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edited by Sabine Wilke and Japhet Johnstone

Readings in the Anthropocene

*The Environmental Humanities,
German Studies, and Beyond*

Edited by
Sabine Wilke and Japhet Johnstone

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Six Mocking the Anthropocene: Caricatures of Man-Made Landscapes in German Satirical Magazines from the Fin de Siècle

Evi Zemanek

Since the catchy label Anthropocene (the epoch in which humans have altered the Earth to a degree that their activities will leave permanent traces in the geological record) has been taken up by the humanities, scholars of ecocritical literary and cultural studies have reread texts from different periods as documents that demonstrate humans' intention to master nature.¹ Yet, many of the texts written before the late nineteenth century, that is, before the negative effects of industrialization became visible, do not display an awareness and much less a self-critical consciousness of humans' impact on their environment. Throughout the greater part of the twentieth century, most artworks, be they texts, paintings, or buildings, tell us rather uncritical success stories about humans' conquest of nature in various domains and often do so implicitly. This is especially true for man's transformation of landscapes. In this chapter, however, I will present some unknown examples of a rare early consciousness and critique of humans' impact in the particular form of satirical caricature. These long-forgotten artworks appeared in German magazines at the fin de siècle.²

1 The reason that texts from very different periods are being ascribed to the Anthropocene is due to the difficulty in agreeing on a start date for the era. I follow Paul Crutzen, who, in view of atmospheric evidence, proposed the Industrial Revolution as a date for the beginning of the new geologic epoch; cf. Paul Josef Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind," *Nature* 415 (2002): 23.

2 To this day, caricatures depicting man-made environmental transformations have not received any attention. Literary ecocriticism has so far neglected the

As various publications from the period indicate, humans' building, cultivating, and landscaping activities in the later nineteenth century were judged along the ambiguous lines of "creation/formation" versus "disfigurement/deformation" ("Gestaltung" and "Entstellung")—terms used by the German architect and first chairman of the *Deutscher Bund Heimatschutz* (German Association for Homeland Protection) Paul Schultze-Naumburg in his 1905 book *Die Entstellung unseres Landes* (The Disfigurement of Our Country) and in his very popular, widely read series *Kulturarbeiten* (Works of Culture, 1901–17), particularly in the three volumes altogether titled *Die Gestaltung der Landschaft durch den Menschen* (The Creation of Landscape by Man, 1916–17).³ In the introduction of the latter work we find exceptionally explicit reflections on humans' creative power, the downside to that power, and our subsequent responsibility: "Landscape? Creation? Well, how can we contribute to that? ... I deliberately chose the term 'creation' to emphasize the responsibility we all bear when it comes to the face of our country. Because it is man alone who endows it with expression once he has completely subjugated it to his needs as we have seen in our homeland."⁴

treasures that can be found in old periodicals, mainly because, until the recent wave of digitalization, they were difficult to access, and still, screening them remains very time-consuming. I owe thanks to my assistants Carina Engel and Anna Rauscher for searching through countless numbers of magazines.

3 All translations of German titles and quotes are mine unless otherwise noted. The title *Kulturarbeiten* encompasses all human cultural activities. The three volumes most relevant for my chapter train the reader to find good solutions and to avoid bad ones for road and railway construction, forest and water management, coal mining, industrial construction, and city planning. I read this popular series of books, which since 1900 have also been published in parts in the art journal *Der Kunstwart* (The Art Warden), as context for the caricatures. Its importance for the emerging landscape protection movement is often downplayed, because of its author's later turn to Nazi ideology. Paul Schultze-Naumburg (1869–1949) started as a painter and published on painting in the late 1890s before he made himself a name as an architect advocating for traditionalist building. Until the end of World War I his name was associated with life reform (*Lebensreform*), monument protection (*Denkmalpflege*), and homeland protection (*Heimatschutz*, i.e., landscape preservation). In the late 1920s, however, he combined his art theory with the then prevailing racist ideology.

4 Paul Schultze-Naumburg, *Die Gestaltung der Landschaft durch den Menschen*, Vols 7–9, *Kulturarbeiten*, 3rd edn (Munich: Georg D. W. Callwey Verlag, 1928), 9: "Landschaft? Gestaltung? Ja, was können wir denn dazu tun? ... Ich wählte mit Absicht das Wort 'Gestaltung,' um damit die Verantwortung zu betonen, die wir alle für das Angesicht unseres Landes tragen. Denn der Mensch ist es, der ihm den Ausdruck verleiht, sobald er es ganz seinem Zwecke unterworfen hat, wie es bei unserem Vaterlande der Fall ist."

Schultze-Naumburg concedes that a few areas still might exist that seem untouched by humans, such as some high mountains and heaths, but,

As for the rest, I presume, not a single patch of the Earth's surface in Germany looks the way it did before it was cultivated by men; since everything else we see around us, from forests to fields, from meadows to mill weirs, is man-made or, actually, nature; nature that has been tamed and altered by human hands.⁵

He complains that this interference is "too much of a good thing, a monomania of utilization" (*ein Zuviel des Guten, eine Monomanie der Nutzbarmachung*), and suggests that we take into account "whether, with this ruthless method, goods might be destroyed which no human hand will ever be able to replace" (*ob man bei dieser bedenkenfreien Methode nicht Güter zerstört, die uns keines Menschen Hand je wieder ersetzen kann*).⁶ Although he watches humanity's intrusions into nature with a very critical eye, he clarifies that not only the untouched, but also cultivated nature can be beautiful when humans respect the laws of "necessary harmony" (*notwendige Harmonie*) between their own and God's creations.⁷ Such aesthetic considerations were quite common in these early pleadings for the protection of nature. The aesthetic rules proposed by Schultze-Naumburg advocate for the imitation of organic, natural forms instead of geometrical, and thus artificial, forms. Interestingly, Ernst Rudorff, a pioneer in the nature protection movement, also criticizes river regulations and plot realignments that sought to create rectilinear waterways and rectangular plots, but his critique is rooted in ecological thinking.⁸ He introduced his ideas, to which we will come back later, as early as 1880 in his journal article "On the relationship between modern life and nature" (*Über das Verhältnis*

5 Schultze-Naumburg, *Die Gestaltung der Landschaft durch den Menschen*, 9–10: "Im Übrigen dürfte nicht ein Stück Erdoberfläche in Deutschland mehr so aussehen, wie es vor der Kultivierung durch Menschenhand der Fall war, denn alles, was wir sonst um uns sehen, vom Forst bis zum Feld, von der Wiese bis zum Mühlenwehr, ist Menschenwerk oder doch Natur, von Menschenhand gebändigt und verändert."

6 Schultze-Naumburg, *Die Gestaltung der Landschaft durch den Menschen*, 10.

7 Ibid., 11.

8 Ernst Rudorff (1840–1916), also known as a composer, undertook various individual initiatives for the protection of nature and landscapes. He coined and popularized the idea of "Homeland Protection," in particular with his long essay "Heimatschutz," which first appeared in 1897 in the journal *Grenzboten* 56.2 and 56.4, eventually leading to the foundation of the "German Association for Homeland Protection" (*Deutscher Bund Heimatschutz*).

des modernen Lebens zur Natur) as a reaction to the planned railway construction on the famous Dragon's Rock (*Drachenfels*) of the Seven Hills (*Siebengebirge*) on the shores of the Rhine river.⁹ The extract from Schultze-Naumburg and the reference to Rudorff provide two contexts that serve as a temporal frame for the artworks from the fin de siècle that I am going to discuss below.

In order to show human attempts to transform the surface of the Earth or even to discover an early consciousness of the possible scope of human interventions, it is worth looking into nineteenth-century newspapers and magazines. In these early mass media publications, we can trace the emergence of discourses revolving around various symptoms that demonstrate humans' conquest of nature. Readers were being informed continually about new findings in the natural sciences and technical innovations, the expansion of industrialization and infrastructure (for example, the expansion of the railroad, the building of bridges and tunnels), and, last but not least, the spread of tourism to the remotest regions. In illustrated newspapers that appeared weekly from the mid-century, like the *Illustrierte Zeitung* (Illustrated Newspaper, 1843–1944), as well as in the entertaining and educational bourgeois journals *Die Gartenlaube* (The Arbor, 1853–1944) and *Über Land und Meer* (On Land and Sea, 1858–1923), these stories of success, but also of spectacular disasters such as railroad accidents, were communicated in illustrated reports and travelogues.¹⁰

Only after the readers had been made familiar with all these aspects of sweeping modernization could the "achievements" be called into question through a demonstration of their downsides. The papers and journals mentioned above, however, usually did not intend to alarm or even agitate their readers, not even in their pictorial satires. This goal was eagerly pursued in satirical magazines instead. Besides poems, short narratives or serial novels, and advertisements, *Fliegende Blätter* (Flying Leaves, 1845–1928) and *Simplicissimus* (1896–1944), for example, featured countless caricatures mostly combined with short texts. These humorous drawings implicitly criticize certain social developments and politics. Unfortunately, literary scholars and cultural historians commonly neglect drawings, treating them as mere illustrations of historical events, and thus greatly underestimate their potential as

9 On the history of *Heimatschutz*, especially in the Siebengebirge and the Rhineland region, see the comprehensive study of Germany's environmental history by Thomas M. Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). See in particular the introduction and chapter 1, "Nature's Homelands: The Origins of Landscape Preservation, 1885–1914."

10 Again, all translations of German newspaper titles that never appeared in English are mine.

forms of satire. As a unique pictorial medium of cultural criticism that inventively reveals problematic developments and imagines alternatives by combining text and image, they certainly deserve more attention and an approach informed by intermedia studies.

Caricature as a term, concept, and pictorial technique was already well known by the mid-nineteenth century. In the *Brockhaus* encyclopedia we find a detailed definition of caricature as a "picture of mockery or deformation" (*Spott- oder Zerrbild*) in which characteristics of the depicted subject are exaggerated.¹¹ As the opposite of the norm or of an ideal—caricatures were also defined as an "inverted ideal" (*verkehrtes Ideal*)¹²—the depicted persons seem ugly or ridiculous. Early encyclopedia entries concentrate on deformed portraits, while later entries include depictions of social phenomena as well. In this latter perspective, caricature serves to criticize a society's values and activities, sometimes being the only possible form of a critique otherwise too dangerous to be expressed publicly, depending on the times and the governing political system. For our purpose it makes sense to follow the common and broad definition of caricature as a visual satire. According to the same mid-nineteenth-century edition of *Brockhaus*, "The task of satire is to radically expose the futile efforts, the prevalent foolishness, and the vices of one's time, especially the social conditions of particular nations and classes."¹³ Since a satirical caricature aims at making its readers or beholders realize that something is wrong, it distorts, deforms, and exaggerates its subject, often to a degree that makes it seem ridiculous, although not all satires provoke laughter. Even if it uses wit to attract attention, its main goal is to make people think about the problem it displays. Its other common techniques are parody, irony, and sarcasm. Additionally, caricatures rely on allegation and provocation. They cannot be understood without knowing their horizon of reference, which corresponds to the sociopolitical status quo in the real world. Thus, they are intrinsically linked to the ideal they thwart, and they need to be associated with this beautiful ideal in order to be recognizable as dissent. Like any revolutionary strategy, caricature relies upon the system it attacks.¹⁴

11 Cf. "Caricatur," in *Allgemeine deutsche Real-Enzyklopädie für gebildete Stände. Conversations-Lexikon*, Vol. 3 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1843), 201.

12 Cf., for example, *Handbuch der Philosophie und der philosophischen Literatur*, Vol. 2 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1821), 53.

13 Cf. "Satire," in *Allgemeine deutsche Real-Enzyklopädie für gebildete Stände. Conversations-Lexikon*, Vol. 12 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1847), 558: "Die Aufgabe der Satire ist, die nützigen Bestrebungen und herrschenden Thorheiten und Laster der Zeit, besonders der gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse, einzelner Staaten und Stände, in ihrer ganzen Blöße darzustellen."

14 Cf. Werner Hofmann, *Die Karikatur: Von Leonardo bis Picasso* (Hamburg: EVA Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), 35.

We have to keep in mind, however, that magazines had to respect censorship regulations for mass media.¹⁵ Significantly, the first successful satirical papers—among others *Kladderadatsch* (1848–1944) and *Die Leuchtkugeln* (Maroons) (1848–51)—appeared shortly before and around the German Revolution of 1848–9, when unrestricted freedom of the press was demanded, and, indeed, preventive censorship was suspended for a short time. In reaction, the rules were tightened again, until freedom of the press was guaranteed by the new press law of the Reich (*Reichspressegesetz*), which went into effect in 1874. However, this freedom was revoked again by the Anti-Socialist Laws (*Sozialistengesetze*) in effect from 1878 to 1890 and responsible for the closing of many newspapers. Good times for satirical papers began again in 1890 when these laws expired after Bismarck resigned. Thus, the authors of the most prominent satirical magazine that appeared near the end of the century, *Simplicissimus*, were free to speak out for a few years. Yet another threat arose with the legislation referred to as the *Lex Heinze*, suggested by Kaiser Wilhelm and adopted in 1900. It forbade the public display of immorality (*Unsittlichkeit*), be it in mass media, art museums, or theaters. The law provoked strong protest by many artists, who succeeded in getting artworks removed from the ban. There were similar attempts at restrictions during the Weimar Republic, but the worst case of censorship came, of course, with the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. These developments, however, are not relevant for the caricatures I discuss in this chapter, which stem from the fin de siècle. It should be added that censorship rules hindered the satire of politicians, regents, and other authorities much more than the satirical comments about the bourgeoisie's or the gentry's attitudes toward nature.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, verbal and visual critiques primarily targeted the lifestyles of bourgeoisie and gentry, class conflicts, patriarchy, marriage, women's emancipation, family life, and children's education. During the German Empire, much critique was directed against the monarchy and imperialism, the politics of the Kaiser and Chancellor Bismarck, legislation and jurisdiction, the military, international conflicts, and wars.¹⁶ Of the far fewer caricatures

15 For detailed information, see Rudolf Stöber, *Deutsche Pressegeschichte: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, 2nd edn (Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2005), 136–55.

16 For an overview of the main topics and targets of caricatures in *Simplicissimus*, which has received much more attention from scholars than other satirical papers, see Hasso Zimdars, *Die Zeitschrift Simplicissimus: Ihre Karikaturen* (PhD thesis, Universität Bonn, 1972); and Gisela Vetter-Liebenow (ed.), *Zwischen Kaiserwetter und Donnerrollen: Die wilhelminische Epoche im Spiegel des Simplicissimus von 1896 bis 1914* (Hannover: Wilhelm-Busch-Gesellschaft e.V., 2013).

that do depict rapid industrialization, modernization, and urbanization, some call attention to the consequences of these events for human life and the natural world. But then the outbreak of World War I brought public interest in nature to a halt.

Among the caricatures from the last decades of the nineteenth century that reflect upon humanity's ambivalent relation to nature, the most popular topics are hunting and tourism. While one would expect caricatures about hunting to expose humans' questionable handling of animals, most of them, in fact, simply mock the hunter's hubris and his difficulties in catching the animal. This is also true for caricatures about poaching and the theft of wood, still common crimes in the nineteenth century. Most satires of tourism, respectively, focus on humans by tending to mock the bourgeois urbanites' sentimental romanticization of nature, their awkwardness when going on excursions, and their pretentiousness in contrast to the locals, rather than giving thought to landscapes and their flora.¹⁷ All these depictions are amusing and interesting, but not relevant for the central question of my chapter.

There is one topic, however, that focuses on human's destruction of landscapes and that was picked up by some caricatures: the excessive clear-cutting of forests, which, incidentally, Schultze-Naumburg also considered historically the first step of humanity's destruction of nature.¹⁸ As is well known, Germany's pristine woodlands had been drastically shrinking and transformed, notably through being turned into timber, throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Environmental historians have asserted that an early consciousness of nature's value can be discerned in complaints of a wood shortage (*Holznot*), complaints that had been widespread and persistent in central Europe since the eighteenth century.¹⁹ Whether these complaints were justified or not, they were motivated mainly by economic calculations and the fear of losing one's primary source of livelihood rather than by the impulse to protect nature for its own sake. And when the

romantics, who mythologized the "German Forest" (*Deutscher Wald*), joined in the protests, they also wished to preserve the woods for the sake of humans instead of thinking ecologically. Both motivations, however, underlie the pleas against forest clearances by Schultze-Naumburg, who bemoans at length the loss of pristine woods and their substitution with timber for four reasons: the importance of natural woods for ecosystems, for aesthetic pleasure as well as spiritual shelter and—because one can only love a *beautiful* homeland, as he says—for German national identity (an argument also central in the later Nazi ideology).²⁰ Such patriotic motivations, however, do not seem relevant for the first caricature, which attacks the unscrupulous commercialization of the forest. The topic had by then already been introduced by famous voices in objection to destructive exploitation, namely Ernst Moritz Arndt and Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl.²¹ But their protest did not appear in the form of satirical artworks. In fact, when this caricature appears, the highest waves of protest had already ebbed, since extensive reforestation had already begun around mid-century. The reason why the lament about forest clearance was (still) being satirized most likely lies in the media history of caricatures and their journals, and maybe, as the second artwork to be presented suggests, in a revival of a post-romantic or pre-nationalistic mythologization of the forest.

In January 1898, at the end of the second year of *Simplicissimus*, we find a caricature titled "Deforested" (*Abgeholzt*, Fig. 6.1).²² It fills half of the journal's page and is the only contribution addressing this topic. Thus, it stands in no relation to other texts and caricatures in this issue. The drawing by Josef Benedikt Engl, who contributed caricatures to all issues of the journal until his early death in 1907, shows a hunter or forester (left) and a nobleman in front of a deforested area. Below the picture it says in Gothic print, "My goodness, my Lord the Baron has cleaned up nicely. Soon there will be nothing else left but the family tree" (*Donnerwetter, da hat der Herr Baron aber schön aufgeräumt. Da wird bald nichts mehr da sein, als der Stammbaum*). The comic effect of this caricature derives from the pun made by the hunter, who, while primarily mocking the aristocracy's ancestry, also criticizes the selling out of the forests. Of course, this caricature indirectly complains

20 Cf. Schultze-Naumburg, *Die Gestaltung der Landschaft durch den Menschen*, 44–6, 55–71.

21 For their objections, see Jost Hermand, "Erst die Bäume, dann wir! Proteste gegen das Abholzen der deutschen Wälder 1780–1950," in Jost Hermand (ed.), *Mit den Bäumen sterben die Menschen: Zur Kulturgeschichte der Ökologie* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 1993), 14ff.

22 Josef Benedikt Engl, "Abgeholzt," *Simplicissimus* 1897.43 (January 21, 1898): 339, <http://www.simplicissimus.info/index.php?id=6> (accessed March 17, 2016).

17 For caricatures of "tourists" and "natives," see Wolfgang Hackl, "'Sommerfrischler' und 'Eingeborene': Eine kulturgeschichtliche Lektüre des *Simplicissimus*," in Gertrud Maria Rösch (ed.), *Simplicissimus: Glanz und Elend der Satire in Deutschland* (Regensburg: Universitätsverlag Regensburg, 1996), 161–73. To my knowledge, this is the only essay on caricatures in *Simplicissimus* whose topic is relevant for studies in ecocriticism or environmental humanities.

18 Schultze-Naumburg, *Die Gestaltung der Landschaft durch den Menschen*, 12.

19 In our context it suffices to refer to the debate that existed, regardless of the thesis first expressed by Joachim Radkau that the degree of the alleged wood shortage did not correspond to reality. Cf. Joachim Radkau, *Die Ära der Ökologie: Eine Weltgeschichte* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2011), 40–2, and Joachim Radkau, "Holzverknappung und Krisenbewusstsein im 18. Jahrhundert," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 9 (1983): 513–43.

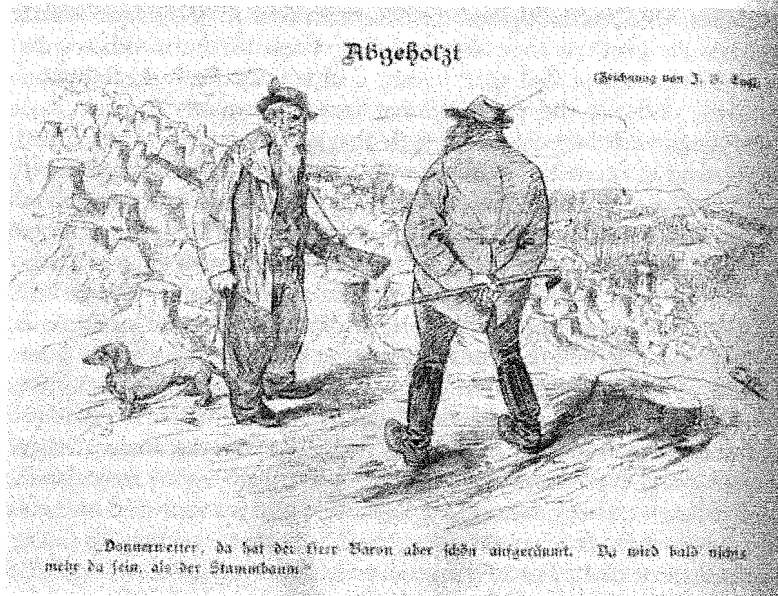


Figure 6.1 Josef Benedikt Engl's "Abgeholzt," *Simplicissimus*, January 21, 1898.

about the extensive deforestation and pleads for more sustainable forestry. Caricatures that use text so sparingly heavily rely on the public awareness of the problem they address. The forest clearance is immediately evident, but without the text we would not know how the artist judges this fact. Both this format and this type of text-image interrelation were popular at the end of the century.

The precursor of this format is a combination of a poem and a drawing that are not mutually interdependent. One rare example of this on the same topic can be found in the journal *Fliegende Blätter* in an issue from 1895. Again, without any thematic connection to other contributions in this issue, we find "A Farewell to the Forest" (*Abschied vom Walde*), a poem by Friedrich Detjens,²³ and an illustration signed by Erdmann Wagner (Fig. 6.2). The image is inserted after the first three stanzas, right above the final one. The poem begins with an apostrophe to the beautiful forest, asking who has cut it down and bidding farewell, resounding four times in the refrain "Farewell,

23 Friedrich Detjens (text) and Erdmann Wagner (picture), "Abschied vom Walde," *Fliegende Blätter* 1895.2626, 195, <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/fb103/0194> (accessed July 1, 2016).

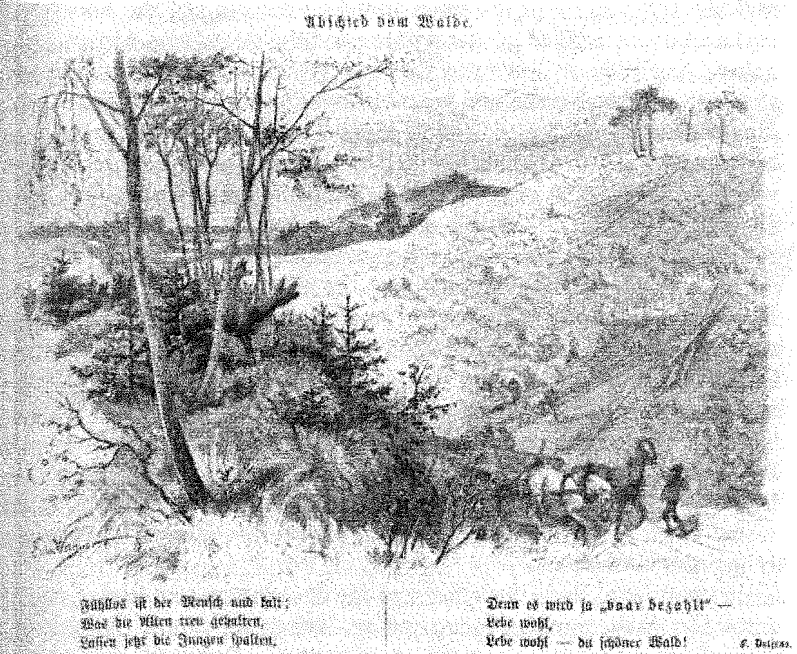


Figure 6.2 Friedrich Detjens's (text) and Erdmann Wagner's (image) "Abschied vom Walde," *Fliegende Blätter*, 1895.

farewell—beautiful forest!" (*Lebe wohl, lebe wohl—du schöner Wald!*). Those familiar with German romantic poetry will recognize the text as a parody of Joseph von Eichendorff's similarly structured poem "The Hunter's Farewell" (*Der Jäger Abschied* 1810/1837), whose opening question, "Who has built you, beautiful forest, so high up there?" (*Wer hat dich, du schöner Wald/Aufgebaut so hoch da droben?*),²⁴ is cited in Detjens's opening lines. The only difference is that Detjens replaced "built" (*aufgebaut*) with "cut" (*abgeholzt*). Concerning Eichendorff's poem, it suffices to say that it is the men who leave the forest to fulfill their duty in the real world, while the forest will always be their true spiritual home—an idea we find in other poems by Eichendorff as well, particularly in the equally famous "Farewell" (*Abschied*, 1810/1837). Both poems were set to music by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (Op. 50, No. 2 and Op. 59, No. 3). While Eichendorff synaesthetically celebrates the living forest, Detjens's parody argues that the loss of the forest is visible, as a damaged landscape, but also

24 Joseph von Eichendorff, *Gedichte* (Stuttgart: Reclam 1997), 107ff.

audible: the sawing of the trees and the whipping of the horses has replaced the sounds of hunter's horns and the poets' songs inspired by nature. The picture illustrates the new situation: it shows a bald hill, sawing woodworkers, and a wagoner handling the horses. There is no longer any sign in the picture of those people who once emitted the bemoaned lovely melodies. Instead, there are two deer observing the whole scene from above, and since the next stanza states, "Humans are deadhearted and coldblooded" (*Fühllos ist der Mensch und kalt*), they could very well be seen as the speakers of the poem. Indeed, they are in the typical observer position in the picture. The final lines blame the new generation for destroying, out of greed for money, what their ancestors had protected. Regarding the relation between the poem and the drawing, it is, as in the first caricature, the poem that evaluates and interprets the facts visible in the rather neutral picture. The image, in turn, reinforces the effect of the poem, for the sight of a stumpy forest floor is more appalling than its mere description. Just as the beauty of nature appeals to multiple senses, the combined verbal and visual work tries to communicate the visual and audible dimensions of the absence of beauty.

In contrast to these depictions of the destruction and loss of nature from the early Anthropocene, other caricatures show the damage caused by humans' attempts to substitute, improve, or beautify nature. For the latter, the Germans invented "beautification societies" (*Verschönerungsvereine*). Their purported goal was to preserve nature for future generations and fend off industrial intervention, but in reality they were successful in attracting tourists and thus profited economically. For all aesthetic questions concerning beauty in art and lifestyle, another journal was founded in Munich in 1896, *Die Jugend: Münchner illustrierte Wochenschrift für Kunst und Leben* (Youth: Munich's illustrated weekly paper for art and lifestyle), which derived its name from the art nouveau movement *Jugendstil*. While scholarship usually focuses on how this style developed in the context of this magazine, it overlooks interesting contributions within the journal that reflect upon humans' changing relationship with nature. In its first year, we already find two drawings by Fritz Rehm next to each other (Fig. 6.3). Below the first one (left), the text reads, "Before the Foundation of the Beautification Society" (*Vor der Gründung des Verschönerungsvereins*), below the second one (right), "After the Foundation of the Beautification Society" (*Nach der Gründung des Verschönerungsvereins*).²⁵ Both show the

25 Fritz Rehm, "Vor der Gründung des Verschönerungsvereins," "Nach der Gründung des Verschönerungsvereins," *Jugend: Münchner illustrierte Wochenschrift für Kunst und Leben* 1896.41 (October 10, 1896): 658ff., <http://www.jugend-wochenschrift.de/index.php?id=24> (accessed March 17, 2016).

same view of a landscape consisting of trees, a small hill, a spring, and a pond. In the second picture, however, we see various traces of human activities and interventions: houses, smoking chimneys in the background, artful bridges and park benches, and a fountain decorated with a lion's head. There are also signs indicating the way to a tavern, instructing visitors to keep their dogs on leashes, prohibiting fishing, and informing the onlooker that all this was made by the "Verschönerungsverein." In contrast to this evidently man-made landscape, the first scenery is supposed to look pristine. Yet in its apparent, but quite artificial naturalness it rather resembles an English landscape garden. The two pictures point to a process of development and imply a narrative that does not need to be told explicitly because by comparing the pictures, the reader can deduce what happened in the time span between both representations. In this respect, the two-part ensemble is similar to a picture story or a comic strip. It shows how men restructure and cultivate nature for their own needs, and thus degrade it to a mere backdrop. Without verbal elaboration the name "Verschönerungsverein" is exposed as a euphemism.

Astonishingly, we find a description of Fritz Rehm's drawing of the "beautified" landscape in an article by Ferdinand Avenarius that appeared in the journal *Der Kunstwart* in 1898 under the heading

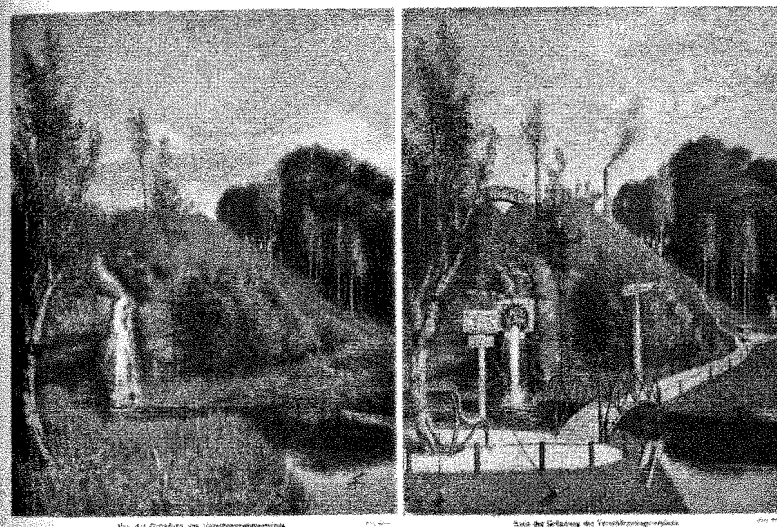


Figure 6.3 Fritz Rehm's "Vor der Gründung des Verschönerungsvereins" and "Nach der Gründung des Verschönerungsvereins," *Jugend*, October 10, 1896.

"Verschönerungsvereine"²⁶—as if Avenarius had known this picture.²⁷ The text begins as a narration. The homodiegetic narrator is on a summer holiday in a secluded village he knows from a vacation years ago. He goes for a walk to search for a fountain he once encountered in the middle of the woods. However, this formerly idyllic place has changed. The path into the woods is wider and leads to a spacious clearing where he is surprised to see a Greek-style altar and water running from a lion-head fountain into a stone shell.²⁸ "My fountain!" he exclaims, grievously remembering the once lively, playful running water. Back then, it seemed to be chatting. The author emphatically describes pristine nature as a living organism. Where the water had once crisscrossed moss and rocks there is now a gravel square with park benches whose cast iron imitates natural wood. Above the lion-head fountain a panel reads, "Erected by the Beautification Society, 1897" (*Errichtet vom Verschönerungsverein, 1897*). The sight of this artificial ensemble puts him to flight; he wanders deeper into the forest looking for a place not yet touched by the beautification society. Then the narration stops and turns to serious reflection. The author changes his strategy, stops complaining, and starts giving advice as to how beautification societies—which he generally considers good—should make their improvements. He is well aware that the beautification of villages for the joy of their inhabitants is just one motivating factor; another factor is the economic benefit to be had in creating an infrastructure to attract tourists. According to Avenarius, most beautification societies in rural areas unfortunately try to reach this goal by modernizing their villages with urban architecture. His views resemble those articulated and illustrated by Schultze-Naumburg in *Die Entstellung des Landes*. Both clearly judge from an aesthetic perspective. Fearing that beautification societies tend to make wrong aesthetic decisions themselves, Avenarius asks them simply to watch over any building initiatives attentively; in fact, he defines the task of beautification societies as the "prevention of uglification" (*Verhinderung von Verhäßlichkeit*).²⁹

26 Ferdinand Avenarius, "Verschönerungsvereine," *Der Kunstwart: Rundschau über alle Gebiete des Schönen. Monatshefte für Kunst, Literatur und Leben* 19.1 (July 1898): 197–201, http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/kunstwart11_2/0207 (accessed July 1, 2016).

27 Avenarius was one of the editors of *Der Kunstwart*, which was linked to the Life Reform Movement, and Schultze-Naumburg worked for this journal as editorial journalist and author.

28 Here, again, is the lion-head fountain that Schultze-Naumburg despises as a terribly artificial form. Cf. Schultze-Naumburg, *Die Gestaltung der Landschaft durch den Menschen*, 83, 86.

29 Avenarius, "Verschönerungsvereine," 201.

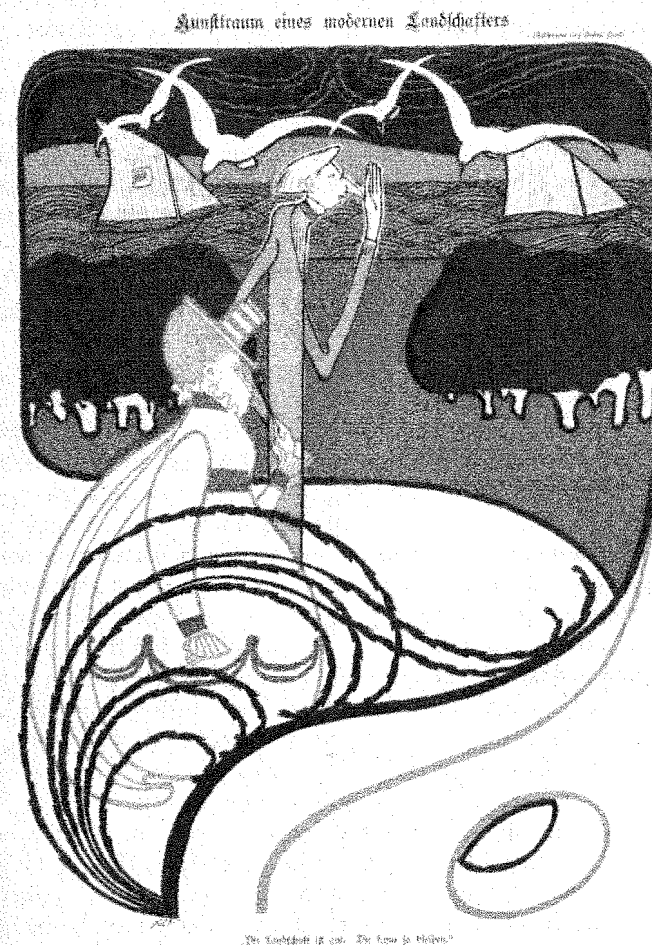


Figure 6.4 Bruno Paul's "Kunsttraum eines modernen Landschafters," *Simplicissimus*, November 6, 1897.

In journals mainly dedicated to art, like *Jugend* and *Der Kunstwart*, most judgments about nature and suggestions of how to treat it follow aesthetic principles without considering nature as worth protecting for its own sake. *Jugendstil* artworks in particular shape landscapes in their own flamboyant manner. The artists' unscrupulous appropriation of nature is satirized in a caricature by Bruno Paul that appeared in *Simplicissimus* in 1897, covering the whole last page of this issue (Fig. 6.4). The color picture "Artistic Dream of a Modern Landscapist" (*Kunsttraum eines modernen Landschafters*) shows a park on a seashore framed by dynamic lines which continue in a playful arabesque manner in the lower part of the drawing.³⁰ These merely decorative lines entangle a couple looking closely at the landscape through their glasses, until one of them finally concludes, "The landscape is alright. It can stay like this" (*Die Landschaft ist gut. Die kann so bleiben*). The artist here has become used to transforming nature according to his aesthetic ideals and has lost the ability to discern the artificial from the natural.

Another caricature from *Simplicissimus* implies that it is not only the artists taking part in the aesthetic movement who no longer distinguish between art and nature, or between artificial and natural landscapes. In 1896, Thomas Theodor Heine, one of the two founders of *Simplicissimus* and its chief illustrator, presents a drawing (Fig. 6.5) under the heading "The Artificial Alp near Leipzig (the so-called Saxon Switzerland)" (*Die künstliche Alpe bei Leipzig, sogenannte Sächsische Schweiz*).³¹ To understand the confusing title one should know that there is in fact a hilly region in Saxony that has been called Saxon Switzerland or Swiss Saxony since the early nineteenth century, an allusion to Switzerland's mountainous landscapes, but this area is southeast of Dresden, thus more than 100 kilometers away from Leipzig with its then booming coal and steel industry. Thanks to its striking sandstone rocks, Saxon Switzerland had already attracted many tourists in the nineteenth century. Thus, Ernst Rudorff complained as early as 1880, in his essay "On the relationship between modern life and nature" (*Über das Verhältnis des modernen Lebens zur Natur*), that Saxon Switzerland, just like the Harz, the Thüringer Wald, and the Rhine region, "is totally deformed; its nativeness has been completely destroyed" (*total verdorben; ihre Ursprünglichkeit ist bis auf die Neige vernichtet*).³² In

30 Bruno Paul, "Kunsttraum eines modernen Landschafters," *Simplicissimus* 1897.32 (November 6, 1897): 256, <http://www.simplicissimus.info/index.php?id=6> (accessed March 17, 2016).

31 Thomas Theodor Heine, "Die künstliche Alpe bei Leipzig (sogenannte Sächsische Schweiz)," *Simplicissimus* 1896.45 (February 6, 1897): 6, <http://www.simplicissimus.info/index.php?id=6> (accessed March 17, 2016).

32 Cf. Ernst Rudorff, "Über das Verhältnis des modernen Lebens zur Natur," *Preußische Jahrbücher* 45 (1880): 266.

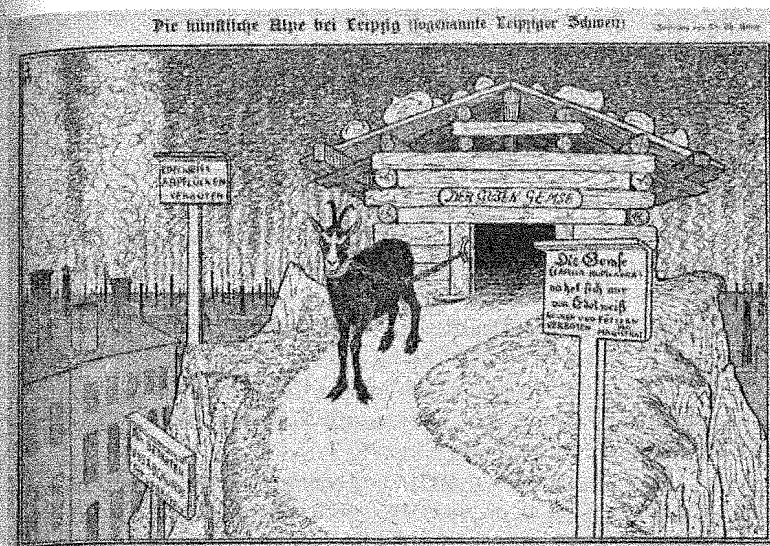


Figure 6.5 Thomas Theodor Heine's "Die künstliche Alpe bei Leipzig (sogenannte Sächsische Schweiz)," *Simplicissimus*, February 6, 1897.

contrast, Wilhelm Bölsche, who extensively explored the geological formation of Saxon Switzerland, does not mention any destruction of the landscape in his book published almost half a century later.³³ It has to be added, though, that Rudorff blames tourism, not the industries visible in Heine's caricature. In fact, ideas regarding the protection of Saxon Switzerland were already circulating around the mid-nineteenth century, and since 1850 several initiatives were launched to protect certain mountain ranges. But it was not until 1990 that the whole area was turned into the Saxon Switzerland National Park.³⁴

Heine's caricature shows a solitary chamois tethered on the plateau of a rock standing in the midst of a sea of factories with excessively smoking chimneys. In this example, there is no text below the picture; instead there are four signs integrated into the scenery. One of them labels the lonely animal, isolated from its natural habitat and flock, with the correct Latin term for its species and informs us that it feeds solely on edelweiss. However, the chamois seems doomed to die because, on the one hand, picking edelweiss is strictly forbidden by

33 Wilhelm Bölsche, *Erwanderte deutsche Geologie: Die Sächsische Schweiz* (Berlin: J. H. W. Dietz Nachfolger, 1925).

34 For detailed information, see Frank Richter, *Nationalpark Sächsische Schweiz: Von der Idee zur Wirklichkeit* (Dresden: Eigenverlag Nationalparkregion Sächsische Schweiz, 1991).

another sign, and on the other hand, the highly symbolic plant could not grow in this environment anyway. Indeed, there is none to be seen in the picture. The scene seems solely set up for men and is somehow comparable to a zoo; but the chamois's situation here is worse. At first sight, we might think that the "Alp" is a natural relict, a last remnant left over after men have eradicated nature to make room for their factories.³⁵ However, by announcing an "artificial Alp" in the title, Heine suggests that men have either designed and built the Alp themselves, or they have transposed the rock from Saxon Switzerland to Leipzig, in both cases with the goal of bringing urbanites in touch with some form of nature. Maybe the caricature implies an analogy: just as humans have created an artificial habitat for the chamois, so too have they enclosed themselves within an artificial (urbanized and industrialized) environment, and thus have maneuvered themselves into a similar situation to that of the animal.

So far, Heine's caricature is the most complex among those discussed in this chapter. First, it exposes the grim consequences of industrialization and urbanization—which, by the way, do not only affect animals but humans, too, as suggested by the air pollution from factory emissions in the picture. Second, it mocks the failure of contemporary preservationists' all too optimistic goal of balancing nature and modern industrialism. The artificial Alp neither offers aesthetic pleasure nor does it successfully contribute to forming a regional or national identity, a *Heimat* feeling, as was hoped would be sparked from beautifully preserved landscapes. In fact, the Alp only demonstrates how industrialism and urbanism marginalize or even exclude nature. And third, it indicates humans' increasing alienation from nature by criticizing their attempts to museify it.

Ernst Rudorff critically observes that the exposition of nature as if it were an artifact is not limited to cities. It was also typical for tourist resorts. Referring to advertisements for "beautiful nature" omnipresent in magazines of his time, he despairs that "Man celebrates nature, but only by prostituting it ... The world is obsessed with the destruction of nature in its essence in order to surrender it to human pleasures" (*Man feiert die Natur, aber man feiert sie, indem man sie prostituiert ... Eine wahre Manie hat die Welt ergriffen, die Natur in ihrem eigensten Wesen zu zerstören*

35 A rapid increase in industry in the 1880s and 1890s is reported in the fifth edition (1896) of *Meyers Konversationslexikon*, and the sixth edition informs us that in 1904 there were 877 factories in Leipzig alone. Cf. *Meyers Konversations-Lexikon: Ein Nachschlagewerk des allgemeinen Wissens*, 17 vols (Leipzig/Vienna: Bibliographisches Institut, 1893–7), Vol. 11 (1896), 197; and *Meyers Großes Konversations-Lexikon: Ein Nachschlagewerk des allgemeinen Wissens*, 20 vols (Leipzig and Vienna: Bibliographisches Institut, 1902–8), Vol. 12, 381.

unter dem Vorgehen, daß man sie dem Genuß zugänglich machen will).³⁶ Tourism, he continues, debases nature "to a mere decoration" (*zur Decoration herabgewürdigt*), so that it no longer makes any difference "whether the effect is produced by nature or achieved artificially with the help of cardboard, paint-pots, and all sorts of lighting equipment" (*ob der Effect von der Natur producirt oder mit Hülfe von Pappe, Farbentöpfen und allerhand Beleichtungsapparaten künstlich hergestellt ist*).³⁷ By transforming landscapes, humans are not only harming nature, but themselves as well, Rudorff argues. Referring to Friedrich Schiller's belief in the moral value of nature, he explains, "If nature is supposed to have a moral, that is, a cathartic and elevating effect on us, it must not itself be defiled and falsified" (*Soll aber die Natur moralisch, d.h. reinigend und erhebend wirken, so muß sie vor Allem selbst unentwehte, unverfälschte Natur geblieben sein*).³⁸

While the beholders of Heine's caricature do not quite know how modern urbanites could or should approach the Alp and its lonely resident, since this exhibit forces them into the role of passive observers, another artificial mountain depicted in a different caricature in *Fliegende Blätter* in 1887 entices men with the promise of interaction (Fig. 6.6). Under the heading "New Enterprise" (*Neues Unternehmen*),³⁹ we see a snow-covered rock and many climbers. Only a few reach the mountaintop, whereas most of them are tumbling down. Compared to the caricatures discussed earlier, this drawing by an unnamed artist is the most humorous. The figures resemble the yokels drawn by the famous caricaturist Wilhelm Busch. As in "Max und Moritz," the wittiness rests upon brutality: three climbers are depicted in free fall; two others are being blown away by the force of a water cannon; one is being hit by heavy stones; one is stuck in a crevasse; and another is being carried away on a stretcher. We are tempted to laugh because the scenery looks like a playground, which it is in a way. The drawing is full of funny details to be discovered by the reader. Some are self-explanatory; others (like the clerk sitting in a little hut on the left busily writing) require a lengthy explanation. Below the picture we read:

To satisfy urgently felt needs an enterprise has been established, which aims at creating the experience of all the dangers a hiking-trip might entail, all the risks a vigorous mountaineer can ask for, accessible to those who cannot afford an actual

36 Rudorff, "Über das Verhältnis des modernen Lebens zur Natur," 263ff.

37 Ibid., 265.

38 Ibid., 266.

39 Anon., "Neues Unternehmen," *Fliegende Blätter* 1887.2164: 21ff., <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/fb86/0021> (accessed July 1, 2016).

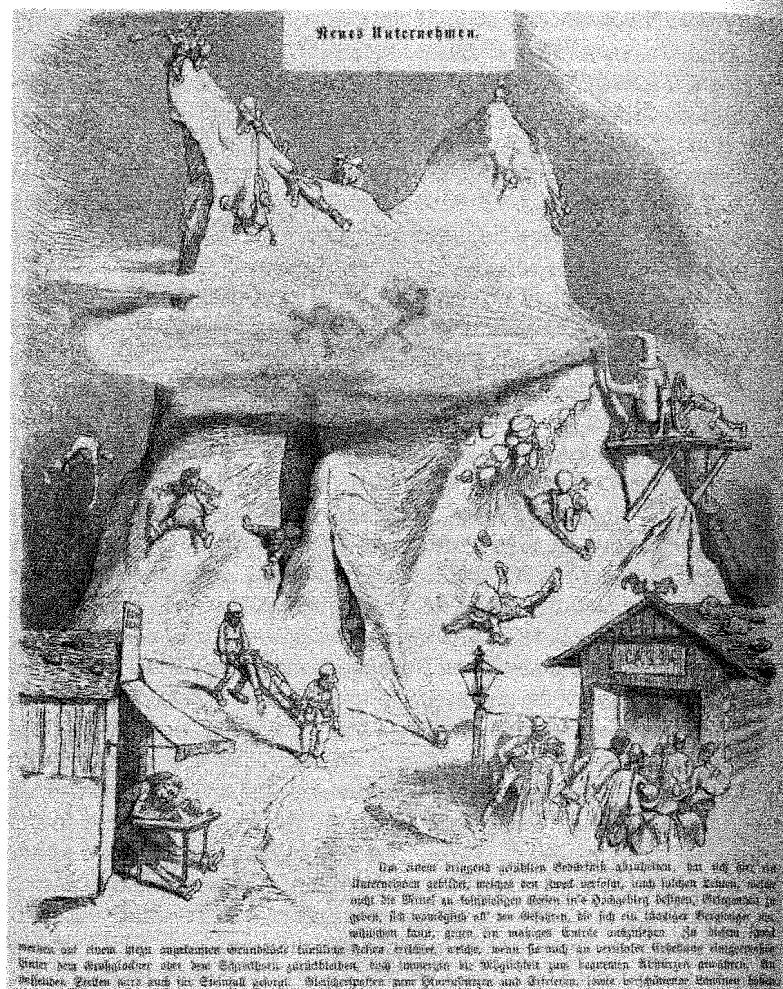


Figure 6.6 Anonymous, "Neues Unternehmen," *Fliegende Blätter*, 1887.

journey to the mountains, at an inexpensive fee. For this purpose, on newly purchased property artificial rocks will be erected, which, even though not quite able to rival the Großglockner or the Schreckhorn in terms of height, will allow visitors to crash comfortably. In suitable places, falling rock will be supplied as well. So far, it has not been possible to satisfactorily imitate ice crevasses to fall into and be frozen to death and spilling avalanches; however, we have been able to produce sudden fog (helpful for getting lost and, eventually, falling down) with a water diffusing machine. Moreover, great pains will be taken to ensure that the fates of those who have an accident in our establishment will be announced by name in several widely read papers on a daily basis.⁴⁰

Each sentence of this announcement is full of irony and thus counts on a strategy we have not yet encountered in other caricatures. Just like holidays in the mountains and activities such as hiking and climbing, caricatures of clumsy mountain tourists were in vogue in the second half of the nineteenth century. Usually, though, the mockery was directed against wealthy tourists from the bourgeoisie or gentry. Now, the need for distraction and the love of adventure is seen as a vice across classes. By explicitly inviting the less wealthy, the artist jokingly responds to Ernst Rudorff's demand to grant them access to nature.⁴¹ Nowadays, creative adventure playgrounds, impressive climbing gyms, and tropical island swimming halls can be found in every major city, but, needless to say, these were a mere fantasy 120 years ago.

40 "Um einem dringend gefühlten Bedürfnis nachzuholen, hat sich hier ein Unternehmen gebildet, welches den Zweck verfolgt, auch solchen Leuten, welche nicht die Mittel zu kostspieligen Reisen in's Hochgebirge besitzen, Gelegenheit zu geben, sich womöglichst all den Gefahren, die sich ein tüchtiger Bergsteiger nur wünschen kann, gegen ein mäßiges Entrée auszusetzen. In diesem Zweck werden auf einem hierzu angekauften Grundstück künstliche Felsen errichtet, welche, wenn sie auch vertikaler Erhebung einigermaßen hinter dem Großglockner oder dem Schreckhorn zurückbleiben, doch immerhin die Möglichkeit zum bequemen Abstürzen gewähren. An passenden Stellen wird auch für Steinfall gesorgt. Gletscherspalten zum Hineinstürzen und Erfrieren, sowie verschüttende Lawinen haben bis jetzt noch nicht in zufriedenstellender Weise nachgeahmt werden können; hingegen werden plötzlich einfallende Nebel (sehr praktisch zum Verirren und schließlichen Abstürzen) durch einen Wasserzerstäubungsapparat hergestellt. Ferner ist Sorge getragen, daß über die in dem Etablissement Verunglückten täglich in einigen stark gelesenen Blättern mit Namensnennung Bericht erstattet wird." Anonymous, "Neues Unternehmen," 21ff.

41 Cf. Rudorff, "Über das Verhältnis des modernen Lebens zur Natur," 273, 275.

This satire attacks other social phenomena and human vices as well. First of all, the enumeration of dangers to which urbanites are being exposed in this adventure park mocks those who boisterously underestimate the risks involved, revealing their lack of knowledge about nature. Furthermore, the style of the announcement pokes fun at the reports of success and their naïve belief in progress. Admitting that there are still certain limits to humans' capacity to imitate nature, the advertisement proudly lists technical inventions meant to entertain and challenge the masses, and, last but not least, to allow them to experience "nature" far away from nature. It additionally ridicules both sensational journalism and people's need for public attention or recognition. And finally, it satirizes humans' commercialization of nature and their marketing measures.

All of these works stimulate readers and viewers to start thinking critically about the topics they depict, but they reach this goal in quite different ways. This is due in part to their varying text-image relations. Today's advanced text and image studies claim that concrete pictures are processed faster and remembered better than texts containing abstract ideas. This has been proven for simple subjects, but is this also true for complex issues whose evaluation is difficult? In the first two caricatures (Figs 6.1 and 6.2) the forest clear-cutting is evident, and the sight of the stumpy forest floors surely reinforces the critique communicated in the text. However, especially in the picture with the heading "A Farewell from the Forest" (Fig. 6.2), the evaluation of the scene is solely communicated through the text. And the critical context of the two pictures "Before/After the Foundation of the Beautification Society" (Fig. 6.3) and "Artistic Dream of a Modern Landscapist" (Fig. 6.4) is only reliably indicated by the headings or the words below the picture, respectively. In other cases, such as in "The Artificial Alp near Leipzig" (Fig. 6.5) and "New Enterprise" (Fig. 6.6), it is obvious from the pictures alone that they are satires, but it is hard to guess what we are looking at in the pictures and their message remains vague. The first picture (Fig. 6.5) only shows that something is wrong, that the animal is being kept in a bad environment; the second picture (Fig. 6.6) makes us laugh, but we would not guess that we are facing some sort of adventure park where climbers fall down on purpose. In all these artifacts, then, the pictures depend upon the texts, while the texts—except for the poem in "A Farewell to the Forest" (Fig. 6.2)—depend upon the pictures to an even greater degree, all the more so the shorter the texts are. Mostly, text and image are interdependent—they complement and reinforce each other.

In some caricatures, all the components (heading, additional text, and picture) are funny independently of one another, but in others the humor only works when the different parts deliver the punchline

together. While a certain kind of wit is more easily communicated visually, as in "New Enterprise" (Fig. 6.6), whose humor would perfectly complement verses by Wilhelm Busch, other pictures can hardly be called funny, like the chamois chained to the artificial Alp (Fig. 6.5). This picture nevertheless exerts a great effect on the viewer by forcing eye contact with the animal, creating a specific proximity between the two species that pictures can mediate better than text. For this example it might be helpful to borrow Wolfgang Iser's concept of the implied reader to examine the picture's effect on its implied viewer.⁴² The latter is tempted to read the animal's face, but he will not be successful, since the strength of its gaze lies in its suggestiveness. This caricature contains a strong critique, but its complexity might be a hindrance for a great part of its contemporary audience—all the more so given that complexity reduces the entertainment factor for those who do not want to have to think too hard about a joke.

Furthermore, caricatures vary in the strictness, resoluteness, and explicitness of their judgments. The critique is most explicit in the two caricatures dealing with forest clear-cutting. The judgment in "Deforested!" (Fig. 6.1) (in contrast to "A Farewell from the Forest," Fig. 6.2) is relatively mild. Deploping a practice that had been criticized for quite some time when the caricature appeared, its humor predominantly relies upon verbal wit and sarcasm whose tone guarantees that the hunter's utterance is understood as a critique. The difference between sarcasm and irony becomes clear when we look at "New Enterprise" (Fig. 6.6), whose text is entirely ironic, a euphemistic announcement of a ludicrous enterprise that reacts to humans' absurd and perilous wishes. When we strip the text of its ironic tone, the author's judgment of high-spirited society is still evident, whereas judgment is completely left to the reader in "Before/After the Foundation of the Beautification Society" (Fig. 6.3). These two realistic pictures, which are not distorted and barely exaggerated—thus, stylistically not a caricature in the narrow sense—require readers to evaluate the beautification society's work on their own through a comparison of the pictures.

Lastly, caricatures differ in the norm or value system they refer to when it comes to making judgments either implicitly or explicitly. While other nineteenth-century caricatures that show breaches of law (such as poaching and the theft of wood) clearly refer to legal norms, these caricatures of humans' treatment of nature cannot rely upon precise rules of conduct supported by the majority. Instead, their point of view refers to a morality or ethics—a recognition of nature's value, its uniqueness and inimitability, and thus the need to consider it worthy

42 Especially for caricatures this has been suggested by Bernard, P. Woschek, *Zur Witzigkeit von Karikaturen* (Moers: edition aragon, 1991), 33.

of being protected for its own sake—that in the late nineteenth century still has to be introduced, explained, and fought for in the face of the cultural trends mocked in the caricatures. This ideological horizon of reference is complemented by aesthetic ideals as in the caricatures about the beautification society and the one about the landscapist's nature painting. Except for the latter, all caricatures discussed communicate and popularize some knowledge about the environment and call attention to its anthropogenic transformation. Being satirical caricatures, their prime concern is making fun of annoying problems, without offering any explicit proposals for sociopolitical reform or individual activism. The main reason for the lack of proposed solutions lies in the genre of caricature itself, which usually only points out an issue. Another reason is the fact that the artists creating them are not ideologically involved, since they professionally create caricatures on a daily basis about all kinds of subjects.

Nevertheless, by demonstrating wrong approaches towards nature, these caricatures do implicitly give some indication of better approaches: The ones about forest clear-cutting suggest rethinking current paradigms and practices in forestry; the double picture invites a re-evaluation of the aims and practices of beautification societies; the caricature about the landscapist suggests that we all reconsider our treatment of nature as a subject or mere backdrop; the caricature showing the artificial Alp invites us to reflect upon how we can integrate nature into a modern urban world and appeals for the protection of nature; and finally, the caricature depicting the alpine adventure park recommends experiencing "real" nature instead of imitating and commercializing it. By articulating their cultural critique in a humorous, witty, or artful way, these caricatures succeed in reaching people who would not have read an essay on the same subject published in a scholarly journal. Regardless of whether caricatures might eventually have any long-lasting effects, they are not to be underestimated in their function of calling attention to various environmental transformations, and we can read them as documentations of an early critical consciousness of the Anthropocene.

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