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Firing up the Anthropocene: Conflagration, Representation and Temporality in Modern Australia

ABSTRACT

The European colonization of Australia introduced a new population into a continent in which Indigenous people had practiced cyclic burning as a form of ecosystem maintenance since time immemorial. The settlers' complete disdain for Indigenous knowledge and related practices caused these customs to largely fall into disuse. One result of this was an increased vulnerability of landscapes to bush fires, a factor that has risen to the fore in the early twenty-first century. The fires that have swept across the landscape with increasing frequency and ferocity have provoked fears of a rolling, fiery apocalypse that might make living in many areas of the continent untenable. This marks a new phase of settler anxiety that has been fuelled by extensive coverage of fires on broadcast and digital media platforms. Blending discussions of Indigenous culture, 19th-21st-century European settler visual art, literature and modern communications media, this article begins by examining the nature of Anthropocene modernity and the very different worldviews and practices of Australian Indigenous peoples. Particular attention is given to senses of time and of living and working with fire. Subsequent sections open up the topic with regard to the planetary present and how we might adjust to the future.

Keywords: Anthropocene, fire, Australia, *tempus nullius*.

INTRODUCTION: A PLACE OF FIRES

Australia is the driest inhabited continent on the planet. The government agency Geoscience Australia identifies that around 35% of the continent's land mass receives less than 250 millimetres of rain per year and is classified as desert, a further 35% receives less than 500 millimetres, rendering it semi-arid, and rainfall is erratic in the remaining 30%. As a result, Australia, and eastern Australia in particular, is highly fire prone. Indeed, Geoscience Australia emphasizes that "[b]ushfires are an intrinsic part of Australia's environment. Natural ecosystems have evolved with fire, and the landscape, along with its biological diversity, has been shaped by both historic and recent fires." The fire pattern identified above is one that Australia's flora and fauna adapted to during the *longue durée* of the pre-colonial period. However, the situation since colonization has been markedly different, as settlers have changed land use, significantly influenced by European models of cultivation and settlement, and have constructed extensive built environments, particularly along Australia's eastern coast.

This article approaches its subject informed by personal experience. I write as an inhabitant of the eastern Australian coast who experienced the impact of the extensive fires that afflicted the region in the summer of 2019–20 and struggled to understand their scale and their implications for the future. Similarly, I started writing this article in December 2020, when more than half of the precious world heritage listed landscape of K'gari ("Fraser Island"), which I have often visited, was on fire (destroying its distinct flora and fauna and endangering human lives), and as I warily monitored smaller fires closer to my home. The article represents an attempt to make sense of this situation, its representations and discourse surrounding it in order to understand how "we"—i.e. a planetary population—got to "here," i.e. the Anthropocene, and how we might survive and adapt.

EXPERIENCE OF FIRES

As if going into battle, the knapsack
full on my shoulders, its pipe and nozzle
slung up like a rifle.
We fought along the river, seeing shrubs
explode, riddled with fire,
eerie sounds of trees shrieking
like things alive, feral, flames like faces
spilling down into the ferns.

> We staggered, sick with the hammering heat,
> dousing endless flames that slammed at us
> like nightmares, sullen ghosts
> groping at our limbs. We plunged
> into that day's red thunder,
> subsumed like suiciders who stare into
> the rifle, gulp the flame. Individuals
> meandering in something huge.
> We choked in smoking semi-darkness,
> shadows through the lead-coloured
> air of limbo. (Salom)

The opening verse of Australian poet Philip Salom's "Bushfire" is perhaps the most striking literary representation of what it is like to be a firefighter faced by a major blaze. It is as fresh and relevant at time of writing (watching similar firefighters on television struggling to combat the conflagration on K'gari), as it was when it was written forty years ago. Yet something profound has changed in the intervening period. In the 1980s the moment of the Anthropocene was only dimly discernible. Evidence was littered across the planet but hadn't been pulled together in a grand theory and narrative. Such developments occurred some twenty years later when a number of scientists and scientific bodies moved to adopt the term "Anthropocene" to identify a new epoch in which humans had exercised a decisive impact on the planet (Zalasiewicz et al.).

Writing before this paradigm shift came into play, Salom presents an apocalyptic, war-like scenario. The fire-*fighter* protagonist is on the "front line" of the fire, his spray nozzle slung "like a rifle" over his shoulder. Fittingly in this regard, the poem invites comparison to works by World War One (WW1) poets such as Wilfred Owen, whose "Dulce et Decorum Est" (1920) conveyed images of a choking mustard gas attack in which "someone still was yelling out and stumbling / And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime." Owen's work attempted to convey the inhumane and apocalyptic carnage of trench warfare in WW1 in which men were tormented by new weapons technologies deployed in harsh and wearying weather conditions. For Owen's generation, WW1 was a close to unimaginable tragedy that many hoped would be the "war to end all wars." By and large, poets and artists with first-hand experience of combat confined themselves to a grim realism nightmarish enough not to require any supernatural association. But Salom's poem readily engages with such elements ("sounds of trees shrieking / like things alive, feral, flames like faces" and "flames that slammed at us / like nightmares, sullen ghosts / groping at our limbs"). The bushfire is represented as *spirited*, antipathetic and vengeful. This element echoes earlier Australian settlers' perceptions

of bushfires and a sense of imminent, fiery apocalypse that has repeatedly manifested itself in Australian colonial and postcolonial society.

One of the first notable European settlers' representations of the scale, intensity and terror of an Australian bushfire was produced by English artist William Strutt in 1864. His painting *Black Thursday*[1] is striking on a number of levels. With its elongated (quasi-cinemascopic) format, glowering darkness and smoke and its representation of a chaotic mass of humans spread across the canvas, Strutt's painting strongly resembles battle-scapes painted by previous European artists, such as Salvator Rosa's *A Cavalry Battle* (c. 1650) or William Sadler's *Battle of Waterloo* (1815). Strutt's painting shows a dark russe sky with trails of smoke and a thin horizontal band compressing horsemen, people on foot and terrified domestic and indigenous animals. Corpses of animals litter the foreground and strange, spectral, flying creatures cluster in a group at the top centre of the image. The scenario is not simply one of crisis but rather one of an apocalypse. *Black Thursday* is strongly informed by two sensibilities: the nature of Australian settler society in the mid-nineteenth century and the artist's own biographical position. The painting, executed thirteen years after the event depicted, represents the tragedy that befell the European settler community and the (scattered and depleted) Indigenous population of Victoria in 1851. European colonization of Victoria began in 1803, with the establishment of a small settlement on Port Phillip Bay. The city of Melbourne was founded in 1835 and the estimated settler population of the state in 1851 was c. 77,000 (the extent of the Indigenous population was not recorded).

As in other areas of Australia, colonial settlement involved multiple and varied acts of aggression, deprivation and marginalization of Indigenous communities. Occupying a land area of 227,436 square kilometres, the settler population was thinly scattered across Victoria and comprised tentative pioneers in a land whose cyclic weather patterns were still a mystery. Victoria experienced extreme heat and drought in 1850 and then, in February 1851, strong, dry winds blew down from the north. These winds fanned small bushfires into a conflagration that swept across a quarter of the state, causing widespread flight of settlers and massive destruction of farm animals, native wildlife and properties. Strutt conveys the intensity of this experience on a suitably epic scale that appears to reflect his own trauma. Arriving in Melbourne from England in 1850, the artist—like other British settlers—had no experience or perception of large-scale forest fires, which were virtually

[1] See reproduction online at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Thursday_bushfires#/media/File:WP_Black_Thursday.jpg

disappearing as deforestation progressed across Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[2] Without clear pictorial antecedents, Strutt adopted a battlefield scenario to represent the event, with one twist: its scene is, more correctly, one of a panicked rout in which the losers crowd the canvas as the victorious elemental fire consumes all before it.

The lack of European settler frames-of-reference for understanding drought and bushfire is also manifest in a small group of other nineteenth-century paintings. Ignorant about and disinterested in Indigenous mythologies and culture more generally, British settlers brought European sensibilities, motifs and paradigms to bear upon their experience of Australia and used these in a range of representational media. One minor strand in this was the attempt to personify various aspects of the Australian environment through figures derived from European mythologies and art-historical traditions. This is particularly evident in two striking paintings that reflected on drought and bushfire in very different ways from Strutt's *Black Thursday*. To a modern sensibility these images may seem distinctly mannered, but they represent creative attempts to come to terms with and represent key aspects of the Australian environment and of settler anxieties concerning it. The first was painted by Charles Conder, who emigrated to Australia from England in 1884 at the age of sixteen. During the first two years of his residence he worked as a surveyor for the New South Wales (NSW) Land Office and then took a job as an artist for the *Illustrated Sydney News* until 1888, when he relocated to Melbourne. Conder's initial employment took him around NSW at a time when eastern Australia was in the grip of an extended drought that had commenced in 1880, delivering NSW its driest years since records began. His 1889 painting *Hot Wind*[3] reflects his experiences of searing summer heat and wilting vegetation so vastly different from the climate and landscapes he had grown up with. The painting was influenced by the European Symbolist movement, which attempted to counter the Naturalist movement in literature and painting with figures and scenes that represented the human experience through resonant symbolism (Goldwater).

Conder represents the hot wind as generated by a malevolent young female whose appearance is typical of late nineteenth-century Symbolist figures (Dijkstra). She is a tormenting, flame-haired, *femme fatale* who lays on the sand, her legs wrapped in ambiguous material that renders them tail-like (like a desert mermaid). The snake that views her, its head

[2] Similarly, major urban fires, such as the one that afflicted Westminster in October 1834, were exceptional events.

[3] See reproduction online at: https://fineartamerica.com/featured/4-hot-wind-charles-conder.html

raised, is reminiscent of the serpent in the Biblical Garden of Eden. Yet the landscape is very un-Eden like. Only a few small dry plants rise through the sand in the foreground and the slope to the left of the image is brown and dry. Off to the far right is a small, indistinct cluster that represents the city towards which the woman is blowing the smoke from her brazier. She is also, notably, white, representing a European imagination of the hot wind personified as a young Caucasian woman rather than any figure from Indigenous Australian culture. A similar vision is also evident in the work of Arthur Streeton, who was born and raised in Victoria. His painting *Spirit of the Drought* (1887) is similar to Conder's in palette and subject but eschews a brazier to represent heat and fire. Instead, he cloaks his standing female nude with swirls of red that both suggest flames and the blood that is absent in the skeletons lying at her feet (recalling the similar bodies featured in Strutt's painting). The Symbolist moment was fleeting in Australia, and subsequent representations of the dry landscape largely ditch imaginings of the spirit of the bush, drought or fire, but such paintings are notable for attempting to imaginatively make sense of the hot, dry and volatile continent. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries the allusive characterizations of fire as elemental, conveyed in Salom's previously discussed verse, are as close as we come to mythologizing the blunt forces of drought and conflagration.

TEMPUS NULLIUS

While expert opinions vary (Clode 3–52), it seems likely that one of the contributing causes of the fires that plagued areas of Australia in the nineteenth and successive centuries was the cessation of Indigenous burning practices that had been undertaken by multiple generations as a form of eco-system management (Daily). Indeed, the coastal grasslands that first attracted European settlers due to their easy navigability on foot or horseback and for their potential as grazing land for cattle or sheep were the result of sustained cyclic burns. These kept combustible plant materials to a minimum, prompted fresh growth and ensured an absence of tangles of deadwood that might impede movement. The burns, which have been characterized as both "quick" and "cool" (Korff), differ from uncontrolled ones in that they do not damage soil nutrients, plant root systems or seeds and are limited in scale, allowing fauna to escape. The arrival of settlers and the massive (deliberate or incidental) depletion of Indigenous populations caused regular burning to cease and stocks of combustible material to accrue. The lack of perception of Indigenous peoples exercising ongoing landscape stewardship reflects

more general, racist-colonialist perceptions of Indigenous peoples' lack of accomplishments and socio-cultural development and, thus, a perception of them as *lacking history*. The colonial perception and doctrine of Australia being a *terra nullius*—literally "nobody's land"—prior to colonial settlement is well known and was a guiding principle of Australian law until it was overturned by the Australian High Court's judgement in the Mabo case in 1992 (AIATSIS).

Along with the colonial assertion of *terra nullius* there has been another pervasive (if less remarked and less formalized) perception of the pre-colonial period as, essentially, *tempus nullius*: empty, unclaimed time: pre-history as an irrelevant blur of everyday events without plan, progression, innovation or impact. This perception necessarily precluded any sense of Indigenous people's landscape-shaping history and regular stewardship. In an intriguing contemporary twist, Krznaric has taken this idea further and argued that the modern moment, more generally, is fixated on the present and therefore views both *the past and the future* as *tempus nullius* in a manner that is dismissive of history and uncaring of the future (qtd. in Darmody). Deep Aboriginal history is often referred to as the "Dream Time," a period in which the landscape and its inhabitants were created by supernatural agency.

For Indigenous Australians this is not remote in the manner of ancient history in the Western world, but is rather a powerful originary moment that resonates in the present and extends into the future. It thereby offers Indigenous people a spiritual asset that can resist colonial and post-colonial repression. The so-called "Dreaming stories" complement the "Dream Time" but often reflect more specific and less prosaic aspects of human inhabitation of land and include tales, songs and visual representations. Such material records Indigenous maintenance burning and uses of fire for hunting, as in the vivid works of contemporary Pitjantjatjara artist Jorna Newberry, which render controlled burns in dark red waves over desert landscapes (see Japingka Aboriginal Art). Both the Dream Time and Dreaming stories are very much part of contemporary Australian Indigenous life and are acknowledged by more liberal/inclusivist non-Indigenous Australians. There is obviously a severe disjuncture between such worldviews and perceptions of there being a historical *tempus nullius* in pre-colonial Australia. Indeed, belief in *tempus nullius* and in the latest moment of the brief period of colonial settlement as being the crucial "now" is antithetical to Indigenous beliefs. This issue was made vividly apparent in early 2020 through the actions of the mining giant Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ). In order to expand one of its iron ore mining areas in Western Australia, RTZ destroyed a 46,000-year-old Indigenous heritage site in the Juukan Gorge, ignoring objections and in full knowledge of the damage it

was doing. Despite media condemnation, the resignation of some senior executives, a public apology and an adverse finding against the company in a parliamentary report, there is no evidence that the company has shifted its priorities and senses of value. Its focus remains resolutely on the now.

Differing and contested notions of time also recur in public debates in other ways. During the peak of the 2019–20 bushfires, Green groups asserted that the fires were evidence of climate change and made pressing arguments for the Government to acknowledge and address this. In response, right-wing Australian politicians frequently stated that "now" wasn't "the time" for such discussions. They also did not indicate what the "right time" for such discussions might be, simply attempting to postpone these into an indefinite future. This returns us to Krznaric's contention that we are increasingly regarding the future as *tempus nullius* in a manner that enables us to effectively dump discussions, measures, waste problems and general planetary degradation into it in an effort to enjoy the last vestiges of extractivist advantage while we can. This is a chillingly callous scenario that offers bleak prospects for the planet. Of course, there are counter-voices and a growing international commitment to zero carbon emissions *sometime* in the near future, but there is an increasing absence of any belief, narrative or rhetoric of progress and/or utopianism in the West. In its place—in liberal/environmentally sensitive contexts, at least—the hope is for slowing the rate of planetary degradation so that some semblance of a liveable future can be held onto.

As Whyte so persuasively identifies, a number of Indigenous perceptions of both the discourses that produced doctrines such as *terra nullius* and such contemporary concepts as *tempus nullius* are significantly different from Western/settler paradigms. In particular, some Indigenous perspectives on climate change "situate the present time as already dystopian" (Whyte 224) and, similarly, regard themselves as confronting Anthropocene climate change through the lens of "having already passed through environmental and climate crises arising from the effects of colonialism" (226). From such perspectives, the current moment is but one in a series of environmental catastrophes that have been caused by colonialism and extractivism (227). Important as such perceptions are within the broad conceptual framework explored in this paper, Indigenous peoples share a common interest with settler populations in seeking to limit the conflagration of ecosystems and natural and built landscapes. As Indigenous proponents of traditional Australian burning practices assert, even at this late stage in colonialism and the Anthropocene, we can still "look after the landscape" through traditional burning techniques (Victor Steffensen qtd. in Faa) in ways that benefit both Indigenous and settler inhabitants, and serve to educate the latter in the process.

REPRESENTING THE FIERY SUBLIME

In terms of representational principles and practices, there are both key similarities and key differences in how we can represent longer-term environmental issues and immediate emergencies. Both are vital and pressing but conflagration brings with it its own sense of urgent nowness. Fire is a compelling spectacle and while pyromania is a well-documented individual "disorder" within western psychiatry (Grant and Kim), the perversity of the impulse is in fact broadly dispersed. This is evident in the contemporary moment through what Demos describes as the "aesthetic delectation" of fire when images produced "in the thick of things" allow the "viewer, distanced, protected—at least temporarily so" to "witness destruction as a sublime aesthetic object . . . as disaster drives a networked imaging system in which viewers are able to escape the clutches of death, even as they can witness, in acts of perverse enjoyment, its visual, if not physical, encroachment."

The notion of fiery destruction as a "sublime" aesthetic object requires some consideration. In common usage the term "sublime" combines a dual sense of aesthetic intensity and of awe, of being close to overwhelmed by an aesthetic object or experience. It's ambiguous as to whether there is anything conventionally pleasant and/or pleasurable about such a response and, indeed, the sublime may be perceived as terrible and, thereby, as inducing terror. Drawing on the work of eighteenth-century philosopher Edmund Burke, Des Pres identifies that terror (in all its manifestations) is inherently connected to (and, in some senses, interchangeable with) sublimity and attracts us—albeit perversely—through offering us a prospect of our own annihilation. This is, of course, the basis of disaster fiction as a genre, providing vicarious thrills that enable us to fleetingly confront darkest fears and extreme visions of local and/or or planetary turmoil. As Page has identified, with particular regard to representations of New York in peril, cities are often the focus of such fictions, offering densely packed "sets" that can be demolished, exploded or inundated in various ways. In these regards, the media coverage of the events at the World Trade Center on 9/11 were preceded and given a genre context by fictional work but with the ante massively upped by the realization that the spectacle was actually happening. Somewhat surprisingly, fire disaster films have been few and far between and have mostly concerned urban disasters (such as John Guillermin's *Towering Inferno* [1974] or Ron Howard's *Backdraft* [1991]). One of the most notable exceptions to the previous characterization was Joseph Kozinski's *Only the Brave* (2017), a film that focussed on a team of fire fighters that lost 19 of their members during a wildfire in Arizona in 2013. The film was widely praised by reviewers for

both its effective representation of human tragedy and its impressive CGI generated fire scenes, with Ebiri praising what he characterized as its "regal grace" and "controlled elegant approach" to its subject.

Notwithstanding the accomplishment of Kozinski's film, one of the problems faced by fiction filmmakers is that their CGI effects and staged scenes cannot match the scale, variety and impact of actual conflagrations. This is particularly the case in the twenty-first century when an array of airborne, lightweight and/or highly portable cameras can provide multiple perspectives on bush fires. These allow us to both regard their scale from afar and witness the drama of moving fire-fronts, spot fires and incinerations at ground level. Our implication into the spectacle depends on how deeply fire terrifies us and what empathy we have for the populations, as well as the environments and regions far from us and/or in locales we may barely know. There is also a broader factor. While fires may have been common historically, particularly in fire-prone areas such as the West Coast of the United States or Eastern Australia, perceptions of their increasing frequency and intensity in the Anthropocene, and of our inability to prevent them, effectively paralyzes us, both in general and, particularly, at peak moments in fire seasons that seem to be increasing in duration. As Demos colourfully asserts: "[H]istory is itself burning with these fires, overwhelmed by current emergency alerts. Imminent disaster demands response, but there's no time for structural analysis of etiology. We seem to be blinded by emergency, restricted to its immediacy, magnifying the emergency itself." In this, we are stuck, fascinated, scared and imperilled by the conflagration of the present.

DISCUSSION—CHALLENGING TIMES

Increasingly, the present and the future appear to have been conquered by the forces of the Anthropocene that our high carbon producing, industrialized societies have unleashed. Krznaric has posed the question in terms of how we might "de-colonize" the future, and this metaphor has some pertinence. If we see colonialism and the extractivist enterprise as innately correlated, as Gómez-Barris has argued, the challenge is to commence that decolonization and to learn the lessons of "Deep Time": the "3.8 billion years of R and D" (Darmody), developed on the planet by natural (i.e. in this context, largely pre-human) systems. Krznaric's discussions identify the need for a new enlightenment that is radically different from *the* Enlightenment that occurred in the West in the eighteenth century and opened the way for science and industry to usher in the Anthropocene.

The fundamental challenges facing humanity in the early twenty-first century are clear. In order to limit traumatic phenomena such as major changes to weather patterns and the inundation of lowlands we need to lower carbon emissions as quickly as possible and prevent further clearance of forests. This is the "core business" of the Green movement and it is vital and urgent. But another, more complex challenge involves adaptation. While the best prospect for nature regenerating itself in patterns that resemble those of the recent past would be for humans to suddenly disappear from the planet (as Weisman makes vivid) this seems somewhat unlikely, though not altogether impossible (given the likelihood of further pandemics). Increasingly it seems that the best-case scenario will involve us slowing and partially limiting Anthropocene phenomena and adapting to them.

One of the traumas experienced by a particular group of Australians in the summer of 2019–20 concerned the combustion of rainforests. People such as myself, who frequent areas populated by subtropical rainforest vegetation (in my case, the far northern eastern corner of NSW referred to variously as "Northern Rivers" or "The Rainbow Region") were caught by surprise by the recent fires. The dense and usually moist ecosystems had previously appeared to be effectively immune to bush fires, breaking their progress when fire-fronts and/or spot fires occurred in grasslands or eucalypts. But 2019–20 was different. The intensity of the fires, fed by the considerable fuel-bases they consumed, swept into rainforest areas and burned-out vegetation that has no "tradition" or mechanisms for coping with such burns in the same manner that grasslands or particular species of trees have. The safe spaces of the rainforest, which activists such as I have toiled to preserve and protect, suddenly appeared colonized by the Anthropocene and their futures were instantly rewritten. It was a salutary experience, one that turned a blowtorch onto complacency and wishful thinking.

Adaptation has been key to both human and multi-species' survival and development throughout global history. Indeed, evolution is a paradigmatic adaptive mechanism. But it is the pace of Anthropocene change that is most challenging and dismaying. The unfolding great extinction event of the Anthropocene is one in which species are recognized as endangered and their numbers variously plummet or disappear more quickly than activist efforts to protect them can be effectively mobilized. Each and every intervention to protect an endangered habitat and the species it houses is important but we are deluded if we think that such local successes are in any way remedying global extractivism and environmental devastation. We are protecting fragments and such fragments may well be all we have left. But fragments are vulnerable, and humanly induced

global warming and regional drought patterns are implacable forces. Two of the scariest phenomena presented to the Australian public during the 2019–20 fire crisis were the fire tornado and the supercell bushfire. These are related to, but significantly more powerful than, the phenomenon of small, heated whirlwinds bearing ash, cinders and smoke often referred to as "fire devils." Revisiting the late nineteenth-century Symbolist paintings discussed in the first section, it is not difficult to imagine Conder's fiery siren blowing such little twisters from her brazier, or even for the red swirls surrounding Streeton's *Spirit of the Drought* to represent such a phenomenon, but fire tornados and supercell bushfires require a larger contextual frame to comprehend. Fire tornados are basically an amplified form of fiery whirlwind, spectacular and dangerous enough, but in supercell thunderstorms—generated by localized weather systems known as pyrocumulonimbus that feature large, rotating updrafts—the whole system can spin, generating intense, fast winds (Dowdy, Fromm and McCarthy) that can easily surprise and overwhelm fire crews or residents attempting to defend their homes. The scale of these phenomena overwhelms human perception and agency, and provides an Old Testament-type vision of a fiery Hell manifesting on Earth.

The existential challenges facing human society in the early twenty-first century are daunting. Staring into the flaming abyss of gigantic bushfires or into the flowing inundation of coastal lowlands can be overwhelming and, in the author's specific context in Eastern Australia, there is a basic but pressing question of how to continue living in a fire zone with any degree of optimism about the present, let alone the future. The challenge involves engaging with time in its multiplicities; of shifting from the now-ism that defines our twenty-first-century lifestyles and worldviews and reasserting the past, present and future as overlapping. In this, the future—or, more precisely, our imagination of the future—can be seen to determine the present, perhaps even more than the present determines the future. If we can conceive a future in which our efforts to slow and stall the Anthropocene have some tangible results, we can imagine adapting to a future that, while significantly different from the present, is still bearable and can provide a platform to integrate natural and human entities and energies in more productive and balanced ways. There is (necessarily) no return to the past, to past ecosystems and past inhabitation practices that have been irrevocably altered. But new scenarios and new prospects for integrated deep ecologies and greater sustainability can inspire us to reconcile disparate worldviews and concepts of environmental stewardship if we can snap out of *now-ism* and inhabit time in a distinctly different manner and with a more profound sense of responsibility.

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