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"Fractal Eaarth: Visualizing the Global Environment in the Anthropocene"

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Lekan, Thomas M. "Fractal Eaarth: Visualizing the Global Environment in the Anthropocene." *Environmental Humanities* 5, no. 1 (2014): 171-201. doi:10.1215/22011919-3615469.

This essay offers a postcolonial critique of recent environmentalist literature and exhibitions that frame the Anthropocene using the NASA Apollo mission's *Earthrise* (1968) and *Blue Marble* (1972) photographs from space. Building on the work of Dennis Cosgrove and Donna Haraway, as well as historical evidence from the U.N. Environmental Summit in Stockholm in 1972, the essay explores how the attempt to depict *Anthropos* as a unitary geophysical agent resurrects the appeal to the Whole Earth environmentalism of the 1970s without attending to the U.S. imperialist and racist connotations of the disembodied "god trick" found in these extraterrestrial photographs. As evidenced already in the 1950s at the landmark Man and Nature conference at Princeton and in the wildlife documentaries of Bernhard and Michael Grzimek, moreover, the first decades of the Great Acceleration witnessed the growing use of aerial images to chart the "disappearance of the outside" and to advocate for wilderness areas in the Global South as a "cultural heritage of mankind." The confluence of geophysical tipping points, universalist history, and political struggle over decolonization resulted in eco-images that subsumed all parts of the globe—most especially Africa—into a doomsday narrative of human profligacy that lost sight of a kaleidoscopic patchwork of cultural landscapes. Fractal topographies, by contrast, serve as more effective indices of the recursive layering found in digital representations such as Google Earth and help us to stretch our historical imagination and cultural criticism into scale-dependent and multi-agentic realms that lie beyond the Apollonian visions of the late Holocene. (Text from author's abstract)

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