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## Afterword

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If you seek to study nostalgia, always be alert for its mania. The 'longing for home' that has been nostalgia's reputation since its first appearance in a Swiss medical dissertation in 1688 has always been more, or less, than it appears to be (Boyer 2006). Johannes Hofer who first coined the term was looking for a way to capture the powerful sentiments of homesickness that seemed to paralyse young people who had been forced by circumstance to spend long periods of time away from their natal villages, often as soldiers or indentured servants. It was an affliction wrapped up with what Raymond Williams (1974) termed the 'mobile privatization' of European modernity. Increasing numbers of young persons were on the move because of war, commerce, studies and work in the seventeenth century. And yet it was still common for Europeans to die not many kilometres away from where they were born.

I have always imagined that Hofer empathized closely with the subjects of his case studies, like the country girl probably working as a servant in a foreign town who deliriously shouted *Ich will Heim* ('I want to go home!') until she seemed on the verge of death. Only when she was allowed to return home did her symptoms disappear. Hofer was himself a student living in Basel many kilometres from his native Mühlhausen when he was working on his dissertation. He must have felt the urge to shout from time to time. His own ability to return home was far from guaranteed, caught somewhere between his professional ambitions, his educational possibilities and the peregrinations of an increasingly translocalized Europe.

Hofer sought to medicalize homesickness (*Heimweh*) more than one way. He considered *nostomania* (an obsession with the return home) and *philopatridomania* (an obsessive love of the fatherland) before settling on 'nostalgia' (pain/sorrow for the return home). I have always found it interesting to consider 'mania' as part of the semantic terroir of nostalgia (Boyer 2010). It suggests a hallucinatory pursuit in which the story of 'the return' operates more as pretext than as honest ambition. Return to where and when? Mania excessively occupies the now.

Hofer seems to have been at least intuitively aware of this. He concludes his text with a remarkable story:

Thus not long since it was told me by a Parisian that he himself had an Helvetian bound servant who was sad and melancholy at all times so that he began to work with lessened desire; finally, he came to him and sought dismissal with insistent entreaties, of which he could have no hope beyond him. When the merchant granted this immediately, the servant changed from sudden joy, excused from his mind these phantasma for several days, and after a while remained in Paris, broken up no longer by this disease. (1934: 390)

What Hofer offered as a sort of anecdotal remainder to his thesis contains the key to rethinking the whole phenomenon. The freed Helvetian longed not for a return to his place of origin, even though this is what both he and his master were convinced afflicted him, but for the right to determine his own future. Having won that right, he surprised all parties, including the good Dr Hofer, by remaining just where he was. An insistence upon freedom too, then, belongs to the *terroir* of nostalgia.

So with this in mind, what should we make of ‘ecological nostalgia’? In what respect is it genuine *Heimweh*, in what respect the pursuit of self-determination, and in what respect pure mania? The introduction to this collection of chapters frames its intervention in terms of engaging pervasive instances of ecological nostalgia ‘in modern societies upset by climate change and ecosystem destructions’. *Heimweh* is surely a powerful Anthropocene affect. But Anthropocene grief has a distinctively future anterior character in its focus on how we (in the north) will feel for what we have lost once the Holocene oikos is fully unravelled. There is typically little consideration, let alone grief, expressed for the losses already suffered by those from whom the north expropriated labour, land, materials and life to build its magnificent modern palaces. Moreover, if it were a sincerely presentist grief there would be less focus on the ten or twenty years still remaining to undertake radical civilizational change. But the content of that ‘change’ often seems as evacuated as the meaning of a term like ‘sustainability’ which is set forward in countless policy documents as the antidote to the current trajectory. For every sincere effort to imagine alternative ethics, politics and economy (e.g. Kallis 2018), there are hundreds more that seem to wish to preserve contemporary modernity apart from perhaps to change its sources of fuel or distribution of income. Anthropocene *Heimweh* thus offers a politics of the future that frequently aspires to change as little as possible. Again, our introduction: ‘in a world that is changing fast, it is no surprise that a world shaped by unexpected ecological turns proves propitious to triggering attachment to forms of life that are jeopardized, or already gone’. Claire Colebrook considers this mode of

attachment the ‘Anthropocene state of emergency’ (2017: 406) and worries that it will ultimately be leveraged to legitimate further non-deliberative technoscientific and military interventions in the name of preserving certain ways of being human, very likely at the expense of others.

A geo-engineered future is no more guaranteed than any future. But I think Colebrook is right to sense the mania that ripples within Anthropocene grief. That mania may sometimes appear to be about the restoration of imperial splendour (‘Making the Anthropocene Great Again’). And it may sometimes seem obsessed with achieving new designs for human-environmental balance and futurity. Yet mania, as noted above, is more often about the now, often vividly so. Anthropocene grief does a fairly poor job of recollecting histories and imagining other futures all things considered. We might take that as a sign that its true stakes are the preservation and extension of the contemporary, the time before collapse.

What does it mean to wish to preserve the now? Let us not forget that ‘ecology’ was the neologism of another German medical doctor, Ernst Haeckel. Dr Haeckel, much like Dr Hofer, was very much a child of his time. Although perhaps not the proto-Nazi he is often characterized as, racism, imperialism and economism richly informed the Social Darwinism that he helped to spread throughout Germany in the last decades of the nineteenth century (Weikart 1993). If Haeckel meant ‘ecology’ to define a new area of science devoted to the study of creaturely relations with their creaturely neighbours in their immediate environments, it should not be supposed he had in mind the investigation of zones of mutual prosperity and thriving. No; instead, he had in mind spectacles of the Hobbesian-Malthusian agon in which:

everywhere you find an unsparing, highly embittered bellum omnium contra omnes [*Kampf Aller gegen Alle*]. Nowhere in nature, wherever you may look, does that idyllic peace exist, about which the poets sing ... rather everywhere there is struggle and striving to destroy one’s neighbor and competitor. Passion and selfishness, conscious or unconscious, is everywhere the motive force of life ... Man in this respect is no exception to the rest of the animal world. (1868: 16)

Naturalizing the ‘war of all against all’ has always been one of the most convenient alibis for European colonialism and empire. Likewise, as Hannah Arendt so aptly put it: ‘imperialism would have necessitated the invention of racism as the only possible “explanation” and excuse for its deeds, even if no race-thinking had ever existed in the civilized world’ (2004: 241). Racism helped to position European campaigns of extermination and occupation as being in the greater interest of human ecology.

The introduction to the volume closes by considering ‘imperialist ecological nostalgias’ and, with Haeckel’s legacy in mind, there has probably

never been another kind. But the trouble here seems less with the politically suspect origins of scientific ecology than with the perpetuation of ecological affects and designs that wishfully ignore the forms of violence and dispossession that contributed to the formation and acceleration of *androleukoheteropetromodernity* (a term I prefer to both 'Anthropocene' and 'Capitalocene'). This is where I think anthropology should shine its spotlight and this collection of chapters is an excellent contribution to that critical trajectory.

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