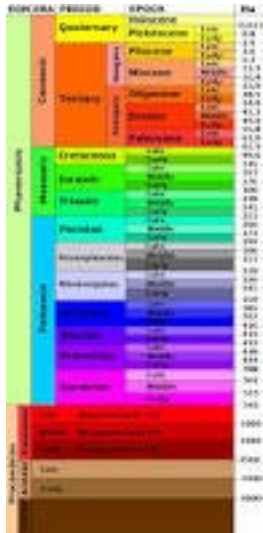
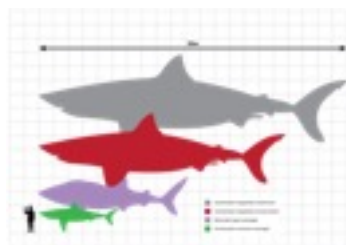


Scaling (textual) worlds in the Anthropocene: an ecocritical perspective

Geologists have recommended to re/name *Anthropocene* the geological epoch in which we now live, in order to emphasize the planet-shaping impact of technologically advanced societies on the earth systems; an impact resulting, e.g. in global warming, degradation of soils, rising ocean acidity, dwindling biodiversity etc. This (Anthropocene) perspective has produced, in the words of Bonneuil and Fressot, a certain “dizziness in the human sciences” as they struggle to connect “socially differentiated historical phenomena with the evolution of the planet”.



A principal problem in this debate are the widely different *scales* thus coming into play: ‘historical’ time versus ‘geological’ time; the local versus the planetary; individual/society versus species, the human and the non-human etc. In this seminar we will investigate how textual worlds, and fictional worlds in particular, depict and model scales, both on thematic and aesthetic levels. We will consult theoretical approaches to the topic of scale from which we will derive focused perspectives for our textual analysis. What are the effects of spatio-temporal proximity and concentration in texts versus spatio-temporal distance and acceleration? How do texts scale human and non-human histories and how do they balance these scales? How does their scaling as measuring interact with scaling as weighing and evaluating? How do we, as critics, switch between different scales when interpreting texts and how can we take account of the Anthropocene perspective in doing so?



Two poems by Byron and John Clare will take us back to the period of romanticism. The remaining sessions of the seminar will deal with two post-millennium novels, Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behaviour* (2012) and Jon McGregor’s *Reservoir 13* (2017), as well as two post/dramatic texts and performances, Rimini Protokoll’s *World Climate Conference* (2014) and Duncan Macmillan’s play *Lungs* (2012). We will investigate how these

texts, paired as strong contrasts, deploy distinctly different scales, how they model the entanglement of scales and how they throw them into crisis. Can texts and textual analysis raise our awareness and understanding of the vastly different scales the Anthropocene brings into view?

Set texts:

Barbara Kingsolver, *Flight Behaviour* (2012); Jon McGregor’s *Reservoir 13* (2017); Duncan Macmillan *Lungs* (2012).

Course requirements:

Regular attendance, excellent knowledge of the set texts etc.; course assignments during the semester and (to receive the maximum credit points) a term paper.