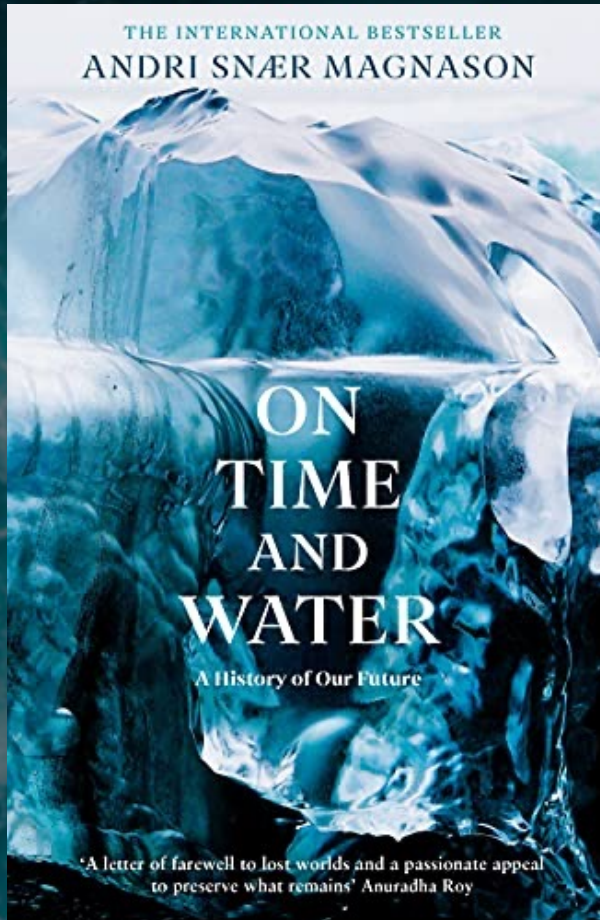


Narrative and discourse of the scientific narrative on the Anthropocene: Andri Snær Magnason's *On Time and Water*

Dr. Alexandra JUSTER. University of Innsbruck, Austria



[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=dUa-tzt22vl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUa-tzt22vl)

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How can literature make a complex, global, interdisciplinary, and worldwide phenomenon like climate change understandable, explain it, and vividly convey it?

In *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), Amitav Ghosh discusses the difficulty for literature to engage with climate change, citing the uncanny and individual thinking as some of the reasons.

Climate literature should be able to inform, to educate, to touch, and to inspire action.

There is already a lot of literature on the topic of climate change, but most of it tends to depict apocalyptic, dystopian scenarios that often have a more paralyzing than activating effect.

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Andri Snaer Magnason is an Icelandic literary scholar who is simultaneously deeply connected to Icelandic nature.

With the book *On Time and Water* (2021), Magnason attempts to take a new approach to climate warning:

1. Iceland and his own family history serve as a limited, comprehensible frame of reference.
2. Scientific phenomena are explained vividly and in an easily understandable manner.
3. Personal, emotionally charged inserts convey proximity to the reader.
4. The wisdom of the Dalai Lama is also drawn upon.
5. Concrete, possible actions are presented and encouraged

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1. Iceland and one's own family history serve as a limited, manageable frame of reference

- ❑ The non-fiction narrative is interwoven with fictional, autobiographical, personal experiences
- ❑ A blend of diary, family history, narrative, and non-fiction
- ❑ The use of the first-person plural to align oneself with the reader
- ❑ Narrating the experiences of the grandparents and how they perceived Iceland in their time.
- ❑ Fictional dialogues with his own children.
- ❑ Emotionality: First-person plural: "To counteract a climate catastrophe, we must cease all CO2 emissions by the year 2050."

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2. Scientific phenomena are explained vividly and in an easily understandable manner

"For example, human blood has a specific pH range, typically between 7.35 and 7.45. Deviations from this range, either higher or lower, can lead to severe illness. If the value goes beyond this reference range, it can result in organ failure and death. Similarly, for many animal species, the pH of seawater is as crucial as the pH of blood is for our bodies."

"The acidification of the oceans occurred because seawater has absorbed approximately thirty percent of the carbon dioxide we have pumped into the atmosphere."

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3. Personal, emotionally charged interjections convey proximity to the reader

Faced with the complexity of the problem, Magnason emphasizes his own overwhelmed state:

"I feel the noise within me. Because all these terms form a black hole that I cannot comprehend..."

"I have four children... What am I supposed to tell them when they ask: Are you leaving us a destroyed Earth? ».

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4. The wisdom of the Dalai Lama is invoked, emphasizing humanity's dependence on nature:

"This reminds us that ultimately we are dependent on nature, no matter how advanced our technology is. [...]. Global warming can spiral out of control. [...] Sometimes, advanced technology and science lead us to assume that we can control nature. But that's not true. We can to some extent, but we also have to live in harmony with it."

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5. Concrete, possible actions are outlined and urged

"*Ecocide*" is a new term, analogous to genocide, to hold those accountable who are involved in the destruction of ecosystems.

The education system must inform, raise awareness, and cultivate ecological ethics in all young individuals.

The urgent measures involve:

- Food chains
- Renewable energies
- Afforestation and regeneration of wetlands
- Techniques for the extraction and sequestration of CO₂

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR LISTENING!