

The Ecological Turn

Design, Architecture and Aesthetics
beyond "Anthropocene"

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Doctoral Program
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S.01

ECO-POLITICAL
NARRATIVE
DIVERSIFICATION

Overlapping Narratives: Self-Representations of the Anthropocene

Anthropocene; Landscape; Weird; City; Narratives; Memory.

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The exhibition “Anthropocene: Burtynsky, Baichwal, de Pencier” has codified a visual imaginary consciousness of the Anthropocene that demands further discussion to enlighten the peculiarities of the “view from above” that characterises most of the project’s images, and to lift the debate to a more fruitful level. This article takes a new look at this topic in light of the catastrophic narratives, the myth of flight and the intrinsic link with the imagery of the metropolis, opening the debate up to a different point of observation. Therefore, some subtexts of the discourse come into play (such as the sublime, the uncanny – in the dual meaning of weird and eerie – and the multispecies narratives) that broaden the reflection on the agency of the Anthropocene and that can potentially defuse the aestheticising paradox that, by monumentalising the image, compromises its effectiveness.



“Like the moon
reflecting on the water
in the hollow of the hands,
this world we don’t know
if it is or if it is not”

Ki no Tsurayuki,
eighteenth day of the fifth month of the eighth Tenjō year (945)¹

To each Anthropocene its own Apocalypse.

The urban phenomenon, seen as the singularity of a structure of relations that expresses the impact of human race on the entire planet, informs the production of imaginaries of its own evolutionary process: it is therefore natural that in terms of language and strategies of representation the visualisation of the concept of Anthropocene is placed in this context.

Starting in 2018, the exhibition “Anthropocene: Burtynsky, Baichwal, de Pencier” (and all related products such as films, augmented reality applications, gigapixel images and publications) codified a visual imagery focused on the representation of the Anthropocene.

Even if the “Anthropocene project” declares itself to be an open process, it is evident that, in particular, Burtynsky’s images constitute a priority imaginary that risks depowering reflection due to the aesthetic paradox according to which “the conquest of nature, having been aestheticised, leads to a loss of perception (aesthesia), which is to say, it becomes an anaesthetic”.²

In fact, more than in the concrete scientific operability of the term, the interest in the definition of *Anthropocene* resides

1 Jisei, *Poesie dell’Addio*, ed. Ornella Civardi, (Milan: SE, 2017), 12.

2 Nicholas Mirzoeff, “Visualizing the Anthropocene”, *Public Culture* 26 (2014): 213-232.

in the occasion of a “prise de conscience essentielle pour comprendre ce qui nous arrive. Car ce qui nous arrive n’est pas une crise environnementale, c’est une révolution géologique d’origine humaine”.³

Bonneuil and Fressoz’s critical contribution on the topic has the merit of accounting for a whole series of concurrent interpretations of the concept of Anthropocene and of distancing itself from a purely environmentalist plan of reflection.

The Anthropocene represents a complex conceptual knot. Indeed, it is a term that was immediately borrowed from biology and interpreted in light of different disciplines (from meteorology to geology), and subsequently acquired a pervasiveness that has not, however, freed it from an original paradox: the species called upon to define the name of an epoch is the same that establishes its characteristics, which are almost exclusively linked to the impact of its own work. If we also consider that the era in question has (perhaps) begun but has certainly not yet ended, the paradoxical picture is complete. *Homo sapiens* (assuming that even this designation is still appropriate) is called to define its present and to evaluate this periodisation on the basis of its (actual or presumed) impact on the environment: an evident paradox that multiplies the influences between observer and observed phenomenon in a much more articulated and complex way than Schrödinger’s classic postulation.⁴

Besides having a dual issue of self-referentiality (in the narration and in the identification of causes and characteristics), the definition of the term *Anthropocene* presents a remarkable degree of arbitrariness that reminds us of the attribution of place names in the newly discovered lands of past centuries.

3 Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *L’Événement Anthropocène. La Terre, l’histoire et nous* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2016), XIII.

4 Erwin Schrödinger, “Die gegenwärtige Situation in der Quantenmechanik (The present situation in quantum mechanics)”. *Naturwissenschaften* 23 (1935): 807–812.

The extent of this arbitrariness is testified to by the debate on the exact dating of the beginning of this period and also on the correctness of the name itself and the meanings attributed to it, which oscillate within a wide range of topical areas: from the political level, to the economic level (where the question is about the evolution of current production and consumption systems), and to the biological level (where the question is about our chances of survival as a species in the immediate future).

This last aspect is a fundamental subtext of the Anthropocene. Concern for survival is a distinctive characteristic of the great narratives of human history: the impact of the micro-apocalypse (from the Universal Flood to the Lisbon earthquake of 1755) and the persistence of the narratives connected to them, as well as the pervasiveness of eschatological themes in religions are just a few examples of this.

The reappropriation of the apocalyptic theme in an etymological sense (i.e. unveiling) spurs a possible reactivation of the debate on the Anthropocene, not so much because a narration of the final catastrophe is necessary but rather to make us fully aware that such a subtext is present and deeply informs the views we are analysing.

Collective memory and catastrophe.

“Quelles paroles faut-il semer, pour que les jardins du monde redeviennent fertiles?”, se demandait la poétesse Jeanine Salesse. Quelles histoires faut-il écrire pour apprendre à vivre l'Anthropocène ?”.⁵

Before we even ask ourselves what kind of stories, we should ask ourselves whether it is really the story we are talking about, or whether it is *a* story, a narrative. Halbwachs's reflection on t

5 Bonneuil and Fressoz, *L'Événement Anthropocène*, 358.

he relationship between history and collective memory helps us in this sense.

“La mémoire collective se distingue de l’histoire au moins sous deux rapports. C’est un courant de pensée continu, d’une continuité qui n’a rien d’artificiel, puisqu’elle ne retient du passé que ce qui en est encore vivant ou capable de vivre dans la conscience du groupe qui l’entretient. Par définition, elle ne dépasse pas les limites de ce groupe. Lorsqu’une période cesse d’intéresser la période qui suit ce n’est pas un même groupe qui oublie une partie de son passé: il y a en réalité, deux groupes qui se succèdent. L’histoire divise la suite des siècles en périodes, comme on distribue la matière d’une tragédie en plusieurs actes. Mais, tandis que, dans une pièce, d’un acte à l’autre, la même action se poursuit, avec les mêmes personnages qui demeurent jusqu’au dénouement conformes à leur caractère.... dans l’histoire on a l’impression que, d’une période à l’autre, tout est renouvelé.... L’histoire, qui se place hors des groupes et au-dessus d’eux, n’hésite pas à introduire dans le courant des faits des divisions simples, et dont la place est fixée un fois pour toutes. Elle n’obéit pas, ce faisant, rien qu’à un besoin didactique de schématisation”.⁶

The concept of collective memory is perhaps more relevant to what the Anthropocene represents: not an abstract periodisation but an ever-changing entity that takes on variable characteristics depending on the group that recognises itself and that in many cases contaminates and mixes with concurrent memories. This understanding gives a better account of the different naming attempts enumerated by Bonneuil and Freson (oligantropocene, thermocene, tanatocene, phagocene, agnotocene, capitalocene, polemocene): each group builds, perpetuates and recognises itself in a specific narration that plausibly requires different representations.

6 Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997), 132-133.

Anthropocene's view from above

Burtynsky's work gives us the most representative and popular images of the Anthropocene: we therefore focus on one characteristic of most of his images published in the context of the project, namely the view from above.

From a conceptual point of view, Burtynsky can be placed in a consolidated path through the history of landscape photography. A first reference, made directly in the exhibition catalogue, is to the work of Ansel Adams and Nancy Newhall⁷ on William Garret's images accompanied by texts that have the tones of a dark prophecy: "Hell we are building on earth. Headlong, heedless, we rush: to pour into air and water poisons and pollutions until dense choking palls of smog lie over cities and rivers run black and foul; to blast down the hills, bulldoze the trees, scrape bare the fields to build predestinated slums, until city encroaches on suburb, suburb on country, industry to all, and city joins city, jamming the shores, filling the valleys, stretching across the plains". This text, which in some parts takes up the structure of the ancient chain tales such as the Jewish *Chad Gadya* to "This is the House That Jack Built", signals the union between the image seen from above, the story of the territory and the dialectic of a clash with nature.

Looking beyond more recent references, such as the famous project by Yann Arthus Bertrand (*Earth from Above*, 2004) or the visual approach of Godfrey Reggio in his "Qatsi" trilogy,⁸ the most direct references are certainly to the work of the photographers of the Düsseldorf School (Andreas Gursky, Thomas Struth, and Thomas Ruff among others) who had in turn developed the themes of the 1975 exhibition *New Topographics*:

7 Ansel Adams and Nancy Newhall, *This is the American Earth* (Oakland: The Sierra Club, 1960), 36

8 "Koyaaniqatsi. Life Out of Balance" (1982), "Powaqqatsi. Life in transition" (1988), and "Naqoyqatsi. Life as War" (2002).

*Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape*⁹ (Robert Adams, Lewis Baltz, Nicholas Nixon, and Bernd and Hilla Becher). The minimisation and expulsion of the human figure and the focus on the immersive rendering allowed by digital photography and large format printing technologies are elements of strong visual continuity with Burtynsky's work.

Hackett explicitly addresses the subject of the point of observation in the chapter "The View from Above"¹⁰ where, indicating a path from map tracking to aerial mapping for military use, she reconstructs the relationship between aerial view and the narration of natural phenomena on a continental scale.

Using photos from above as a tool to "document the scale of anthropogenic activity on the surface of the planet"¹¹ is legitimate, but it is important to keep in mind that the view from above is not a pure and simple geometrical data point but rather a way of looking and narrating that is full of implications.

Mirzoeff highlights some of them when he writes "visualizing was and is a hierarchical, indeed autocratic, means of imagining the social as permanent conflict.... In short, Anthropocene visibility keeps us believing that somehow the war against nature that Western society has been waging for centuries is not only right; it is beautiful, and it can be won".¹²

The stratification of this imagery dates to the Impressionist period and to Monet's most famous painting *Impression, soleil levant* "a painting that at once reveals and aestheticises anthropogenic environmental destruction.... The smokiness of the port of Le Havre in Normandy, seen in Monet's picture, was a feature of French visual culture from popular photographs and paint-

9 Jenkins, *New Topographics*, 1975.

10 Sophie Hackett, Andrea Kunard and Urk Stahel, *Edward Burtynsky, Jennifer Baichwal, Nicholas de Pencier, Anthropocene* (Fred ericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2018), 16.

11 *ibid.*, 23.

12 Mirzoeff, "Visualizing the Anthropocene", 216-217.

ings from the middle of the nineteenth century to Maurice de Vlaminck's 1907 painting *Le Havre, les bassins...* The painting is constructed from an unusually high viewpoint... Here the human agents of the Anthropocene look at their creation from its own viewpoint, as it were, and see that it was good".¹³ It is interesting – as we will see later on in our discussion of the Anthropocene agency – that the “human agents” observe the effects of their work from above, and that Mizroeff, with an interesting reversal of meaning, quotes Genesis attributing to them prerogatives of the divine.

In the view from above, therefore, there remains a subtext that reads in terms of the clash between man and the environment but also a childish “idea of control”¹⁴ aroused by the illusion of being in front of a diorama from which, as in Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Dioramas*,¹⁵ someone has omitted the frame.¹⁶ The “super-terrestrial”¹⁷ gaze is an ancient theme that is deeply connected to the dream of flight: it resonates in the story of the Tower of Babel, as well as in the story of Daedalus and Icarus, and is always connected to an expression of power that brings about a break, often unfortunate, with the order of things. The Tower of Babel collapses and Icarus fatally falls into the sea, and even King David's attempt to census his people (to count them “from above” on his throne) is destined to fail. On the other hand, the main prerogative of Superman, semi-divine pop icon of the American metropolis, is flight (or rather the possibility of overcoming a skyscraper, a modern Tower of Babel, with a single leap).

13 *ibid.*, 221-223.

14 Simon Garfield, *In Miniature. How Small Things Illuminate the World* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2018), 15..

15 Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Dioramas* (Bologna: Damiani, 2014).

16 Gianluca Didino, *Essere senza casa. Sulla condizione di vivere in tempi strani* (Rome: Minimum Fax, 2019), 87.

17 Geneviève Azam, “Le temps du monde fini: vers l'après-capitalisme” (Paris: Les Liens qui libèrent, 2012) cit. in Bonneuil and Fressoz, *L'Événement Anthropocène*, 73.

The crowning achievement of these narrations of flight is the conquest of a view of the Earth from space, symbolically marked by the image “Earthrise” taken in 1968 by the astronauts of Apollo 8. The orbital view, according to McLuhan, led to the affirmation of the perception of the Earth as an available artefact. It is no coincidence that the article in question was entitled “At the moment of Sputnik the planet became a global theater in which there are no spectators but only actors”.¹⁸

Concern about the extent of human activity on the planet is visually imbued with the symmetrical ambition of leaving a trace visible from space (from eternity): this dualism implied by the adoption of a zenithal point of view is one of the fundamental elements to reactivate a reflective dynamic and defuse the superficial aesthetic fascination produced by Burtinsky’s images.

Aesthetic seduction also has a natural stabilising function because, as Susan Sontag says, “taking photographs...is a way of certifying experience, [but] also a way of refusing it – by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir.... The very activity of taking pictures is soothing and assuages general feelings of disorientation that are likely to be exacerbated by travel”.¹⁹

The Anthropocene is photogenic, like all catastrophic situations, thanks also to the incessant production of imaginary images employed by science fiction narratives and cinematography, a visual system strongly linked to the urban phenomenon from the early years of the 20th century (with examples ranging from *Metropolis* by Fritz Lang to *Blade Runner* by Ridley Scott) and

18 Marshall McLuhan, “At the Moment of Sputnik the Planet Became a Global Theater in which There are No Spectators but Only Actors”, *Journal of Communication*, vol. 24, no. 1 (1974): 48-58.

19 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977), 177.



that soon embraced a planetary scale, constituting what Musset calls “icônes et géosymboles de l’apocalypse”.²⁰

In the view from above, in the unforeseen geometries produced by human action, one can inevitably recognise, even if only on an implicit level, the images of post-apocalyptic futures or distant planets that science fiction has been producing without interruption for over a century. It should come as no surprise that in an attempt to rationalise its impact on the planet and

exorcise the consequences of its actions, the human race tends to resort to known and to some extent comforting visual codes.

New frontiers of the uncanny: sublime, weird, eerie and tentacular thinking.

Hackett’s notation of how Burtynsky’s work establishes a dialectic between “disorientation and discovery” and that of Baichwal and De Pencier between “familiar and unfamiliar”²¹ is one of the key elements in reopening the imagery of the Anthropocene.

We are dealing with images that, in oscillating between the terms of these dualisms, are less effective on the front of “disorientation” and “unfamiliar”. Indeed, they are images that we are able to trace back to something we know or intuit. It is therefore the case to restore a more effective uncanny or “unheimlich” (unhomely) dimension. The blatant contradiction of wanting to portray the ruins/foundation of the Tower of Babel from the top of the tower itself produces a sort of cognitive stalemate by configuring these scenarios as “automonuments”.²² To reactivate the reflection it is therefore necessary to “go home” and re-enact a more domestic, more grounded dimension of the narrative, that is, to reappropriate the horizontal measurement method used to trace

20 Alain Musset, *Le syndrome de Babylone - Géoconflits de l’apocalypse* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2012), 175.

21 Hackett, Kunard and Stahel, *Anthropocene*, 24.

22 Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York. A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994), 100.

the portolans and position the automatic surveys of the aerial view in the background.

It is necessary to give back to the visualisation of the Anthropocene a procedural and not monumental dimension, and therefore to retrigger the uncanny dimension that in Burtynsky's production is certainly present but weakened by the sense stratifications discussed above.

At a basic level, Burtynsky's images already recall the disturbance associated with the classic idea of Burke's sublime given by the presence of out-of-scale objects or the sudden perception of a disproportionate height (above or below).

Fressoz correctly writes, "au sublime de la quantité, l'Anthropocène ajoute le sublime géologique des âges et des éons, duquel il tire ses effets les plus saisissants... Le discours de l'Anthropocène cultive cette esthétique de la soudaineté, de la bifurcation et de l'événement. Le sublime de l'anthropocène réside précisément dans cette rencontre extraordinaire : une durée infime, quasi-nulle au regard de l'histoire terrienne, aura suffi à provoquer une altération comparable au grand bouleversement qui nous sépare du Mésozoïque.... Les promoteurs de l'anthropocène mobilisent également le sublime de la violence, celui des tremblements de terre, des tempêtes et des ouragans. Le succès scientifique, artistique et médiatique de l'Anthropocène repose évidemment sur cette « jouissance douloureuse », sur ce « plaisir négatif » dont parlent Burke et Kant. L'Anthropocène s'appuie sur un imaginaire de l'effondrement, propre aux nations occidentales qui, depuis deux siècles, admirent leur puissance en fantasmant les ruines de leur futur".²³

The uncanny, as defined by Vidler,²⁴ falls within the domain of

23 Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, «L'Anthropocène et l'esthétique du sublime», in *Sublime, les tremblements du monde, catalogue d'exposition* (Paris: Centre Pompidou Metz, 2016), 3-4.

24 Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny. Essays in the Modern Unholy*, (London: MIT, 1992), 21.

the sublime and coincides with a specific condition of cognitive uncertainty. If the perturbing is therefore “the discovery of the singularity through a caesura, the discovery of the extraordinary in the heart of everyday life”,²⁵ we can begin to read some of the landscapes of the Anthropocene as a sort of uninhabited house, a sort of “restless” space, as Brion would say, or a space “that is not occupied by man... a vacant space immediately filled by emptiness, a generator of anguish and vertigo, a fearsome power that takes possession of all the places from which the divine and the human are excluded”.²⁶

The inscription of the perturbing in the sublime opens the reflection towards two further declensions: the *weird* and the *erie*.

According to Fisher’s definition, the weird as a particular genre of perturbation “involves a sensation of wrongness: a weird entity or object is so strange that it makes us feel that it should not exist, or at least it should not exist here. Yet if the entity or object is here, then the categories which we have up until now used to make sense of the world cannot be valid”.²⁷

This is missing in Burtinsky’s images, at least from a first reading. Nothing we observe surprises us on the level of incorrectness: as uncomfortable as it is to admit, everything we see, beyond the formal fascination of the composition of the whole, is painfully familiar. Only the series dedicated to Dandora Landfill,²⁸ with its harrowing mixture of inorganic and organic, activates a deeper question that, far beyond a banal plan of scandalised pietism, questions us about an apparently wrong and alien form of life.

By adopting this interpretation, the sequence in question regains a sense of profound unease that recalls the image of

25 Michele Cometa and Alain Motandon, *Vedere. Lo sguardo di E. T. A. Hoffmann*, (Palermo: duepunti edizioni, 2009), 170.

26 Marcel Brion, *L’art fantastique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1961)

27 Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater Books, 2016), 15.

28 Hackett, Kunard and Stahel, *Anthropocene*, 62.

the unconscious according to Freud cited by Fisher precisely in relation to the weird: “Now let us, by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past - an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one”.²⁹

The dramatic overlapping of layers where nothing can be forgotten creates a non-Euclidean, “Escherian” and perturbing space. In this reference to the non-Euclidean extraneousness, Fisher recognises the fundamental significance of Howard Philip Lovecraft’s writings and their relevance in defining the exact meaning of the weird.

“All my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large”³⁰: the cold and inhuman cosmic intelligences that populate the stories of the writer from Providence arouse a new kind of terror linked to total indifference to the human.

If read in light of Lovecraft’s work, the title of McLuhan’s article cited above is tinged with disturbing Kafkaesque echoes: if “There are No Spectators but Only Actors” in the theatre we have set up, who does the gaze that observes really belong to? Is Burtinsky’s gaze therefore a failure of presence, a call to an empty agent who observes without looking like a Lovecraftian deity, indifferent and totally foreign to the human?

Including in looking at Anthropocene images the idea that our ability to give a name (or many names) and to explain processes is totally meaningless compared to the actual scope of a geo-

29 Sigmund Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Wien: Internationaler, Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1930) translation by James Strachley, *Civilization and its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1962), 17.

30 Lovecraft mail to the publisher of the magazine *Weird Tales*, 1927. cit. in Fisher, *The Weird And The Eerie*, 16.

logical time is certainly an important step. This does not mean that the consequences of our actions are negligible or ethically acceptable, but that, if we look at them from a weird perspective, we begin to intuit the relative and disturbing nonsense of trying to explain them (not to mention the illusion of being able to govern them). Accepting this vision serves to defuse the risk that “l’Anthropocène, comme tout autre sublime, est sujet à la loi des rendements décroissants: une fois que l’audience est préparée et conditionnée, son effet s’émousse. En ce sens, désigner une œuvre d’art comme « art de l’Anthropocène » serait absolument fatale à son efficacité esthétique”.³¹

If “the weird is constituted by a presence”, the eerie on the contrary “is constituted by a failure of absence or a failure of presence. The sensation of the eerie occurs either when there is something present where there should be nothing, or there is nothing present when there should be something”.³² Indeed, “behind all of the manifestations of the eerie, the central enigma at its core is the problem of agency. In the case of failure of absence, the question concerns the existence of agency as such. Is there a deliberative agent here at all? Are we being watched by an entity that has not yet revealed itself? In the case of failure of presence, the question concerns the particular nature of the agent at work”.³³ It is a fact that human agency is a fundamental requirement of the whole Anthropocene question, even if dependent on the names we try to give to the same phenomenon (since “Nommer n’est pas dire le vrai, mais conférer à ce qui est nommé le pouvoir de nous faire sentir et penser sur le mode qu’appelle le nom”³⁴). Agency apparently moves from human to capital, for example, human agency always remains behind the scenes. Perhaps we should begin to consider the hypothesis

31 Fressoz, Jean-Baptiste, *L’Anthropocène et l’esthétique du sublime*, 8.

32 Fisher, *The Weird And The Eerie*, 61-63.

33 *ibid.*

34 Isabelle Stengers, *Au temps des catastrophes, Résister à la barbarie qui vient* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 2009), 49.

that the agency of the show we are witnessing through Burtynsky's images is not exclusively human.

It is Haraway's contribution about the narratives of Chtulucene that completes the categories necessary to conclude our reflections. If accepting the apocalyptic afflatus has unveiled the structure of the Anthropocene imaginary, Haraway suggests (going back to the French etymology of the term *trouble*³⁵) we cloud it again, mixing it with multispecies narratives. The entry into the story (of man on man) of an otherness that comes from the chthonian dimensions of nature conveys an interesting dimension of weirdness and eeriness to the current visualisation of the Anthropocene.

The chthonian reference, the co-implication of the animal kingdom in a "tentacular" form of thinking, which for Haraway has a totemic representation both in the *Pimosa cthulhu* spider and in the terracotta effigy of Potnia Theron, the Lady of the Animals, allows us to include in our narration the "geostories" where "all the former props and passive agents have become active without, therefore, being part of a giant plot written by some overseeing entity".³⁶

In order to escape a cycle of self-fulfilling prophecies, the production of a future that is represented according to intrinsically anthropocentric narratives must open up to a dimension of perturbation and include hypotheses about agency independent from the human.

35 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chtulucene* (London: Duke University Press, 2016), XX.

36 Bruno Latour, "The Puzzling Face of a Secular Gaia." Gifford Lectures, Lecture 3. Quotation from lecture manuscript (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2013), cit. in Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 81.

Findings

“Quelles histoires faut-il écrire pour apprendre à vivre l’Anthropocène ?”³⁷

With great wisdom, Bonneuil and Fressoz pose the fundamental question by shifting the focus from the unrealistic questions on how to defuse or reverse the transformations produced by the human race to learning new models of life adapted to the new context. A design linked to storytelling is certainly a more suitable context to incorporate the categories of eerie and weird necessary to “understand the uncanny that has pervaded our time”³⁸ and face the “intrusion of Gaïa”,³⁹ an intrusive agency that forcibly broadens the field of our narrative. On the other hand, a downward leap in scale capable of bringing the scope of confrontation back to the *bio* before the *geo* could incorporate new, more effective and productive views of the Anthropocene.

This does not mean that the work of Burtynsky, Baichwal and De Pencier is not a fundamental visual contribution in the reflection on the Anthropocene. However, it is appropriate, in order not to waste the most important and fatal discussion of our times, to interpret these images not only for what they represent, but also in light of the reflection that their realisation triggers.

37 Bonneuil and Fressoz, *L'Événement Anthropocène*, 358.

38 Didino, *Essere senza casa*, 19.

39 Stengers, *Au temps des catastrophes*, 47.

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