

The Anthropocene Ecologies and Stories in the Environmental Humanities

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In 2000, atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen and biologist Eugene Stoermer proposed the idea that the Earth has transitioned from the Holocene—the epoch that began at the end of the last Ice Age—to a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene. Since then the Anthropocene has gained a cultural life of its own, becoming a key term in many academic disciplines to describe humanity’s epoch-making signature on the planet’s geomorphological processes. The Earth system sciences focus on the “chemical and biological effects of global human activity” (Zalasiewicz et al.) in the planet’s geological stratification. The scientific accounts of the Anthropocene are predicated on the *anthropos* – the collective human figure as a geological force so powerful that even after its extinction its sedimentary traces will be visible “for many millennia, maybe millions of years to come” (Crutzen and Stoermer).

The Anthropocene is thought differently in the Environmental Humanities. Rather than seeing it as an epoch of the “great homogenization” of terrestrial systems and fates under the geological layer of *the* universal anthropos, the Environmental Humanities claim that what is at stake is “much more than ‘just’ geology” (Jussi Parikka), because the Anthropocene is constitutive of social, cultural, political, ethical, aesthetic, as well as ecological relations. Therefore, in my talk I will posit that the Anthropocene story needs to be revised, so that millions of years from now the fossil records can reveal a different narrative in which all biological species, elements, minerals, and everything else are allowed a life of their own. But, finding new ways of storying the Anthropocene is not easy. When geology is intermingled with human activities over time spans that are literally baffling, how do we formulate Earth’s stories without furnishing them with anthropocentric meanings? One way to answer this question is to take into account “cli-fi” narratives, or climate change fictions that explore extensive human interactions with geomorphic systems. My talk will conclude with as specific example, Liz Jensen’s *The Rapture*.

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She has published widely on postmodern, material, and feminist ecocriticisms, and ecocritical theory. Her more recent edited collections include *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism* (with Greta Gaard and Simon Estok, Routledge, 2013), *Material Ecocriticism* (with Serenella Iovino, Indianan University Press, 2014), and *Environmental Humanities: Voices from the Anthropocene* (with Serenella Iovino, Rowman& Littlefield, 2017). She has also edited *Ekoeleştiri: Çevre ve Edebiyat* (Phoenix, 2012) and *New Voices in International Ecocriticism* (Lexington Books, 2015).

Oppermann has presented keynote speeches and invited talks on material ecocriticism, the Anthropocene, and ecocritical theory in Taiwan, China, Sweden, Poland, Italy, and Turkey.

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Her recent work is focused on material ecocriticism, posthuman models, and the influence of the Anthropocene discourse in the environmental humanities.