

Call for Papers

IMAGES AND STORIES OF THE ORIGIN(S) OF THE WORLD AND HUMANKIND

(online conference, 3-4 November, 2022)

Creation stories addressing the origin of Earth and/or that of humankind are presumably among the oldest narratives known in many parts of the world. Similarly, there are ancient works of art depicting creation or, for instance in South Asian art, cycles of destruction and creation. While not scientifically accurate from the point of view of modern physics or evolution theory, these stories and images of the beginnings of (life on) Earth have nevertheless been profoundly true ways of perceiving reality for many people. They serve to define humans' relationship with the divine as well as the position, rights, and obligations of human beings on the planet. Today, images of the origin of Earth may resonate in new ways with people becoming increasingly aware of the consequences of climate change. Stories and images of the origin of humankind often revolve around processes of Othering, defining humanity by setting it apart from its (supposed) Other(s), be they divine, animals, or Neanderthals (e.g., in William Golding's *The Inheritors* (1955) and other works of 'prehistoric fiction'). According to Katherine V. Snyder, the popularity of post-apocalyptic fiction caters to a fascination with witnessing the "fundamentally unwitnessable" (479).¹ A similar fascination can be ascribed to images of the origin of the world and humankind, which may also explain why writers, artists, and filmmakers continue to revisit stories and images of creation.

In a two-day conference we seek to bring together expertise on different cultural, regional and historical backgrounds, addressing questions like the following ones from various disciplinary vantage points (including literary studies, art history, archaeology, media studies, anthropology, philosophy, theology, religious studies):

- How is the origin of the world/humankind imagined in texts, art, audio-visual media? What does the relationship between normative ideas and aesthetic considerations look like?
- How are stories and images of the origin of the world/humankind embedded in cultural knowledge and prevalent ways of perceiving the world? How are they related to scientific knowledge?
- Can we identify recurrent motifs and patterns used to describe or explain the origins of the world/humankind that can be found across different cultural or religious contexts? Are there some cultural contexts that offer unique explanations/narrations?

We invite proposals of approx. 250 words. Please, send your proposals (including your full name and affiliation) by **20 June, 2022** to mgymnich@uni-bonn.de and julia.hegewald@uni-bonn.de

Organisers:

Prof. Dr. Marion Gymnich, Department of English, American and Celtic Studies, University of Bonn

Prof. Dr. Julia A. B. Hegewald, Asian and Islamic Art History, University of Bonn

¹ Snyder, Katherine V., "'Time to Go'. The Post-Apocalyptic and the Post-Traumatic in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*." *Studies in the Novel* 43.4 (2011): 470-489.