like water in a river, joessa, in the sea, meressä. Waves of languages, nyelvek, kieliä, språk, Sprachen, roll onto the seashore and roll out again, constantly. Constantemente.

Languages are the heartbeat and wavebeat of my heart, of my brain, of my ocean. I mix words and structures and sounds and scripts and meanings. I swim in språk. I breathe diller. Even when I write in apparently one language, idioma, in reality I denke and create and write in multiple languages.

*

The poems I write are like sea water. You can measure its temperature or the salinity, Salzgehalt. You can measure the amount of languages or the length and width of the words and meanings. Yet like with sea water tengervíz, you must let yourself float, trusting that you will not sink sjunka and drown hukkuva, and the poems a versek will carry you.

But maar: we humans are careless with water eau, our primary element, our Mother, Äni, Äiti, Anya. We throw it away. We dry up the already desiccated lands and turn them into wastelands. We fill the rivers and folyók and lakes and Seen and oceans and Weltmeere with chemicals and rubbish. We live as if water will be there always, just like Mama is there for us, forever, ikuisesti, örökre, ewig, siempre.

*

Come with me for a walk on the beach.

We have walked there many times before, but now we will monitor it. Choose a strip of a hundred sata stotinu metres. Take a list and a pencil. Count and collect any marine litter of our era the PlasticoFantasticoPartycene. We are already breathing, eating and drinking plastic particles. We carry hundreds of grammes of plastic particles in our bodies.

One day, when humans have returned back to deniz, the sea, these memorabilia of us two-legged thoughtless predators rovdyr will still be floating in the water, acqua, agua, and flowing through hava, the air.

There is a huge sack we will fill now with discarded souvenirs of humanity.

Poem II

Walk the Line

mark starting point. Punkt.
forest / beach / sea nothing keeps still
tricolour flag / no nation / no frontiers / no passports
washing line with dripping shirts never drying
dunes / yellow flower eyes / heavy seagulls flapping
wind winds lost languages gull swallows plastic bag
kowtowing bushes / hopping sand / joking waves
walking the rope / sinking feet / ship or boat on horizon?
nothing keeps within boundaries
not even the litter

count countless
cigarette butts / ketchup bottles / scattered memories
cleaning sticks with ear wax long diluted
beer / water / juice cans / metal tins / green glass fragments
plastic plastic plastic plastic plastic plastic plastic plastic
hard / soft / recyclable / don't know what to do with it
bottle caps / bottle caps / bottle caps and more bottle caps
red / blue / green / yellow / nondescript bags
gather collect pick up put in big black plastic sacks
marine / shelf / surface / beach litter / language litter
land-based and sea-based and all of it human-based
sea shells / sea weed / dead fish / dead gull / dead jellyfish
did they have our leftovers for lunch?

They say we live in the Anthropocene. They say humans människor have a huge impact on this planet, on the geology, ecosystems, biodiversity, species extinction and the climate. They say human menneskelig civilisation has caused the present crisis, the increasing number of environmental catastrophes. They say that humans mennirnir have become like hungry locusts, eating everything in sight, and that humanity menneskehet has grown too voracious and too vast and too destructive. What do you think? Do you feel guilty, syyllinen?



When did Anthropocene start? Nobody nessuno knows. Keine Ahnung. When does it end? When humanity emberiség is gone, weg. Because they say Anthropocene is the time of the humans, of the human influence on the planet.

Here is a dilemma. We humans have forgotten that we are a species, too. We humans think that we are Civilised Cywilizowany Civilisé and therefore know how to rule the world värld Welt świat világ. We humans are shocked chockade järktytynyt when we realise that there are forces we cannot control.



We humans... we think we are at the top of the food chain and crude brain, because we have Zivilisation Sivilisaatio. Because we have Language Gjuha. Because we walk on two dva twee legs. Because we... there are lots of reasons, syitä, if you want to find them.

What if we turned our civilised brains around and asked: What if we are not the smartest and most beautiful?



I love Nature, you say. I love Természet. There is only love Liebe amore ljubav in the speech of humanity when we talk about Nature, our beloved Gaia Γαία, our planeetta, this pear-shaped sphere which keeps our feet glued to its surface, the ground.

And yet you cry out and I scream and everybody starts howling when Natur invades our sterile chemically cleaned homes. Because luonto, naturen, is already far from us urbanised turbonised carbonised burdenised organised organisms.

*We have lost our connections and our bearings, our Orientierung.
We know more today about nature in theory, from TV, internet, books.
What about reality?*

Poem III

μικρο hirviöt

Kırkayak
hidden in cauliflower:
bevis: ilman kemiaa

Hänger från en tråd,
ignora la gravedad:
erste ögla till Netz.

Vlhy slaan a pierre.
Octo ben fuggono быстрее
än meine két.

Liv im Wald:
huge karvainen ben invade walls
Ich must plugga hålen

Hämähäkkikö
goss myrkkyänsä, stinging?
Pahkluu turpoaa.

Vem каза minä must
zauvjek amare taiao?
Et μικρο monsters?

Micro Monsters

A millipede
hidden in cauliflower
proof: no chemicals

Hanging from a thread
ignoring gravitation:
first loop for a net.

Waves whip up on stone.
Eight legs flee much faster
than my only two.

Life in the forest:
huge hairy legs invade walls
I must plug the holes.

Was it the spider
who poured its poison, stinging?
Ankle is swelling.

Who said I must
always love Nature?
And micro monsters?

*

Do we really love our planet planeta planeetta планета and nature natyra priroda природа? Are they ours or are we just one of the inhabitants? Are we simply greedy squatters, Hausbesetzer, using up resources far beyond our needs? What are our needs, actually насправді, for survival, or individual, economic економске, social социални, political политический, and others?

There are innumerable needs within each of us inhabitants on this Planet:

You want a new car auto кола and I want to fly away for a holiday ваканция.

You want to eat meat meco carn every day and I want new clothes to show off to others.

You want to... I want to... You want to... I want to... Vols... Vull... Végtelen. Endless. Endlos. Sonsuz.

*

You ask what love for nature has to do with our needs. You say we destroy nature because humanity is all bad, destructive, evil, paha, gonosz, böse, mal.

Is it really? Or are we just blind, sokeita, pimedad, living in illusions and allusions and confusions and delusions, and without conclusions or solutions or fusions? Is humanity in fact the prisoner of its own wants and needs?

Poem IV

Karp at ter/re

Golden felder-ihre sehr unten-in
berges herz-sein-in
schwarzig hallen-in endohne nacht
schwer füße steine-auf treten
pferde streifen, herum, herum

Erdes oben-auf
berges nieren-seine
grün wasser-in gold licht
ente füße-ihre paddeln, entfernen
pferde auf ab gehen

Heimlich pfad-auf weit
berges darm-sein-in
grau sand-auf weiße kruste
hund füße-sein vorsichtig schreiten
pferde blind werden, ja blind

Welt-von weit
 berges lungen-seine-in
 tief schwarz boden-mit see
 gesunde füße-seine treppen-auf springen
 schuhe salzig, sehr salzig werden

Carp Horse Sweat / Earth

Far below the golden fields
 in the heart of the mountain
 eternal night in dark halls
 heavy feet tread on stones
 horses go around, around

Far above on the earth
 lie kidneys of the mountain
 golden light in green water
 ducky feet paddle away
 horses go up and down

Far along the secret path
 in intestines of the mountain
 white crust on grey sand
 doggy feet step gingerly
 horses go blind, yes blind

Far back from the world
 in the lungs of the mountain
 deep lake with black floor
 healthy feet jump on stairs
 shoes get salty, so salty

*

Salt... Salt of the Earth. Salt and water. Tuz. Só. Sol. Salz. Water and salt. Our bodies need salt. But too much suolaa and too much saltpetre, too much Politik and too much nuclear bomb testing, too much displacement and too much of humanity – it becomes too much, zu viel, troppo, liikaa.

Poem V

Nur

توگە	魔鬼	沙	
تۆم	核弹		
چوپان	湖底	星星	
balıq qamış	بۆرە	toshqan қоян түлкө	توغۇز يولwas
سارلىق	晚了!		
ھازىر ئۇلار:	忍受 生存 坚持.	谁在乎?	
تار	مۇز		
derya	田田田田田 ...		
qamış üy satma	ييمەك (yimek)		
1. egej-balıq	2. it-balıq		
köt			
	何处?	你跟随湖.	
فەرۇز	Yaz. Қаpa. böriler topi:	射它	
	一无所有.	只有谎言.	
ھازىر ئۇلار:	一切都好		
ھايات	hayat	ھаят	
	不中用	无效的	一文不值
	水分散	停止更改	
	灌溉!	破坏湖!	
ھېچنېمە؛ يوق			
Öy.	远.		
ھازىر ئۇلار:	文明	变得复杂	吃鱼
	卧虎	bolmisa	
	藏龙 穿着破布.		Yol bolsun!

Only

Camels are gone. Traces wiped away by devils, roaring sand.
 Brilliant fungi shatter skies, raining ions, shake dunes awake.
 Epilated bottom scintillates, pondering star competitors.
 Turn back, you fish reed wolf hare fox boar tiger!
 Even the swamp is better, but it is too late!

Now they say: you can endure survive subsist persist
 and not go extinct (honestly, who cares about you?).
 Impossible to halt mountain caps from melting and fading,
 and rivers from tapering off to fields that should be less.
 Reed huts floors roofs, cooked shoots, bury the dead in reed.

First left the marinka and scaly osman, then empty green
 shallows, slimy banks, orphaned lake wandering –
 you never knew where, but you followed it.
 Turquoise summer day mirror blackens, wolves are shot
 there never was much, but now nothing is left except lies.

Now they say: nothing alarming or treacherous, but we
 had to cut down your reed forest, your livelihood,
 because it was useless unproductive ineffective worthless.
 We must harness digressing waters, curb peregrination, or
 even better solution: feed irrigation, scorch and raze lake bed.

Nothing and nobody can sleep, hide, prowl.
 Decamp up your sticks, get to live in real house far away.
 Now they say: get civilized complicated, no more fish-eating.
 Crouching tiger will never return and
 dragon is hidden in desert rags.

May there be a way!

*

*Stop! Stop! Cmon!
Why cannot we give it up?
Stop! Stop! Prestati!
Why cannot we be satisfied with less?
Stop! Stop! Stoppa!
Why cannot we?*

Поem VI

Коменсалити

ю ар нотин бът а грейт ейп
– мей аур казинс нот би инсълтид! –
*по-малко от деветдесет и осем процента от гените
те разделят от мечтите ти да бъдещ извънземен
на тази планета
или од владееньето со светот
како крал на създавањето
можда си припитомио ватру да испечете одреске
и напуните стомак протеинима
и разработал оружје для унищожения любых угроз
усё роўна вы бясшэрсныя бясстрашныя нядбайныя
хоць вы ўжо не ясце шмат галінак
достармен кездескен кездегі сіздің мейірімділік сіз
қартайған кезде ескі достарыңызға қамқор боласыз
сиз агрессивдүү болуп, өзүңүзгө ишенимсиз сезесиз
бейкапар оюн жана жаштыкка болгон шалаакылык
дряпанна спина дряпають вам спину
включаючи виключаючи боротьба створення зв'язку
туганнарын борын буенча бел
социаль иерархия потенциал таныклык
йор мейтин дейтин ийтин хебитс
ивен йор фейкин шейкин мейкин ит ол ап
всички те предават истинския ти характер
– не си измислил биология–
зур маймыл ут белән уйнарга гына өйрәнде*

Commensality

you are nothing but a great ape
 – may our cousins not be insulted! –
 less than ninety-eight percent of genes divide you
 from your dreams of being an alien on this planet
 or ruling the world as the king of creation
 maybe you have tamed the fire
 to grill the steaks and
 fill the stomach with protein
 and developed weapons to kill any threats in sight
 still you are hairless fearless careless
 although you don't eat much twigs anymore
 your kindness when meeting friends
 keeping old buddies when you age
 aggression when feeling insecure
 reckless play and youthful thoughtlessness
 scratching backs getting groomed
 including excluding fighting bonding
 recognising your relatives by the nose
 social hierarchy potential credential
 your mating dating eating habits
 even your faking shaking making it all up
 they all betray your real character
 – you did not invent biology –
 a great ape just learned to play with fire

*

Humanity has created and invented so many things, you say. Look at what we have done! you say. Where are our cousins, serkut, neven, our hair-covered sisters, Schwestern, and brothers, braća? you ask. They are still in the jungle, dzsungel, džungla, cracking nuts and gathering fruits and shoots and roots without boots and suits.

But: would we be happier if we had remained in this primordial primateordial state?

We enjoy the thought of being happy, glücklich, lyckliga, onnellisia, felici önnelikud.

We enjoy being dizzy and fizzy and busy.

We enjoy adrenalin and being hooked on dopamin.

And we enjoy the paradox paradoja paradosso of being happy – and feeling onneton önnatud unhappy for being happy.

Poem VII

Seinäkirjoitus

Den här världen är helt sökö!

16 å rebell, väärä mesta i de här superfiina gänget
kravatt hänger o de där typerna alltså tuppar tävlar huomiosta
pälättää ei lyssna: så va tycker de här tjära unga folket?

Värdsfred värds alltså fatta världens framtid värre värde tjärlek
vassomhålst värd nämen vicken värd pureskellaan?

Hei vart e aksjön, framtidens förändrax?

Jetttestura munnarr åck gull tiedior skramla, för små hender
alri röra riktig vär ellea ärlig honest jobb

Värden e din förfeder va heter de arv farsans rettihet

Du ska ändra på värden. Schunger de grå hår

Joo joo, no balls, vi fattar,

men vafför reparera du int den här globen
före du gett den ti mej?

Nu e gator fulla me andra 16 som underskriven alltså jag
de vill samma såm ja en gång sku ha: fixa rubbe för helvete
låt mig vex up i lycklit paradiis sagoland o serva mej
På riktigt, ja försöker få jorden på fötter o framtiden me, bäst ja
kan Å jag frågar alla dom där me dyra telefåner o ryggsekkar
virtuella nördar i välfärden rebeller bara en liten fråga:
Va e du beredd å ge up? Alltså avstå?

Writing on the wall

Out of order: this world

Sixteen and rebellious, out of space in solemn congregation
 hanging ties and strutting cocks compete for consideration
 talk not listen: so, what do the dear young people here think?
 World peace World understanding World future World love
 World whatever which world are we chewing?
Where is the action to change our future?

Huge mouths and gold chains rattling, too small hands
 never touched a real world or a day's honest work
 The world is your heritage your patrimony your legacy
 You must change the world, grey hairs replay chorus
*Got it, you are emasculated,
 but why don't you repair the world
 before handing it over to me?*

Now streets are filled with other sixteens like me
 wanting the same as I did back then: fix the world for me
 let me grow up in happy paradise fairy tale and serve me
 Yes, I try to change the world and our future. I do my best.
 And I want to ask the expensive mobile phone brand rucksack
 virtual-world focused welfare rebels one simple question:
What are you ready to give up? Relinquish?

*

*Our ancestors have been happily busy changing and transforming transplanting
 transmogrifying transogrifying this planet for many millennia, and we continue
 to follow in their footsteps, but on a far more massive scale. Our förfäder, Vor-
 fahren have anthropocened the Planet for tens of thousands of years, and we
 continue to do the same. Our antepasados antenati esivanemad esivanhemmat
 őseink... it is so så zo easy to blame them. It is so easy lako to blame someone
 else. It is so easy helppoa to accuse and point fingers. It is so easy facile to con-*

tinue living like we have done always mindig, and not think about small and big things or change lifestyles, stil života.

It is so easy to be lazy laisk laiska lat.

*

I have a conscience, Gewissen, and consciousness, Bewusstsein, and a shopping list. Wherever I go and whatever I do, I carry my shopping lista. I consult it and I edit it as I learn more about the world.

But it is only a simple insignificant Wunsch wish Liste, you say. That is true det är sant. But it is never going to happen, you say. Igen, igen, das stimmt. That is true dat is waar.

But if I would not have a wish list I would do nothing or very little. I would wander in the world without knowing where I am going or what I want or who I am.

Poem VIII

Shopping List

Information	<i>real wirklich äkta todellinen echt</i>
Clean air	<i>PRIORITY, TOP!</i>
Rational thinking	<i>is this getting rare, or am I just getting old?</i>
Clean water	<i>top priority, this one, too!!</i>
Responsible activities	<i>absolutely absolutno absoluutselt</i>
Clean soil	
Reusable alternatives	<i>getting there på väg შპლე!</i>
Clean food	<i>health issues, but not only!</i>
Efficient waste management	
Clean energy	<i>anybody against? :-)</i>
Flexibility	<i>hey, this one can be done with some effort, no need to shop for it</i>
Clean production	
Adaptive thinking	<i>აჟტჰნ! gimme more!</i>
Clean consumption	
Understanding	<i>oh yes ach ja</i>
Clean future	<i>this is what we are working for, right?</i>
Sensible choices	
Clean past	<i>that's a bit more difficult</i>

Reflective habits

Clean politics

no comment but this is TOP TOP PRIORITY

Cooperation

this one I love, we need each other

Clean economy

Clarity about consequences

this should come earlier

Clean planet

YES!!! ða! Evet! Certo!

Dialogue + changing habits + innovations + technical & mental progress



When you go shopping Einkaufen, you also carry a wish list, but maybe not everything can be found in the shop butik Laden dyqan dükkân. Maybe not everything I wish for can be found in this world. I can wish wünschen önska toivoa, posso desiderare.



I can work to make at least some of my wishes come true. Some have become reality. Some are still in progress. And I am not alone. I am working with so many others who have other shopping lists, and yet some things on our lists are similar or the same.

And you can work, too auch också aussi myös.

What does your shopping list contain, for your life?

About Our Authors

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