Anthropocene Sublimes. An Introduction

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ECOZON@ | Vol 16, No 1

Introduction

The audiences that walked into the Sydney Opera House during the 16th Biennale in 2008 found themselves in a forest. The interior of the opera building—including the seating, the aisles, the stage, and the balconies—was overtaken by a thousand trees clouded in mist. Only cryptic lyrics of an unfamiliar song—unfamiliar, because written especially for the occasion—provided even the suggestion of orientation. Visitors were equipped with headlamps and invited to roam and linger in a defamiliarized space. What appeared to be an enclave of high culture, sealed off from the natural world, is reimagined as the site where the natural environment reasserts its agency by—literally—taking up space we might have considered to be quintessentially a realm of culture.

French artist Pierre Huyghe's "A Forest of Lines"—the exhibition that occupied the Opera House for 24 hours, or for the duration a single rotation of the Earth—is an avowedly speculative work; Huyghe himself notes in an interview with Amelia Douglas that it is "a science fiction experiment in a way" (2). The experiment suspends customary ways an audience might inhabit the space of the opera house ("the spatial and social protocol usually associated with this space is gone") and it extends an invitation to recalibrate our relation, attunement, our listening to the nonhuman world—which here appears as a forest, "a multitude, heterogeneous and complex [thing] that keeps changing" (2). In that way, it affirms the power of art to help us come to terms with the reality of the Anthropocene—a reality that radically redraws the lines between the human and the nonhuman, and which calls on humans to find

more sustainable strategies for planetary cohabitation. While photographs of the exhibition eerily resonate with what Greg Garrard has called "disanthrophic" images of a lush nature reclaiming a planet liberated from human life, the *experience* of the exhibition decidedly leaves room for human life: audiences are invited to use the forest as a park, even as a picnic place (Douglas 2). Crucially, the exhibition does not sell the fantasy of an illusory immersion in nature at a (not so) blissful remove from technology and civilization: as Huyghe emphasizes, the architecture and "the memory of the space if you have been there before" are an integral part of the experience (Douglas 2). The exhibition's Anthropocene aesthetics, then, amounts to an invitation to reimagine the complex interrelations between nature, culture, and technology.

This special issue contends that the affordances and, as we will see, the limitations of Anthropocene aesthetics in a work like "A Forest of Lines," are made legible in the relation between the Anthropocene and the time-tested aesthetic category of the sublime. On the one hand, the affinity between the Anthropocene and the sublime is almost too obvious: both center experiences of disorientation and overwhelm, and both bring into play the mastery and/or impotence of human life (Fressoz). On the other, the sublime *in* the Anthropocene seems not only time-tested but also time-worn: in the Anthropocene's "world of wounds" (Emmett and Nye 93), sublime exaltation no longer adequately captures our affective disposition to the worlds—especially as postures of human superiority over a fungible natural environment (at times explicitly fostered through the sublime) have so destructively contributed to current environmental crises. This informs a sobering awareness that today, in Marco Caracciolo's words, "[g]rief, distress, and guilt complicate and enrich the sublime" (303). Given both the genealogical implication of the sublime in the history of the Anthropocene, and the tension between the obvious affinity and awkward mismatch between the Anthropocene and the sublime, this special issue interrogates and, as our title has it, *pluralizes* that relation so as to enrich discussion over the ethics, politics, and aesthetics of the current environmental crisis.

Returning to "A Forest of Lines," it is striking how faithfully it sets up a sublime scenario—a scenario in which, in Immanuel Kant's classic account, the human mind is confronted with its inability to represent an overwhelming reality, and yet recuperates that moment of failure by its superior insight in the impossibility of representation. In an interview, Huyghe emphasizes that he chose the Opera House as it serves as "a place of representation": "When you enter inside the Opera House you encounter an image. You are standing at the top of the space; you are looking down at a canopy covered with mist where the light is like dawn. You are above a valley obscured by clouds" (2). So far so *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (Caspar David Friedrich's 1818 painting is a staple of the artistic and romantic sublimes). Yet at this point, the audience is invited to abandon its safe contemplative position and to enter into an *embodied* relation with the forest: "As you come down the paths, through the maze of trees, you enter the mist and you start to get lost in the forest that seems to have grown over night and still growing […]" (2). This activates an embodied and material dimension of the sublime that is quite foreign to Kant's more idealistic

ECOZON@ | Vol 16, No 1

account but that has itself a venerable pedigree—not least in Edmund Burke's classic account (Caracciolo 299). Indeed, Huyghe's Anthropocene update of the sublime joins recent theoretical interventions on the notion of the sublime—under the rubrics of the "haptic" (McNee) and the "toxic" (Peeples) sublimes, on which we will elaborate in the next section—in centering the kinesthetic relations between human subjects and their environments. In "A Forest of Lines," this embodied dimension does not cancel the promise of freedom encoded in the Kantian sublime—even if the freedom at stake is a decidedly more grounded one: "you can walk in any kind of direction, choose the path that you want to take through the image" (2).

"A Forest of Lines" seems to demonstrate the affordances of deploying the flexible lens of a pluralized notion of the sublime to make sense of Anthropocene aesthetics; it shows how an updated version of the sublime underwrites "an encounter with a sentient milieu that generates new possibilities of co-dependence between events or elements that unfold" ("Pierre Huyghe"). At the same time, this lens also allows for a more critical perspective. As an exhibition mounted by a white European artist in a settler colonial nation, "A Forest of Lines" displays an awareness of racist and imperialist legacies in which, as several authors in this issue also argue, the aesthetics of the sublime is deeply imbricated. The song that provides orientation is modeled on the Aboriginal notion of the songline: songs that correspond to walking tracks across the land. The lyrics refer to "trees [that] swallow whole men," a line that refers to a passage in James Cook's diary that chronicles his erroneous interpretation of hollow trees in which Aboriginal peoples had deposited dead bodies as people-eating organisms (Douglas 4). Yet it is not sure that such an encrypted reference to Cook's diary sufficiently critiques the legacy of the sublime. For one thing, the audience, equipped with headlamps, is still invited to adopt the position of a conquering explorer enjoying self-evident access to the forest; nor is the exclusionary, elitist nature of the institution of the opera acknowledged. And indeed, the very title of the exhibition still points to the ratiocinative capacity to abstract ("lines") from material reality ("forest").

In the following section, we lay out how recent theoretical engagements with the sublime have in various ways attempted to reassess and update the notion for an age of environmental derangement. Many of these theoretical updates inform the contributions to this special issue, as we lay out in the third and final section of this introduction. While the different contributions cumulatively showcase the richness and variety of these many twenty-first-century sublimes, many of them also register more fundamental reservations with the viability of the concept of the sublime (a line of thinking we also introduce in the next section). This special issue as a whole, then, maintains that, in light of the conflicted genealogies of the sublime, an Anthropocene update of the notion would be incomplete without a more radical critique of the notion. If this special issue proposes to *pluralize* the sublime, it also opens up a critical space for such radical critique—critique that holds that not even pluralization will make the sublime a viable tool for the present. If pluralization means we can no longer see the forest for the trees, it might be necessary to sacrifice the trees to save the

ECOZON@ | Vol 16, No 1

forest—to burn it all down, Opera House included. But not before we have tried to save them.

Discourses, Trajectories, and Destinies of the Sublime

The past two decades have seen a reemergence of the sublime in the environmental humanities as a key notion for making sense of contemporary ecological crises and the reality proposed by the concept of Anthropocene. We identify three primary categories of discourses that have associated the sublime with the Anthropocene: those which continue to see in classical notions of the sublime potential for explicating global environmental and technological changes; those which remain skeptical about such capacity and advocate for abandoning the sublime altogether; and those which have attempted to revise the notion to make it more environment-oriented, attuned to human-nonhuman relationality, and/or suitable for underlining humans' role in various forms of ecological disruption.

In the work of scholars such as Ursula K. Heise (*Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* 20–41), Timothy Morton ("Here Comes Everything"; "Sublime Objects"), Gene Ray, and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, the sublime has served to describe the *incomprehensible scale* of air pollution and climate change as well as the far-reaching ramifications of infrastructures and technologies (e.g., radiation and satellite imagery). Such scholarship builds on the obvious connections between, on the one hand, the sublime's traditional ideas of greatness and vastness and the related affects of terror and of being overwhelmed, and, on the other, the shifts in global environmental awareness urged by the Anthropocene. According to Fressoz, the Anthropocene depends on updated conceptualizations of humanity and capitalism best emblematized by the sublime (288–89). The Anthropocene sublime, for Fressoz, is therefore multifaceted: it is at once a "geological sublime" that transforms mankind into a "geological superman"; a mutating "technological sublime" that has evolved in parallel with economic and technological progress (from capitalism's early days through the space race); a "scientific sublime" that misinterprets the Anthropocene as a twentieth-century global environmental "awakening" (which underestimates previous generations' insights in environmental destruction); and, lastly, a "sublime of collapse" predicting planetary meltdown (288–96).

The technological and scientific sublimes, Fressoz acknowledges, are not new.[1] The technological sublime, when opposed to the natural sublime more specifically, sheds light on how the sublime developed differently according to national contexts and linguistic traditions: while German philosophers and the Romantics fantasized about landscapes like the Alps (which most of them never visited), the American natural sublime romanticized a settler-colonial myth of a pure and uninhabited wilderness. The American technological sublime shifts from the natural sublime's fascination with the country's spectacular wilderness to the worship of its

[1] For the technological sublime see Marx, and Nye, *American Technological Sublime*, and for the scientific sublime, see Hoffmann and Whyte, and Gross.

 ISSN 2171-9594

technological achievements as a means of reinforcing the nation's sense of exceptionalism (Nye, *Seven Sublimes* 1–3). In both cases, the American sublime is hardly separable from the contiguous notion of frontier. Exploration 'beyond the frontier' has led the technological sublime to be constantly reconceptualized to better account for the awe and satisfaction felt with dizzy and destructive innovations. To name a few of these incarnations of the technological sublime: there is the "nuclear" or "atomic sublime" for nuclear technologies and atomic explosion, the "agricultural sublime" for industrial farming, and the "petroleum," "petrochemical" or "oil sublime" for oil fields and rigs as well as petrochemicals.[2] Like Nye, Fressoz is among those scholars who still refer to notions such as the technological, scientific, or Anthropocene sublime *not* to celebrate human exploits and progress but as a means of accounting for and/or critiquing the roles humans and technology have played in global crises.

Other ecocritics and scholars in the environmental humanities, ranging from Patrick D. Murphy ("An Ecological Feminist Revisioning of the Masculinist Sublime"; "Sublime") and Jeffrey Bilbro to Louise Economides and Bruno Latour, have instead foregrounded the *impossibility* of sublime encounters in the Anthropocene and encouraged a shift in focus from the sublime to other affects and aesthetic categories. Murphy subscribes to the long-lasting critique of the sublime's numerous masculinist, racial, and gender biases and argues that the sublime should be abandoned if a more "participatory" or "integrational" version cannot be articulated (80–91).[3] Bilbro, for his part, warns that sticking with the sublime is only bound to repeat the Kantian fetishism for reason and the consequential human yearning for mastery over the physical environment (134). He thus returns to the beautiful, traditionally opposed to the sublime, as a more viable replacement for the sublime since, he argues, it can more suitably foster a sense of place in our complex world (139). Similarly, Louise Economides, in her attempt to propose the alternative of "wonder," goes as far as claiming that the sublime "is a primary cause of, not the solution to, our environmental crisis" (20). No one was ever as clear as Bruno Latour, however, in his "Farewell to the Sublime," which maintains that sublime encounters cannot be possible in the Anthropocene since "the world is no longer a spectacle to be enjoyed from a secured place" (170).

In spite of abundant criticism (or perhaps as an unintended result of it), the sublime continues to thrive as a driving concept in the environmental humanities. In the late 1990s, William Cronon and Christopher Hitt called for a *more ecologically attuned* sublime. They argue that the natural sublime had contributed to widening the gap between nature and culture, civilization and wilderness, and to reestablishing humanity's control over the natural world (Cronon 17; Hitt 605–09). Hitt draws on the Kantian ideal of transcendence, which also resonated with Lee Rozelle in his

[2] See Ferguson, Wilson, Hales, Lovatt, Masco, and Lombard, "Rewriting the Unthinkable" for the nuclear or atomic sublime; see Pollan, and Lynch and Norris for the agricultural sublime; and see Hatherley, Schuster, and Banita for oil en related sublimes.

[3] See Gilroy, Armstrong, Freeman, and Shapiro for related critiques.

conceptualization of an "ecosublime"; for Rozelle, traditional templates of awe and terror can still result in a responsible engagement with the environment (1). Along the lines of Hitt and Rozelle, there have been other attempts to salvage not the natural but the Romantic sublime, which generally does acknowledge the limits of reason and understanding (Shaw 98). John G. Pipkin, for instance, suggests that "the material sublime" of women Romantic poets such as Mary Tighe and Dorothy Wordsworth "transforms fear and anxiety into feelings of commiseration or identification with the material world, resulting in a moment of personal defiance, empowerment, or self-realization" (600–601). In the same fashion, Paul Outka proposes the "organic sublime," which consists of "episodes when an individual experienced and recorded an often profoundly disconcerting awareness of the radical material identity between his or her embodied self and the natural world" (31). Following such recuperations more concerned with materiality and the physical world, the sublime has gradually become more essentially environment-oriented in recent scholarship.

More recently, Emily Brady has explicitly redefined the natural sublime as an "environmental" or "humbling sublime" that tries to showcase "a material experience" instead of anthropocentrism (195). Brady's environmental sublime is ultimately "relational" in its attempt to promote "self-knowledge" through engagements with non-human materiality and agency (197–99). Similarly, David Nye's environmental sublime "renews intimacy with the tangible world," being devoted to finding interest in while fearing for the complex biodiversity of our world (116–30). In Nye's account, the environmental sublime specifically becomes the antithesis of the technological sublime insofar as it does not endeavor to master nature through rational thought and technology but instead focuses on its ineffability in the forms of "obscure skein of symbiotic relations" (116). In such efforts to connect the sublime to environmental concerns, the concept acquires a different potential: it moves away from the human achievements praised by avatars of the technological sublime to celebrate—or at least acknowledge—non-human agencies. Such potential can be seen in the animal sublime, for example, which has been referred to as a discourse or rhetorical strategy aimed at highlighting the ecological and aesthetic values, emotional behaviors, cognitive faculties, and sense of agency of non-human/animal species.[4]

What is as yet largely missing from the many Anthropocene updates of the sublime is a sublime that more actively engages with the plethora of posthumanist trends that have been attempting, for the last few decades, to refocus the humanities and social sciences on non-human agency and materiality: from actor-network theory and material ecocriticism to new materialism. While the notion of the Anthropocene inescapably emphasizes the role of the human, these trends center the nonhuman. This could, of course, result in a "flattening of ontologies" and in humans absolving themselves of responsibility for ecological destruction (Heise, "Introduction" 4–5). But the sublime, which has customarily been theorized as a human-centered notion involving a subjective experience and limited emotions and affects, could profit from

[4] See Bhogal, Duggan, and Litsardopoulou.

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a more forthright recognition and elaboration of the tensions between humans and nonhumans.

That is not to say that this tension cannot result in productive encounters. Alan McNee's "haptic sublime," for example, challenges the ocular-centrism of classical theories to engage in a multi-sensorial, "embodied," and "direct physical experience" of material landscapes (4). The haptic sublime does not salvage the natural or Romantic sublime, but more radically reimagines their parameters: nature is no longer a spectacle to be enjoyed from a safe distance (Burke; Kant), but is now engaged with in embodied ways that can enrich the limited affective reach of the sublime (Caracciolo 329) and result in a variety of constructive encounters with the nonhuman. The toxic sublime, theorized first by Jennifer Peeples in 2011 and subsequently explored by several other scholars, for its part, circumvents the possible "capacity for naiveté" in Jane Bennett's "vital materialism" (Vermeulen 89; Bennett 18), which to a (too) large extent brackets the threatening power of materiality.[5] Instead, the toxic sublime echoes Stacy Alaimo's notion of "trans-corporeality" in that it recognizes the toxicity of awe-inspiring phenomena, and thus the harmful potential of non-human and chemical/technological agents and the responsibility of humans in creating them (Alaimo 2; Peeples 375).

Several contributions of this special focus section continue the trajectories opened up by the animal, haptic, and toxic sublimes (the third key discourse around the sublime we have surveyed) and present other conceptually updated and ecologically upgraded versions of the sublime: they develop notions such as the "cosmic" (Cazajous-Augé), "Gaian" (Fecteau), "creaturely" or "stolastalgic" (Wennerscheid), and "whale" (Ng) sublimes and the "sublime of the ordinary" (Girardin), which all in their own way open onto new conceptions of human-nonhuman-environment relationality. The essays on the cosmic and the Gaian sublime join Thomas Storey's ecological update of Alexander Galloway's concept of the "juridico-geometric sublime" in interrogating the mobilization of the sublime to capture the incomprehensible vastness of the current polycrisis (the first contemporary discourse we presented in this section). Several other essays (most notably Peters, Klestil, and Shabangu) invest most of their critical force in a sustained interrogation of the problematic legacies of the sublime and remain less convinced by the viability of the notion for confronting the challenges of the Anthropocene.

In This Issue

The essays collected here were selected by the guest editors from a large number of submissions to an open call and reflect a wide range of methodological approaches and diverse archives that reassess the sublime in relation to the Anthropocene. Unsurprisingly, while most contributions hinge on a crucial critique of the historically white, racist, and anti-Black category of the sublime from Burke on,

[5] For the toxic sublime, see Sarah J. Ray, Bissonette, Kane, Lombard, "Toward a Speculative-Pragmatic Sublime," and Bergmann and Briwa.

 ISSN 2171-9594

some also locate alternative histories in the development of the sublime made visible in the Anthropocene, while others argue for varied ways in which the sublime must be transformed in this looming geological epoch. Tacuma Peters' essay, the first of this issue, opens with the simple pronouncement that "[a]s a concept, the sublime has shown the ability to endure." This issue takes up the forms and modes of that endurance, the structures of power and racial capital that make possible its ability to endure, and the various interruptions and forms of resistance to sublimity that its endurance still necessitates.

Peters' essay, "Querying the Ecological Sublime: Colonial Aesthetics, Anticololonial Thought, and the 'Double Fracture,'" traces the sublime aesthetics historically tied up with settler colonialism and enslavement in the US, starting with Burke's well-known treatise—unsurprisingly cited throughout this issue—and its influence on Kant. Beyond a critique of the white settler logics that undergird the sublime, Peters' essay details the ways in which the category is already taken up by Native Presbyterian cleric Samson Occom (1723-1792) to *contest* the devastating logics and effects of settler colonialism. This resituating of the sublime as a historical category through Black and Indigenous thought is further supported by Peters' reading of Ottobah Cugoano's (1757-1791) Jeremiad as "provid[ing] a thoroughgoing critique of colonialism while also attacking one of the presuppositions of Edmund Burke's aesthetics: that darkness was sublime, not beautiful" (Peters). Indigenous and Black critiques of Burke's sublime, Peters shows, are not only a contemporary phenomenon but were already present in the work of Burke's contemporaries in ways that complicate recent celebrations of the ecological sublime that too often remain oblivious of these countertraditions.

Matthias Klestil's contribution similarly takes up the fact that "the racial biases found in classical theories of the sublime have often been met by thought-provoking resistance and counter-discourses in the African American tradition" (Klestil). His essay, "Blackness and the Anthropocene Sublime in Jesmyn Ward's Fiction" details the ways in which race and specifically blackness remain foundational to Anthropocene aesthetics and the Anthropocene sublime. Focusing his readings on forms of collapse that animate Ward's fiction, especially temporal collapse, Klestil argues that Ward's work pushes against the singularity of environmental crisis, revealing instead how "practices of slavery and segregation have shaped the conditions of collapse in the present." If Latour claimed that the world is no longer a place to be observed from a secure place, Klestil asks about those who may never have rested securely in place, ungrounding sublimity through Black studies and the field of African American literature.

Charlie Ng's contribution, "The Whale Sublime in Doreen Cunningham's *Soundings* and Rebecca Giggs's *Fathoms*" examines a literary lineage of what Ng names as "cetacean texts" from Melville's *Moby-Dick* and 19th century commercial whaling. Tracing how whales in literature often stand in for "exploitative relationships between humans and nature in capitalist modernity," Ng reimagines "the whale sublime" in two contemporary "nature writing" or "animal writing" texts in which she locates an

 ISSN 2171-9594

"inquisitive, feminine sensibility that focuses on wonder, resilience, and relationality." Ng's essay is invested in an "inclusive sense of responsibility for the nonhuman entities that share our world," developing the concept of the whale sublime as "mediat[ing] the 'response-ability' and 'responsibility' that Haraway calls for in her theorization of entanglement (12-13)." But she also crucially hinges entanglement on forms of disconnection and disappointment that the texts offer, wherein "the agency of the whales is foregrounded." Highlighting modes of frustration and disappointment present in the texts by Cunningham and Giggs, Ng argues that cetacean literature does not "undermine the human-nonhuman entanglement […] rather, [it] add[s] complexity to it."

Catherine Girardin's essay takes us to fairly uncharted territory in studies of the sublime: a dance performance. In "Un sublime de l'ordinaire dans le spectacle *Weathering* (2023) de Faye Driscoll," Girardin's original case study (Driscoll's *Weathering*) illustrates how the classical sublime can be imaginatively reinvigorated when 'lower' senses (touch, smell, and hearing) are mobilized. In this way, echoing McNee's "haptic sublime," Girardin outlines a "material sublime" relying primarily on intimacy and interdependence. Beyond ocular-centrism and inertia, Girardin explores how *Weathering*'s intercorporeality (some, following Alaimo, might say 'trans-corporeality') and its use of various sensory systems evoke the slowness and movement necessary to counter the overwhelm and acceleration of a neoliberal Anthropocene. The outcome of Girardin's move is a "sublime of the ordinary," one that sensitizes audiences to the "ordinary strangeness" of our world.

In "The Anthropocene Cosmic Sublime: Viewing the Earth from Space in Samantha Harvey's *Orbital*," Claire Cazajous-Augé shifts our understanding from the terrestrial (or oceanic) sublime into the realms of outer space in a reading of Samantha Harvey's recent Booker Prize-winning novel *Orbital* (2024). Developing what she calls the "Anthropocene cosmic sublime," Cazajous-Augé argues that the space industry and space exploration, including their significant contribution to waste and pollution (on Earth and in orbit) mark an important shift in Anthropocene aesthetics unbound by terrestrial limitations. While technological innovations make visible the universe and even enable views from space, these do not automatically inspire feelings of a shared planet and of a shared responsibilities to it; too often, exploitative technologies reimbue humanity with a sense of domination and power. To counter this, the Anthropocene cosmic sublime that Cazajous-Augé locates in Harvey's novel "transforms the exclusive experience of space exploration into a collective call for respectful coexistence with both terrestrial and extraterrestrial environments, emphasizing shared responsibility and humility over individual transcendence."

Thomas Storey's essay, "Romantic Cybernetics: Jorie Graham, Trevor Paglen, and the Sublime Contradictions of the Anthropocene," develops some of the broader contradictions of sublimity in the Anthropocene specifically through (and beyond) Alexander Galloway's concept of the "juridico-geometric sublime." Galloway's concept, Storey contends, names a form of "digital unrepresentability, as expressed in

 ISSN 2171-9594

the suggestion that interfaces are not workable; they do not provide the transparency they purport to facilitate." What Galloway's elaboration of the concept does not factor in, and what this essay contributes to it, is the properly environmental dimension of the contemporary sublime. This contemporary sublime, for Storey, emerges at the crossroads of "the freedom of the play impulse in Romanticism" and the drive for control in cybernetics, which is a key part of the genealogy of the digital present. It is "the friction that arises from the Romantico-cybernetic synthesis" that makes up "the incommensurability of a contemporaneity saturated by the digital and threatened by ecological collapse." His essay examines works by poet Jorie Graham and the artist Trevor Paglen, the latter whose work is featured on the issue's cover. Graham and Paglen help Storey to develop a theory of the Anthropocene sublime as "an aesthetic form that highlights the unrepresentable way in which everyday life is complexly woven into systems of extraction, domination, and exploitation that take the environment as their object and that are enmeshed within broader structures of state and extra-state power that remain largely invisible." This form of the sublime is as totalizing as it is self-contradictory.

Mohammad Shabangu's essay "*Zombies*, Attention and the Sublime in the Digital Anthropocene" similarly confronts the role of the digital in warping the Anthropocene sublime as it takes up attention as a central economy of the digital Anthropocene. Shabangu analyzes Congolese artist Baloji's short film *Zombies* which, he writes, "asks us to seize opportunities to turn away from the seductions of psychotechnology and to instead turn toward the unfurling present." Shabangu reads the film as a critique of, among other things, the ubiquity of the mobile device in Kinshasa, the capital and largest city of the Democratic Republic of Congo. He asks, "What are the prospects of the sublime in an era of generalized attention deficiency?" His insistence on the practice of attention as a means of resistance to digital capitalism is developed in his reading of the film's Afrobeat urban soundtrack, its "sonic textures" and "visual language," which he considers as an extended music video—itself an aesthetic challenge, as in Girardin's analysis of Driscoll's *Weathering*, to "the ocular-centrism of prevailing concepts of the sublime."

The final two essays in the collection scale the Anthropocene sublime differently—not in terms of the vast if self-contradictory totalities of the cosmic, the digital, or the juridico-geometric, but in response to more minimally scaled interspecies encounters. Sophie Wennerscheid's "Vom kreatürlich Erhabenen zum solastalgisch Erhabenen in Kerstin Ekmans Roman *Wolfslichter*" shows how the formal and thematic choices in a recent Swedish novel revise the customary association of hunting with the sublime. Paying particular attention to the novel's evocations of the relations between humans and wolves, she coins the notions of the "creaturely" and the "solastalgic" sublimes to capture less human-centric kinds of sublime experience: attuned to a bodily vulnerability shared across species lines (in the case of the creaturely), and interpellated by a guilt-laden experience of environmental destruction and loss (in the case of the solastalgic). The persistence of the (deeply transformed) sublime across these variations ultimately points to a less

ECOZON@ | Vol 16, No 1

toxic mode of masculinity (called here "eco-masculinity") that more productively and sustainably bridges species barriers.

In Maxime Fecteau's "'A Tough Bitch': Lynn Margulis and the Gaian Sublime," the scale is further narrowed to the microbial agency and symbiosis that almost imperceptibly makes up planetary life. Fecteau unearths a notion of the "Gaian sublime" in Lynn Margulis's scientific nonfiction. This notion gives short shrift to the aspirations of human transcendence and geological spectacle in traditional notions of the sublime. Against the violence perpetrated by and in name of the traditional sublime, Margulis' work put forward Earth's smallest inhabitants as its most profound transformers. It is the recognition of life's collaborative creativity across spatial and historical dimensions, Fecteau argues, that a more ecologically attuned sublime experience can take shape. As humans, we don't just attend to this creative process as distant spectators, but as attuned participants. It is a participatory process from which this special issue can ultimately not pretend to be excluded.

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