

2014

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Repository Citation

Sullivan, H. I. (2014). Dirty traffic and the dark pastoral in the Anthropocene: Narrating refugees, deforestation, radiation, and melting ice. *Literatur für Leser*, 14, 83-97. Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang.

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Dirty Traffic and the Dark Pastoral in the Anthropocene: Narrating Refugees, Deforestation, Radiation, and Melting Ice

"Dirt is essentially disorder [...] Dirt offends against order,"¹ asserts Mary Douglas in her 1966 anthropological text on "purity and pollution." Dirt disturbs order; hence dirt is that which is disorderly and "out of place." Similarly, according to Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism* (2012) the term pollution describes a cultural norm denoting something out of place: pollution, he writes, "does not name a substance or class of substances, but rather represents an implicit normative claim that too much of something is present in the environment, usually in the wrong place."² This definition of pollution and dirt as "something out of place," however, is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain since industrial particulates now cover the entire surface of the Earth in a geologically traceable layer of anthropogenic substances.³ Pollution has no place but rather is everywhere, and functions like a form of "dirty traffic," flowing through both biotic and abiotic cycles alike and entering virtually every organic body and cycle occurring in the biosphere (water, carbon, nitrogen, energy, etc.).⁴ We now measure amounts of anthropogenically generated or distributed toxins in our body – and the earth's surfaces – rather than their presence or absence, and so we name our era the "Anthropocene," the age of human influence on the geological body, and the planetary infusion by dirty traffic.

Scholars from many fields including climatologists, chemists, geoscientists, and literary and cultural critics are debating whether the term "Anthropocene" is an apt description of the era beginning with James Watt's patented steam engine at the end of the eighteenth century and then rapidly expanding after World War II with increased energy extraction and use. The term was originally coined in 2000 by the atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen as a frame for the spread of industrial particulates across the entire surface of the planet; the changes to the climate through the increase in carbon dioxide; and the rapid alteration of arable land surface through agriculture, forest management, and urban as well as industrial development.⁵ Dipesh Chakrabarty

1 Mary Douglas: *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Middlesex: Penguin 1966, p. 12.

2 Greg Garrard: *Ecocriticism*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge 2012, p. 6.

3 For discussions of the Anthropocene and human beings as a "geological force," see Will Steffen/Paul J. Crutzen/John R. McNeill: "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?" In: *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment* 36,8 (2007): p. 614-21.

4 For discussion of pollution in human and nonhuman bodies, see Stacy Alaimo: *Bodily Natures. Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2010.

5 Cf. Steffen/Crutzen/McNeill: "The Anthropocene"; Jan Zalasiewicz/Mark William et al.: "Are we Now Living in the Anthropocene?" In: *GSA (Geological Society of America)* 18,2 (2008): p. 4-8; and Jan Zalasiewicz/Mark Williams/Will Steffen/Paul Josef Crutzen: "The New World of the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene, Following the Lost World of the Holocene, Holds Challenges for Both Science and Society." In: *Environmental Science & Technology* 44,7 (2010): p. 228-31.

asserts that climate change collapses the distinction between natural history and human history and he thus declares the need for the arts and humanities to provide narratives linking the geological time scale with the human time frame.⁶ Although the term Anthropocene is quickly gaining currency, it has yet to be officially accepted by all scholars; some criticize its emphasis on human agency that emphasizes not only our *inadvertent* impact but also suggests a hubristically techno-optimistic belief in our ability to manipulate *purposefully* the entire globe.⁷ All groups, whether they prefer to keep or reject the term “Anthropocene,” agree that we have been altering the planet’s flows of water, life, and dirt. The term “dirty traffic” hence includes all these types of material, bodily, ecological, and cultural flows; it also expands my “dirt theory” project, which explores how we are both bodily and culturally a part of our world’s material, “dirty” systems.⁸

In this essay, I explore dirty traffic in a range of texts from the very beginning of the Anthropocene during the “Age of Goethe” to our contemporary era. In the process, I discuss one text each from the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. These examples of dirty traffic include Goethe’s *Hermann und Dorothea* (1796-97), in which war-torn refugees arrive in the pastoral area near Hermann’s family evoking lengthy descriptions of the (flow of) goods they carry with them and the things they need and receive from the villagers. In Annette von Droste-Hülshoff’s *Die Judenbuche* (1842), the forest is clear cut and the stolen timber carried off on the river. Dirty traffic takes the form of spreading radiation and the people hopelessly fleeing in automobiles in Gudrun Pausewang’s 1987 novel *Die Wolke* describing a fictional nuclear explosion. Finally, Ilija Trojanow’s 2011 *Eistau* follows glaciologist Zeno Hintermeier who is so devastated by the melting of his beloved glacier that he abandons his academic career and becomes an expert on Antarctic cruise ships in another form of traffic. Such instances of dirty traffic from all four centuries of the Anthropocene reveal anxieties about the control of, and access to, resources; about the disruptive flows of people in the wake of wars, disasters, and changing social conditions; about the shifting of power from the aristocracy to the middle class through capitalism and fossil fuels; about the toxic flows released into the atmosphere through such energy sources; and about the devastation wrought as the warming planet dissolves ice and glaciers.

Overall, these flows of dirty traffic considered together raise the central question of this essay, one often asked in ecocriticism: What cultural structures or narratives do we have in the Anthropocene for formulating and addressing such large-scale, global

6 Dipesh Chakrabarty: “The Climate of History. Four Theses.” In: *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009): p. 197-222.

7 A few of the many recent cultural analyses of the Anthropocene include Chakrabarty: “The Climate of History”; Paul Alberts: “Responsibility Towards Life in the Early Anthropocene.” In: *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 16 (2011): p. 5-17; and Heinz Wanner: “Vom Holozän zum Anthropozän — Fakten und Fragen zu 10.000 Jahren Klima- und Menschheitsgeschichte.” In: *Fakten und Fragen zu 10.000 Jahren Klima- und Menschheitsgeschichte. Festvortrag anlässlich der Verleihung der Ehrendoktorwürde*. Ed. Christoph Markschieß. Berlin: HU Berlin 2010, p. 13-36.

8 Included in this “dirt theory” project are two coedited volumes and several essays. See for instance the volume with Caroline Schaumann on *Dirty Nature*, (*Colloquia Germanica* 44.2 [2011], [published 2014]); our joint introduction and my essay: “Dirty Nature and Ecocriticism. Mining, Extraction, and Solar Power in Goethe, Hoffmann, Verne, and Eschbach,” p. 111-131; see also the introduction to the special volume on *Material Ecocriticism: Dirt, Waste, Bodies, Food, and Other Matter* that I coedited with Dana Phillips for *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 19.3 (2012): p. 445-47; and my included essay “Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism,” p. 515-31.

alterations of flows including the global spread of industrial matter and altered weather through climate change?⁹ While dirty traffic describes various forms of deterritorialized pollution, people, and flows that are no longer limited to one ecosystem or region, or even just one continent – dirty traffic is a global category – there is clearly a need in ecocriticism for exploring the advantages of various literary and textual forms and genres that can accommodate this set of circumstances. I propose the “dark pastoral” as a possible frame. With the “dark pastoral,” I link dirty traffic to Timothy Morton’s notion of “dark ecology.” Morton, perhaps idealistically, proposes in *Ecology without Nature* that we eliminate the concept of “nature” altogether since it continues to function as a placeholder for a distant, aesthetic site akin to the ideals of Romanticism.¹⁰ Morton revises “nature” as the “mesh,” which signifies the interconnectedness of everything but, at the same time, is not the same as the “web” of technological links. The mesh includes all of us, human and nonhuman, squishy and metallic, and it encompasses all scales from nanoparticles to the macrocosmos. He describes dark ecology as follows:

I explore the possibility of a new ecological aesthetics: *dark ecology*. Dark ecology puts hesitation, uncertainty, irony, and thoughtfulness back into ecological thinking [...] There is no metaposition from which we can make ecological pronouncements. Ironically, this applies in particular to the sunny, affirmative rhetoric of environmental ideology. A more honest ecological art would linger in the shadowy world of irony and difference. With dark ecology, we can explore all kinds of art forms as ecological: not just ones that are about lions and mountains, not just journal writing and sublimity. The ecological thought includes negativity and irony, ugliness and horror.¹¹

Dark ecology thus maps a position that is always within the mesh, part of the biosphere, and includes both the human and the nonhuman and the biotic and abiotic. It is both the beauty and the horror of this interconnectivity; and so, too, is the dark pastoral: a rejection of the artificial delineation of local and global, of cities here and rural countryside there, as if they were independent from each other in the Anthropocene. The inherent interrelatedness of all these categories, I suggest, finds a workable frame in the dark pastoral.

To invoke the pastoral at all, however, is to enter straight into a major controversy in ecocriticism voiced in some of the most important work in the field over the past twenty years. There are currently two sides to this debate: those like British ecocritic Terry Gifford and the Harvard scholar of American ecocriticism, Lawrence Buell, who see the ancient form of the pastoral, which dates all the way back to the third century B.C. with Theocritus, as a productive form of writing about and describing the possibility of living with and in nature in harmony. The pastoral is in their eyes an alternative model

9 For an overview of possible genres that express and imagine climate change, see Axel Goodbody’s discussion of German climate change texts in “Melting Ice and the Paradoxes of Zeno. Didactic Impulses and Aesthetic Distanciation in German Climate Change Fiction.” In: *Ecocriticism* 4.1 (2013): p. 92-102. For an introduction to the topic and a summary of English-language climate change fiction, see Adam Trexler/Adeline Johns-Putra: “Climate Change in Literature and Literary Criticism.” In: *Wiley Interdisciplinary Review: Climate Change* 2.2 (2011): p. 185-200. As early as 1998, Richard Kerridge also addressed the need for exploring appropriate genres for environmental thinking. See his *Writing the Environment. Ecocriticism and Literature*. London: Zed 1998.

10 Timothy Morton: *Ecology without Nature. Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2007.

11 Morton: *Ecology without Nature*, p. 16-17.

to our current economic and technological systems. Gifford and Buell even suggest that the pastoral might offer some kind of deep “realism” in that it portrays nature in a form as unmediated as it can be in a text.¹² Buell’s ground-breaking ecocritical text from 1995, *The Environmental Imagination*, begins, in fact, with the statement: “I start with the subject of pastoral, for ‘pastoral’ has become almost synonymous with the idea of (re)turn to a less urbanized, more ‘natural’ state of existence. Indeed, this entire book, in focusing on art’s capacity to image and re-mythify the natural environment, is itself a kind of pastoral project.”¹³ The other side of the debate is carried out by much more skeptical views such as those of Garrard, Ursula Heise, Morton, and Dana Phillips, all of whom condemn or reject the pastoral for its idealistic, artificial, and falsely harmonious depictions.¹⁴ As these scholars also note, the pastoral’s portrayal of “balance” and simplified ecological systems is contradicted by more recent scientific work in ecology that now operates in terms of complex and dynamic systems.¹⁵ We thus enter this ecocritical fray here with a proposal for a third possibility beyond embracing or outright rejecting the pastoral. I propose instead a dark form of the pastoral that builds on the three-thousand-year tradition of the seemingly “green” genre yet I also acknowledge two things: first, that the pastoral is a genre of sheer literary artifice whose poetic greenery emerges from a specifically urban perspective. Second, for all its preposterously idealized tropes of pure, distant, and green harmony, the pastoral nevertheless remains the dominant vision of nature in much of our modern techno-industrial culture. That is, as the environmental philosopher Val Plumwood documents, our era of the Anthropocene has a predominant blindness to its most fundamental dichotomy, which sees, on the one hand, beautiful nature apart from the human, and, on the other, a realm of endless resources awaiting extraction.¹⁶ Indeed, many individuals still assume that nature, for the most part, is not a site of national forests dying from beetle infestations that are no longer held in check by the warmer winters,¹⁷ but rather that nature is out there, somewhere, doing just fine and still “free” and “wild” so that we can leave it alone or “enter” it at whim, in all of its “Green” glory and “pristine” sites, at least if we have the right SUV, hiking boots, jet skis, or fracking

12 Cf. Terry Gifford: *Pastoral*. London: Routledge 1999; and Lawrence Buell: *The Environmental Imagination. Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1995.

13 Buell: *The Environmental Imagination*, p. 31.

14 Cf. Garrard: *Ecocriticism*, especially his chapter on the “Pastoral”; Ursula Heise: *Sense of Place, Sense of Planet. The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. New York: Oxford University Press 2008, especially chapters 1 and 4; Timothy Morton: *The Ecological Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2010; and Dana Phillips: *The Truth of Ecology. Nature, Culture, and Literature in America*. New York: Oxford University Press 2009.

15 Cf. Daniel Botkin: *Discordant Harmonies. A New Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Oxford 1990; Eric D. Schneider/Dorion Sagan: *Into the Cool. Energy Flow, Thermodynamics, and Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2005; and Heise: *Sense of Place*, p. 136-43. For ecocritics who discuss this updated view of ecology, see especially Phillips: *The Truth of Ecology*; Garrard on “pastoral ecology,” in *Ecocriticism*, p. 63-65, and, with respect to Goethe, my essay: “Nature in a Box: Ecocriticism, Goethe’s Ironic Wether, and Unbalanced Nature.” In: *Ecozon@ 2.2* (2011): p. 228-39.

16 For a discussion of the blindness of our current societal ideologies based on techno-optimism, see environmental philosopher Val Plumwood’s *Environmental Culture. The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. London: Routledge 2001.

17 For a recent report from the US Forest Service on how climate change impacts bark beetles, with devastating results for our national forests, see: <http://www.fs.fed.us/ccrc/topics/bark-beetles.shtml>. (Accessed 12 June 2014.)

equipment. In order to talk about dirty traffic in the Anthropocene, we need a genre or literary form that does not claim to overcome with ease the highly problematic yet nevertheless still dominant view of nature; we need full recognition of our own pastoral impulses juxtaposed with current and scientifically informed skepticism. We need, in other words, the dark pastoral. To emphasize only one side of the issue is ultimately to be blind to the Anthropocene's most astonishing accomplishments and most disheartening devastation.

The traditional pastoral's long history means it comes with baggage that is often ignored or denied in celebratory appreciation of lovely fields and bucolic folks. In contrast, the dark pastoral recognizes that associations with the "natural" are often perverse and prejudiced. The pastoral's troubled past includes racist connotations such as the "Blut und Boden" rhetoric of National Socialism, the classist prejudices in the British aristocracy, and associations with conservative agrarian politics that assert a "natural" harmony in social systems and nature alike, one that reinforces landowners' and landlords' positions.¹⁸ As Phillips writes: "Those who argue that ecocriticism should focus on the pastoral, and that it ought to be a version of pastoral in its own right, too, also must downplay the fact that the pastoral seems to be an ideologically comprised form because of its deployment, especially in British literature, in service of class and imperial or metropolitan interests."¹⁹ Phillips also rebukes the typical assertion of early ecocriticism (it is rarely so naïve any more) that the pastoral and other devoted forms of nature writing allow for "unmediated" presentation of "actual physical environments"; one hardly need enter at this point into a full-blown critique of a view claiming some kind of transparent transferal of nature in the pages of texts. The dark pastoral comes fully armed with an acknowledgement of discursive practices undergirded by postmodernism's rejection of the possibility of unmediated language and things.

Yet the dark pastoral also recognizes, alongside Gifford, Buell, and Axel Goodbody, that pastoral itself is rarely as one-sided and naïve as it may initially appear. Gifford stresses the productive tensions inherent to every pastoral text, of its purposeful artificiality and nostalgic dreams that seemingly erase harsh social realities and yet thereby proffer a specific form of social commentary through absence. Gifford also describes the three forms of the pastoral that go far beyond traditional expectations: the genre as it includes poems and plays of shepherds and fields; the content in any genre depicting rural lives or greenery; and the use of the term to criticize simplistic visions of nature that ignore social or environmental justice.²⁰ Hence the term pastoral can embrace both the dichotomy and a rejection of the dichotomy. As Goodbody notes, "Leo Marx and Raymond Williams locate the prime achievement of the pastoral in its negotiation between the Arcadian ideals of a life of healthy simplicity and innocent sensual pleasure and the impact of modernization and industrialization."²¹ The pastoral

18 See Garrard's discussions of Heidegger's Nazism as well as his philosophy of dwelling in chapter 6 in *Ecocriticism*; and his essay, "Heidegger Nazism Ecocriticism". In: *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 17.2 (2010): p. 251-71.

19 Phillips: *The Truth of Ecology*, p. 16.

20 Cf. the first chapter, "The Three Kinds of Pastoral" in Gifford: *Pastoral*.

21 Axel Goodbody: *Nature, Technology and Cultural Change in Twentieth-Century German Literature. The Challenge of Ecocriticism*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan 2007, p. 210.

itself is not easily lumped into a singular problematic category since it can offer nuanced critiques, self-reflection, and productive tensions; it already contains the seeds of the dark pastoral, which invokes the power of inevitable idyllic urges and lunges into artifice.

My first literary example is Goethe's epic tale, *Hermann und Dorothea*, which frames an explicitly pastoral and agrarian vision for the middle class. Refugees from the Napoleonic wars stream into their luxurious fields and vast gardens. Quite unusual for an epic, *Hermann und Dorothea* has a decidedly non-heroic protagonist whose quest for love never extends beyond the next village. The text also neglects military battles except for a description of Dorothea's impressive defense of herself and several other maidens against marauding, would-be rapists; hence this is an epic sans the epic battles typical of the genre. Instead, this is a domestic epic. No enemy other than his own inability to express his growing love for Dorothea drives Hermann to disappear deep into his family's extensive grounds where he briefly considers becoming a soldier. His mother seeks him, providing the textual opportunity for long descriptions of their lands including a walk through orchards laden with apples and pears, a long garden leading to their bountiful "Weingarten" covered in lush grapes, and onwards, further into the fields of grain "Immer noch wandelte sie auf eigenem Boden und freute / Sich der eigenen Saat und des herrlich nickenden Kornes, / Das mit goldener Kraft sich im ganzen Felde bewegte."²² She finally locates him under a huge pastoral pear tree atop a hill, where shepherds seek the shade. "Er [der Baum] war in der Gegend / Weit und breit gesehn und berühmt die Früchte des Baumes. / Unter ihm pflegten die Schnitter des Mahls sich zu freuen am Mittag / Und die Hirten des Viehs in seinem Schatten zu warten; / Bänke fanden sie da von rohen Steinen und Rasen" ("Euterpe," p. 145). Additional evocation of the text's pastoral flavor, beyond fields awaiting the harvest, appears in the seventh song, "Erato," when Hermann meets Dorothea at the trope's inevitable well, where he wishes to declare his love (until he sees the ring on her finger and loses his courage). "Also sprach sie und war die breiten Stufen hinunter / Mit dem Begleiter gelangt; und auf das Mäuerchen setzen / Beide sich nieder des Quells. Sie beugte sich über, zu schöpfen; / Und er faßte den anderen Krug und beugte sich über. Und sie sahen gespiegelt ihr Bild in der Bläue des Himmels" ("Erato," p. 167). The pastoral setting contrasts with the fiery background of the French Revolution which we only hear about from afar through the refugees. Yet this pastoral is not intended for the aristocracy; it is altered for the bourgeoisie, whose ascendancy brings its own radical changes.

Although the traditional pastoral may appear to be a simplistic frame, the trope has the potential to offer richer nuances. As Gifford elaborates in detail, the pastoral's very artifice encompasses complex and often intentionally ironic contrasts on many levels: its insistence on the differences between the dirty urban and the lovely rural; between a distant, lost Golden Age and a gritty present era; between mythical and historical narratives; and between an intentionally artificial harmony in contrast to the "reality" of daily "modern" life. Gifford notes that the pastoral depicts a sense of harmony only on the surface and that

22 Johann Wolfgang Goethe: *Hermann und Dorothea*. In: *Goethe Werke. Versepen, Schriften, Maximen und Reflexionen*. Ed. Friedmar Apel/Hendrik Birus, et al. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1998, p. 145. Henceforth cited in the main text according to song and page number, e.g. "Euterpe." p. 145.

its form and locale imply tensions and explicit dichotomies which it has always exploited: "From the beginning of its long history the pastoral was written for an urban audience and therefore exploited a tension between the town by the sea and the mountain country of the shepherd, between the life of the court and the life of the shepherd, between people and nature, between retreat and return."²³ In other words, the pastoral's power is partially fueled by its inherent and often unbridgeable tensions. Goethe's epic borrows directly from the pastoral's tensions in humorously provocative ways; after all, the peaceful nostalgia for days long ago hardly applies in the same way for the recently "landed bourgeoisie," or the heroic girl tamed by the decidedly non-heroic home boy. Goethe's pastoral in *Hermann und Dorothea* is replete with irony that reflects the altered paths of material and economic flows already taking place in the early Anthropocene.

Goethe's epic poem attends specifically to the flows of people and of worldly goods transported during war, destroyed by fire (as in his parents' youth), or exchanged. In other words, it shares with traditional epics like the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Iliad* an investment in describing vast quantities of material goods. Goethe's descriptions, however, emphasize the struggles and losses that occur when these goods are transported in despair – dirty traffic, in other words – in contrast, for instance, to the riches that Siegfried and Kriemhild share at their wedding. *Hermann und Dorothea* opens as the villagers describe the mass arrival of bedraggled refugees carrying their goods on their backs and in rickety wagons. In the first scene, the Apothecary provides details of the hordes transporting large amounts of unwieldy goods:

Als wir nun aber den Weg, der quer durchs Tal geht, erreichten,
 War Gedräng' und Getümmel noch groß der Wanderer und Wagen ...
 Traurig war es zu sehn, die mannigfaltige Habe,
 Die ein Haus nur verbirgt, das wohlversehne, und die ein
 Guter Wirt umher an die rechten Stellen gesetzt hat,
 Immer bereit zum Gebrauche, denn alles ist nötig und nützlich;
 Nur zu sehen das alles, auf mancherlei Wagen und Karren
 Durcheinander geladen, mit Übereilung geflüchtet.
 Über dem Schranke lieget das Sieb und die wollene Decke,
 In dem Backtrog das Bett, und das Leintuch über dem Spiegel" ("Kalliope," p. 30).

The text pays close attention to things and people on the move, driven to flee amid war's dirty traffic. The wartime destruction of places and people is portrayed here initially as a flow of stuff, lots of stuff, and yet not nearly enough to sustain those in flight, for they need more supplies. Indeed, Hermann arrives late on the scene because he must wait on his mother to gather donations.

One might wonder why so much emphasis in Goethe's epic national poem is placed on the transport and exchange of goods. The answer relates to class and economic distinctions, at least according to Frank G. Ryder and Benjamin Bennett, who describe this poem as being specifically bourgeois rather than national or eternal: "What Goethe is concerned with here is not the purely human but the specifically bourgeois, not an eternal vision of truth but an unresolved and unresolvable problem in our most immediately actuality."²⁴ Apparently, the bourgeois problem consists in moving goods

23 Gifford: *Pastoral*, p. 3.

24 Frank G. Ryder/Benjamin Bennett: "The Irony of Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*. Its Form and Function." In: *PMLA* 90.3 (1975): p. 433-46; here p. 437.

around in a time of crisis. T.M. Holmes also links Goethe's "idyllic epic" to questions of accumulation, as well as to generic form.²⁵ For Holmes, Goethe portrays the demise of the idyll in precisely the bourgeoisie's momentum of *private accumulation* that "outgrows and undermines the idyllic exemplar."²⁶ Private accumulation defines the middle class according to Holmes; and Ryder and Bennett similarly stress the economic issues of flowing goods. These economic changes were already bringing increased power to the middle class and to an expanding democracy, but they also brought the beginnings of long-term alterations to ecological flows, with devastating implications. Indeed, this is in part what Goethe is describing, albeit not in these specific terms: increased production of goods, modern political interactions, and expanded international trade, all of which eventually lead to large-scale ecological changes. The typical analyses of the early Anthropocene readily note the financial and political developments but overlook the environmental issues that, admittedly, have only recently become clearer. The flow of dirty traffic at the beginning of the Anthropocene has usually been read with much insight as an indicator of a changing world in cultural terms. It is also relevant to explore the changes in ecological terms, which is, indeed, what Goethe documents during his tenure in Weimar while managing mines, river flooding, and the forests.²⁷

Hermann und Dorothea ends with a marriage (typical of a comedy and of the middle-class genre, the novel) rather than the mass deaths common to the epic; Hermann finally manages to propose to Dorothea. Their love bond is stated specifically in terms of possessing material goods. Dorothea first cites the parting words of her former fiancé, noting the instability of the world around them: "Uns gehört der Boden nicht mehr; es wandern die Schätze; / Gold und Silber schmilzt aus den alten heiligen Formen; / Alles regt sich, als wollte die Welt, die gestaltete, rückwärts / Lösen in Chaos und Nacht sich auf, und neu sich gestalten" ("Urania," p. 183). The refugees' flight and the political upheavals are described here as a larger dissolution of the world that is, however, countered by Hermann's domestic, artificial stability. He hears her tale and then responds with assertions of solid possessions. Placing the ring on her finger, he declares that "all this is ours." "Desto fester sei, bei der allgemeinen Erschütterung, / Dorothea, der Bund! Wir wollen halten und dauern [...] / 'Dies ist unser!' so laß uns sagen und so es behaupten! / [...] Du bist mein; und nun ist das Meine meiner als jemals" ("Urania," p. 183-84). Out of an idyll of love and land Goethe creates an epic, with what is best described as dark pastoral overtones, about the rise of the middle class whose marriages are determined by the flow and possession of things.

If the late eighteenth century documents the shifting cultural landscapes away from the aristocracy and into new and uncertain territory expressed in terms of the flow of goods, the nineteenth century finds Annette von Droste-Hülshoff disturbed by the loss of aristocratic power over the flow of resources – trees – from the German forests in *Die Judenbuche*. She also reveals a fear of uncontained flows more specifically:

25 T.M. Holmes: "Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*. The Dissolution of the Embattled Idyll." In: *The Modern Language Review* 82.1 (1987): p. 109-18; here p. 110.

26 Holmes: "Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*," p. 118; emphasis mine.

27 Cf. the discussion of Goethe's forestry by Waltraud Maierhofer: "Goethe and Forestry." In: *Invaluable Trees. Cultures of Nature, 1660-1830*. Ed. Laura Auricchio/Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook/Giulia Pacini. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation 2012, p. 265-80.

the mixing of blood, as Martha Helfer delineates in her discussion of the anti-Semitic aspects of the novella,²⁸ and the shifting economic systems described by Richard Gray.²⁹ The novella begins in a tainted pastoral: the village “B” in East Westphalia lies near a beautiful forest but is populated by poor inhabitants living in smoky cottages still without factories and major highways. Friedrich Mergel was born in a village “das, so schlecht gebaut und rauchig es sein mag, doch das Auge jedes Reisenden fesselt durch die überaus malerische Schönheit seiner Lage in der grünen Waldschlucht eines bedeutenden und geschichtlich merkwürdigen Gebirges. Das Ländchen, dem es angehörte, war damals einer jener abgeschlossenen Erdwinkel ohne Fabriken und Handel, ohne Heerstraßen [...]”³⁰ The beautiful landscape starkly contrasts with its unfortunate inhabitants who participate in all kinds of “dirty traffic” (in Droste-Hülshoff’s eyes), including possible incest, racist notions of blood mixes, money exchanges, usury, the rising middle class, international wars, and, most relevant for this discussion, the *Waldfrevel*, or the theft and illegal transport of timber by the so-called *Blaukittel*. They raze the forest, clear-cutting every single tree down to the saplings, and so wreak ecological havoc. Of greater concern in the text is that they thereby deprive the lords of the control over wood, which is now carried away on the rivers and turned into someone else’s profit. The *Blaukittel*

verheerten alles wie die Wanderraupe, ganze Waldstrecken wurden in einer Nacht gefällt und auf der Stelle fortgeschafft, so daß man am andern Morgen nichts fand, als Späne und wüste Haufen von Topholz, und der Umstand, daß nie Wagenspuren einem Dorfe zuführten, sondern immer vom Flusse her und dorthin zurück, bewies, daß man unter dem Schutz und vielleicht mit dem Beistande der Schiffeigentümer handelte (*J*, 29).

Droste-Hülshoff depicts the forest loss as symbolic of the noble loss of control over morals and flows. In fact, any flow of resources that shifts into the hands of others – whoever they may be – functions as cause for moralistic outrage in the novella. If Goethe portrays the increased flow of stuff and people with the French Revolution and ensuing wars in terms of the rise of the bourgeoisie, Droste-Hülshoff portrays an increased rate of extraction that grapples indirectly with the question of whether nature and the forests are a *Bestand* or “standing reserve.”³¹ The use of resources is aesthetic and balanced in her world, at least if controlled by “generous” landowners like “Herr von S,” but disturbing when in the hands of “immoral” individuals (as according to Helfer’s insightful analysis). From Goethe’s expansive list of mobilized stuff in the eighteenth century to debates about who should have access to resources in terms of “blood” and “purity” in the nineteenth, the dirt of dirty traffic in many ways increases through time. The dark pastoral provides a frame for viewing Droste-Hülshoff’s

28 Cf. Martha Helfer: “‘Wer wagt es, eiteln Blutes Drang zu messen?’ Reading Blood in Annette von Droste-Hülshoff’s *Die Judenbuche*.” In: *German Quarterly* 71.3 (1998): p. 228-53.

29 Cf. Richard T. Gray: “Red Herrings and Blue Smocks: Commercialism, Ecological Destruction, and Anti-Semitism in Annette von Droste-Hülshoff’s *Die Judenbuche*.” In: *German Studies Review* (Oct. 2003): p. 515-42.

30 Annette von Droste-Hülshoff: *Die Judenbuche*. In: Annette von Droste-Hülshoff: *Prosa, Versepen, Dramatische Versuche, Übersetzungen*. Ed. Bodo Plachta/Winfried Woelsler. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1998, p. 11-62; here p. 11. Further references to this edition of *Die Judenbuche* will appear in the main text as *J* plus page number.

31 Martin Heidegger famously formulated the critical term “standing reserve,” or *Bestand* in order to contrast this economic vision that sees forests as timber rather than a complex ecosystems of which we are also a part. See Martin Heidegger: “Die Frage nach der Technik” In: *Martin Heidegger: Vorträge und Aufsätze*. 7th ed. Pfullingen: Verlag Günther Neske 1994, p. 9-40.

version of the shifting economic and sylvan landscapes without losing sight of the tensions implied by a celebration of the green forests that is all too easily combined with the condemnation of allowing non-nobles access to resources. In fact, the dark pastoral highlights a particular conundrum here: the shift into middle-class democracy based on a capitalistic system brings much greater freedom and autonomy to many people even as it brings much more rapid depletion of ecological systems.

While Droste-Hülshoff's novella is conservative politically and its depiction of deforestation appears to function primarily as a "moral" issue that outweighs the ecological, her tale nevertheless significantly overcomes any designation as a merely local incident. Indeed, one of the most disturbing aspects of the story, at least from within its own racist framework, is the issue of mixing people, countries, wars, and spreading resources. In other words, *Die Judenbuche* conveys the impossibility of maintaining a simple delineation between the local and the global. Droste-Hülshoff appears to prefer clear boundaries, but she lays out their erasure through references to various international events. Friedrich and his half-brother Johannes Niemand flee from village B and remain missing for years, for example, eventually joining the Austrian struggle against the Turks. They are captured and live for twenty-six years as slaves near the Bosphorus until Johannes (or rather Friedrich pretending to be Johannes) attempts suicide in order to escape but is rescued by a Dutch ship. The international interactions highlighted in Johannes's tale upon his return home, before his death when we learn that he is actually Friedrich, suggest that identities and locations are more fluid than Droste-Hülshoff would like. Even little village B is influenced by the events taking place across Europe and Asia, and not just by the local wood that is logged and sold down river.

The erasure of local boundaries is noteworthy for ecocriticism generally and for the dark pastoral in particular. As Heise explains in *Sense of Place, Sense of Planet*, the presumed border between the local and the global is always constructed. She notes that the local itself does not offer some pure and unmediated form of nature or access to it in contrast to an artificial national, continental, or global relationship, as is often assumed in environmental discourse (and often sought in Droste-Hülshoff's *Judenbuche*); rather, the local itself is fully imbricated within larger systems and cycles of exchange and construction. Heise proposes replacing the idealized "local" with the concepts of "deterritorialization" and "eco-cosmopolitanism" that link ecocritical studies with recent ideas on globalization and hybridity. She writes:

In a context of rapidly increasing connections around the globe, what is crucial for ecological awareness and environmental ethics is arguably not so much a sense of place as a sense of planet – a sense of how political, economic, technological, social, cultural, and ecological networks shape daily routines. If the concept of deterritorialization foregrounds how cultural practices become detached from place, it also points to how these practices are now imbricated in such larger networks.³²

Heise's eco-cosmopolitanism belies the assumption that local places offer "authentic" nature – a pastoral purity – and emphasizes instead a globalized deterritorialization typical of the Anthropocene. It is this broadening that Droste-Hülshoff's novella delineates so unhappily and despite itself through the examples of the trees exported

32 Heise: *Sense of Place*, p. 55.

from Westphalia to other countries; through the emphasis on Aaron, the Jewish money lender, suggesting the development of more modern capitalistic practices; the Austrian war against the Turks; and the unmentioned impact of the Napoleonic wars on the German lands. Her local region is deterritorialized, much to her dismay, and it thereby functions as another example of the dark pastoral in which forests, class, economics, war, and the flows of people take on new forms.

The move into the twentieth century continues this transformation into new forms of dirty traffic, especially in Gudrun Pausewang's young adult novel, *Die Wolke*, which presents the invisible flow of radiation after a "Super-GAU," a fictional nuclear explosion in Grafenrheinfeld. Radiation, in particular, cannot be "territorialized"; it crosses boundaries both political and bodily. Droste-Hülshoff's *Waldfrevel* and her anti-Semitic blood motifs documented by Helfer are one form of dirty traffic encompassed by the dark pastoral, and Pausewang's study of what happens to human bodies, particularly children's bodies, when exposed to nuclear radiation is another. Pausewang's flows include the radioactive rain dousing everyone in its wake, and the tragic efforts of people trying to flee with their cars and goods. The children and youth suffer most severely from the radiation and from the social breakdown when crowds rush to escape the mushroom cloud. This horrific imagery, however, sharply contrasts with the novel's opening pastoral moment in which the sun gleams through birch trees, white cotton-ball clouds float across the deep blue sky, and cherry blossoms fall like snowflakes – until suddenly a siren screams. All the children are sent home from school with uncertain warnings.

An diesem Freitagmorgen wehte eine starke Brise. Wenn Janna-Berta aus dem Fenster schaute, sah sie die jungen Birkenblätter in der Sonne glitzern. Die Schatten der Zweige zitterten auf dem Asphalt des Schulhofs. Über die Pavillondächer schneite es Kirschblütenblätter. Der Himmel war tiefblau. Nur vereinzelte Wolken, weiß und leicht wie Watte, trieben über ihn hin. Für einen Maimorgen war es außergewöhnlich warm. Die Sicht war klar. Plötzlich heulte die Sirene.³³

The pastoral beauty is destroyed and the world is contaminated. The opening pages preceding the actual narrative include a series of unanswerable questions such as "Was tun? H-Milch kaufen oder Büchsenmilch? *Wir wissen es nicht!*" (*W*, 7); many of them address the problem of purchasing and consuming toxic goods and food. Others specify movements of people, and of transport or transportation specifically, such as the shipment of spinach throughout the regions of Germany, the traffic that continues despite the devastating damage as trucks drive past protestors marching in the opposite direction across the border into France, and mothers who fear to let their children outside because of the radiation. All of these concerns embody forms of dirty traffic in *Die Wolke* that diverge significantly from the novel's opening pastoral vision of beautiful nature; a lovely portrait that is swiftly destroyed by human actions much like in Rachel Carson's environmental classic, *Silent Spring*.

The novel follows the siblings Janna-Berta and her little brother Ulli as they try to escape the mushroom cloud but fail. Ulli is hit by a car and dies – significant for this essay on dirty "traffic" – whereas Janna survives but is sickened both physically by the

33 Gudrun Pausewang: *Die Wolke*. Ravensburg: Ravensburger Buchverlag 1989, p. 13. Further references abbreviated as *W* plus page number.

fallout and emotionally by the denial and cold-hearted behavior of the adults who fail to protect their families and to prevent further incidents. The most poignant images in the novel are of the poisoned, dying children, and of the impossible traffic jams as entire areas try to escape the radioactivity: dirty traffic in Pausewang's words is a row of cars filled with panicked people who become violent:

Auf der Autobahnauffahrt bewegte sich so gut wie nichts. Dicht an dicht fuhren oben die Wagen und gaben nur selten einem, der von unten kam, den Weg frei. Unten an der Abzweigung wurde das Chaos immer schlimmer. Eine Frau am Steuer eines kleinen Fiat, der seitlich abgedrängt worden war, schrie verzweifelt. Drei Kinder auf dem Rücksitz schrien mit. Zwei andere Wagen standen ineinander verkeilt. Aber niemand kümmerte sich darum (W, 45).

The radioactivity is carried by a storm system directly over the endless stream of automobiles and overfilled trains that are insufficient for accommodating the hysterical crowds. Children are trampled, run over, and abandoned; then they are gathered in hospitals overrun by the dying who vomit, lose their hair, and fade away slowly. Finally, the lucky children who survive are reincorporated into new groups and families, much as the goods and the few fortunate refugees in Goethe's epic are brought into the fold of middle-class German comfort. Above all, *Die Wolke* reveals that one cannot actually flee such clouds of radioactivity: this is an extreme view of Anthropocene's inescapable pollution.

While the permeable boundaries that so upset Droste-Hülshoff are economic, political, racial, and "morally" ecological (use of resources by some is good, by others not), those in this twentieth-century novel of nuclear disaster are primarily ecological and bodily. In this context, Stacy Alaimo's concept of "trans-corporeality" from her 2010 *Bodily Natures* is helpful: Alaimo describes how our bodies participate in the voluntary and involuntary intake and expelling of matter, whether nutritious or toxic, when we eat, drink, and breathe. She emphasizes the movement of substances across and through bodies and matter with her concept of "trans-corporeality."

Indeed, thinking across bodies may catalyze the recognition that the environment, which is too often imagined as inert, empty space or as a resource for human use, is, in fact, a world of fleshy beings with their own needs, claims, and actions. By emphasizing the movement across bodies, trans-corporeality reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures. But by underscoring that *trans* indicates movement across different sites, trans-corporeality also opens up a mobile space that acknowledges the often unpredictable and unwanted actions of human bodies, nonhuman creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors.³⁴

This trans-corporeal frame for thinking is helpful when approaching Pausewang's horrific, lengthy descriptions of children fleeing in vain from radioactive clouds and succumbing to radiation poisoning. That is, Alaimo makes evident that trans-corporeal exchanges with our world have both a negative and a positive side. The positive, life-affirming aspect is based on our enmeshment in ecological systems much like Morton's notion of the mesh: we are fully integrated into our bodily environs of air, food, water, and with our co-species as well. The negative aspects include the vulnerability of all living beings when toxic substances are present. Pausewang's novel also reveals how ill prepared we are to navigate the implications of our trans-corporeality, and how the impact of our toxic waste is most severe for the young and vulnerable. In

34 Alaimo: *Bodily Natures*, p. 2.

the context of the Anthropocene's energy accelerations and fuel choices, dirty traffic would thus seem to get even dirtier.

Moving into the twenty-first century, Ilija Trojanow provides another version of dirty traffic with a Werther-like story of failed love between the glaciologist Zeno Hintermeier and his beloved glacier that melts away. *Eistau* thus transforms climate change into a personalized experience of the vast and inhuman scale of global weather patterns. The romance begins early with a love for ice leading to an "arranged marriage," once Zeno is assigned a specific glacier by his "Doktorvater":

Jeden Mai und jeden September reiste ich einige Tage vor den Studenten an, um mich ungestört meinen Sinneseindrücken zu überlassen, um den Gletscher ungestört zu erfühlen, ehe wir ihn anfaßten, diesen Gletscher, den mir mein Doktorvater in Obhut gab, eine arrangierte Ehe, die sich über die Jahre in Leidenschaft verwandelte, als sei jede Messung eine Bestätigung seiner Einzigartigkeit.³⁵

Zeno walks around the glacier, feels it, touches it; stating lovingly: "[ich] legte meine Hände an seine Flanken und strich mir dann mit den Händen über das Gesicht. Sein eisiger Atem, seine belebende Kälte" (*E*, 51). As his love grows for the glacier, the ice shrinks, and he comes to know its individuality as a dying voice. He observes its passing in terms of his own phases of life in what for the human scale may seem ploddingly slow but, in terms of glacial deep time, is extraordinarily rapid. The glacier's changes are indeed faster than his own: "Wir alterten gemeinsam, doch der Gletscher ging mir im Sterben voraus" (*E*, 52). Despair ensues, and Zeno deems the warnings about the outcome of our current practices to be hopelessly Cassandra-like; the "Massenvernichtung" of glaciers continues unabated:

Wir hatten gewarnt, vergeblich, es war von Jahr zu Jahr schlimmer gekommen. Unsere Epoche löst kassandrische Prophezeiungen strebsam ein, selbst die Zuversichtlichen melden sich mit Unkenrufen zu Wort. Solch eine Zerstörung hatte ich trotz alledem nicht vorhergesehen, nicht, als das Gletscherort verschwand (ich feierte meinen Fünfzigsten), nicht, als die Zunge bei einem Eissturz abriß und in der Folge rasch schmolz (ich feierte meinen Sechzigsten), und nun dieser Anschlag aus dem toten Winkel unseres Zweckoptimismus (*E*, 88).

Zeno abandons his wife, his home, the Alps, and his university position in Munich, becoming rather ironically an expert lecturer employed by cruise ships touring the Antarctic where there are still glaciers aplenty. This novel exemplifies dirty traffic with its energy-rich cruise ship full of wealthy tourists visiting the ice and penguins without any sense of their own impact on the water and animals. Zeno lectures to no avail about our non-sustainable cultural and economic choices.³⁶ After several years of failed endeavors to educate the wealthy tourists about the natural world, especially the pleasures of ice, Zeno at last loses hope. Pirate-like, he abandons all the tourists and crew on the ice during an artistically staged "SOS" supposedly bringing awareness to climate change, commandeers the ship and sets off alone to dive into the sea and join his beloved glacier in a suicidal staging worthy of Werther. Goodbody notes that the novel creates both sympathy for, and distance from, Zeno as he hopelessly tries to escape culture during the Anthropocene, when there is in fact no exit.

35 Ilija Trojanow: *Eistau*. Munich: Carl Hanser 2011, p. 50-51. Further references abbreviated by *E* plus page number.

36 Cf. Goodbody: "Melting Ice," especially p. 96-100.

Eistau's narrative structure emerges from a complex weave of three different time frames, which suggests that our choices today are fully connected to both our past and future actions. The novel opens with the first frame, which comprises the middle of the story, when Zeno is returning yet again to another season on the cruise ship. The second frame is the final one, in which radio calls documenting the moment after Zeno hijacks the ship are intermixed with advertising and other impersonal phrases; this continues until the ship is found again at the end of the novel, after Zeno has abandoned it and joined the ocean. The third frame is the past, the tale that begins it all in Zeno's childhood love affair with ice that quickly progresses through his marriage and career until he runs away and accepts the cruise ship position. These three timescapes interweave, like fragmented flows that blur the narrative progress and sharply contrast with the concrete references to "absolute location" of the action given in mathematical coordinates of longitude and latitude at the beginning of each chapter. Space is graphed concretely and absolutely into every chapter, even as the ice melts and time shifts back and forth. Of course, there is no possible return to the exact body and form in the eternal water cycle that defies a single absolute location. The melted water eludes spatial designation and thus is the epitome of deterritorialization. Zeno finally decides to join his glacier in the ocean, rather than to keep fighting the practices causing it to melt. His choice indicates that we cannot escape the dirty traffic that we inadvertently create, and that our culture remains disturbingly blind to its various dirty manifestations.

In conclusion, the forms of dirty traffic in Goethe, Droste-Hülshoff, Pausewang, and Trojanow express concerns regarding the altered flows of resources, people, and bodies that are deterritorialized in the Anthropocene. Goethe begins with the movement of people but highlights primarily the exchange and possession of material goods as the basis of marriage, though the pastoral garden into which Hermann and Dorothea plan to retreat seems unlikely to prevent the conflagration spreading across Europe from disrupting their lives at home. Droste-Hülshoff moralizes about timber disappearing down the river concomitant to the uncontrollable deterritorialization of the rising middle class and increased access to timber, but her apprehensions about the loss of aristocratic control outweigh the loss of trees. Pausewang turns to bodies, revealing the toxic flows that make us aware of our own trans-corporeality in the most disturbing of forms. Trojanow's novel, finally, humanizes large-scale climatic devastation yet with ironic Wertherian futility. While *Eistau* traces the absolute location of Zeno's travels right up until he joins the sea, water and dirty traffic deviate from easy mapping. The Anthropocene is delineated not by stable places, but rather by escalated flows across land, time, and bodies at an ever-faster pace, producing refugees, stolen timber, traffic jams, radioactive rain, and melting glaciers in the fast-forwarding of the biospheric cycles. Trojanow's Zeno concedes the battle against climate change and chooses flight into the sea in order to merge with the watery flows. Perhaps Trojanow is suggesting that we are on a suicidal path either way. "Ich werde hinausgehen, wenn es dunkelt, ich werde fliegen, umgeben von Weißblutfischen und Seescheiden, die unter mir schweben, von Rochen, die über mich hinweggleiten, ich werde fliegen, bis mein Blut zu Eis geronnen ist" (*E*, 167). Zeno's capitulation might also suggest that attempting to flee actually increases the exploitations of our age: a professor studying ice and glaciers may do more positive work against climate change

than someone living off the rich traffic of a cruise ship. The frame of the dark pastoral helps remind us that there is no simple escape from the very systems that sustain us even as they deplete resources, nor is there an easy exit from our dominant cultural frames like the pastoral. We can no more elude current economic practices by living on cruise ships than we can overcome pastoral dreams of nature; not, at least, in this current cultural frame.

The dark pastoral, in other words, offers a means for grappling with the many forms of dirty traffic in the Anthropocene without claiming to eradicate dominant paradigms in one fell swoop. After all, how else might we describe our current state on a warming planet, when the majority of people in industrialized countries still view nature as a pure, pristine place irrelevant to our daily lives and, simultaneously as well as paradoxically, as a site of endless resources that can be continually extracted and consumed with no consequences other than an occasional need to improve our technological ability to extract and “reduce”? The artifice of the pastoral is met, and matched – if not outdone – by the artifice of our non-sustainable economic models that assume unlimited resources and demand unlimited access with little accounting for long-term ecological costs. We thus deploy the dark pastoral with an awareness of the frames that continue to shape our practices, including our own pastoral impulses, but combine them with some doses of skepticism, science, and narratives of dirty traffic in order to engage but not capitulate to the dirty flows in which we all participate.