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Thomas M. Lekan, *Our Gigantic Zoo: A German Quest to Save the Serengeti*.  

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Introduction by Kara Murphy Schlichting, Queens College CUNY

This roundtable, in uniting scholars of European and East African history, is a fascinating window into transnational environmental history. It includes contributions from four historians: Julie Wieskopf, who works on Tanzanian social and environmental history; Chris Conte, a scholar of African, world, environmental, and landscape histories; Jeff Schauer, a scholar of African and European environmental history; and Corinna Treitel, whose work unites science, medical, cultural, and political histories of Central Europe. They have joined to reflect on Thomas M. Lekan’s *Our Gigantic Zoo: A German Quest to Save the Serengeti*. All the roundtable participants agree that Lekan successfully frames *Our Gigantic Zoo* around the life story of German conservationist Bernhard Grzimek’s work in East Africa. They also point out that Lekan’s history positions Grzimek as but one thread in a rich tapestry of post-WWII transnational conservation. Like Lekan’s book, this roundtable engages an impressive range of topics including the history of decolonization, Cold War diplomacy, German colonial nostalgia, African “customary” law, early independence-era Tanzanian politics and the struggle for environmental self-determination, animal behaviorism and territoriality studies, international activism, tourism, and the nature film industry. No small feat.

Chris Conte opens the roundtable by reflecting on Grzimek’s salesmanship for Serengeti National Park and Lekan’s exploration of green imperialism and parks in East Africa. Conte draws four central lessons on postwar conservation in Africa from *Our Gigantic Zoo*. First, he commends Lekan’s assessment of how colonial states and international conservation organizations created tropes of “belonging” in Serengeti National Park, tropes that reflected racist and mythologized narratives. Second, Conte underscores the value of Lekan’s “green imperialism” framing of western governance concerning nature reserves in the post-colonial era. Third, Conte praises Lekan’s analysis of how Grzimek popularized a green pseudo-science via his films. Finally, Conte draws from *Our Gigantic Zoo* the need for histories that examine how Africans responded to national park creation.

Moving the frame of analysis from African history to European history, Corinna Treitel considers Lekan’s contributions to postwar German studies. Grzimek’s life story, she writes, captures an “enlightening impulse” that characterized a generation of Germans. She asks Lekan to reflect on popular enlightenment thinking in the growth of the modern, global environmentalism movement of which Grzimek was a part. Trietel also reflects on the way Lekan uses Grzimek as a window into how Germany’s Nazi past was reconfigured in the postwar era to fit neo-colonial imperialist goals and new global audiences. Here Trietel highlights a theme of this roundtable and *Our Gigantic Zoo*: the problematic, paradoxical impacts of “thinking locally and acting globally.” Grzimek built a worldwide audience for work on wildlife conservation in Tanzania; yet Lekan argues that this work ignored African voices, struggles, histories, and environments.
In the third roundtable response, Jeff Schauer further considers the perils Lekan unearths in “thinking locally and acting globally.” Lekan’s engagement with the Frankfurt Zoological Society’s archive, Schauer writes, allows the author to plumb the mindsets of both African and European wildlife conservation players. Lekan, Schauer observes, positions Grzimek not as the sole focus of his book, as a traditional biography might, but as a point of connectivity. Our Gigantic Zoo is at once a critique of Grzimek’s career, a close analysis of the Serengeti’s ecosystem, and an investigation of global networks of influence. It is a reminder of the benefit historians accrue from carefully populated histories as “a method for tracking change, causation, thought, and activism” at both local and global scales.

To wrap up the roundtable, Julie Weiskopf commends Lekan for framing Grzimek’s work in the echoes of colonialism emanating from post-WWII European nations. By investing in wildlife conservation and “development,” European governments justified continual postwar interference in nations like Tanzania. Weiskopf surveys how Lekan situates Our Gigantic Zoo in the scholarship of East African conservation and environmental history, late colonial and early independence Tanzanian political history, and scholarship on the ethnic groups most affected by conservation controversies. She asks the author to further reflect on Grzimek’s legacy in Africa and what questions writing Our Gigantic Zoo raised for him in terms of future scholarship in Tanzanian conservation and environmental history.

Lekan uses his author reply to chart the evolution of this project—originally an internationally-focused chapter in a history of German environmentalism—and how his teaching experiences led him to apply a “life history” frame to it. Lekan is generous in his reply, responding to many of the questions posed about German medicine and Enlightenment, the compatibility of national parks and democracy, and the state of the field of Tanzanian environmental history from his position as a scholar trained in European history. Responding to the rich historiographic comments of this roundtable, Lekan also reflects on his work searching for monographs to frame his research and writing, highlighting the need for global conservation histories that reflect the important differences among sub-Saharan Africa’s postcolonial political cultures. In so doing, he offers a survey of the scholarship in which he situates his work as well as his interdisciplinary archival research process. To conclude, Lekan reflects on Grzimek’s legacy in Africa and the persistence of myths of “Wild Africa,” highlights the power of “charismatic megascientists” in postwar conservation, the nature (often problematic) of conservation project funding, and the role of Enlightenment thinking in the production of modern environmentalism.

Before turning to the first set of comments, I would like to pause here and thank all the roundtable participants for taking part. In addition, I would like to remind readers that as an open-access forum, H-Environment Roundtable Reviews is available to scholars and non-scholars alike, around the world, free of charge. Please circulate.
On January 11, 2021, an as-yet unidentified group of armed militia members murdered six rangers at Virunga National Park (formerly Albert National Park, 1925-1969) in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Only nine months earlier, twelve rangers and five civilians died at the hands of militia members at Virunga. The report goes on to point out that in the January killings, the murderers executed their victims inside the park and next to a new electrified fence, undoubtedly an exclusionary symbol to local land users. Founded in 1925 as a site for zoological research of untrammeled wilderness, the Virunga National Park is huge; it covers three thousand square miles of the Rift Valley stretching from Lake Edward to Lake Kivu. A multitude of ecosystems cover the park’s steep elevation gradient, which ranges from 680m up to 5109m above sea level in the Ruwenzori Mountains. The park’s value to ecological science is immeasurable; its forests are home to 22 species of primates and more than 218 species of mammals, not to mention the multitudes of insects, reptiles and amphibians. A number of other large Rift Valley national parks flank Virunga in neighboring Uganda and Rwanda. Unfortunately, the wider eastern African Great Lakes region, home to these valuable highlands, has experienced spasms of twentieth century violence, but the Rwanda genocide of 1994 normalized it and millions of people fled into the DRC. In this continuing era of weak state control and armed conflict, militias have periodically sheltered in the park, making a living by producing much-in-demand cooking charcoal from forest timber. Virunga has become as well as target for the London-based oil and gas company SOCO, adding another layer of potential exploitation to the area’s wealth. In sum, Virunga National Park has evolved into a bitterly and violently contested space.¹

Thomas Lekan’s biography of Bernard Grzimek, the well-known German conservationist, takes readers to Albert National Park in 1950, a decidedly more peaceful time, and then on the Tanganyika’s Serengeti, where the German filmed “The Serengeti Shall not Die.” Lekan unravels for his readers the story behind one man’s singular quest to colonize and preserve what he understood to be a pristine piece of East African savanna threatened by modernity. For Grzimek, and others of this period, wildlife preservation meant enclosure, as in a zoo, but on a massive scale that obviated cages. In fact, Lekan’s apt characterization of Grzimek as head zookeeper of the Frankfurt Zoological Society clarifies his highly successful appeals to the European public to fund conservation in the Serengeti. Grzimek believed that people must consume nature in order to preserve it and so he became a salesman for Serengeti National Park as he rode the wave of green imperialism into Tanganyika.

Lekan lays out a painstaking investigation of Grzimek’s psychological development as a failed academic, a Nazi bureaucrat, and the post-war rebuild of the Frankfurt Zoological Garden. Lekan then deftly guides us through the genesis of his subject’s misanthropy and racism that he developed in war-time Germany. Readers follow Grzimek to the Belgian Congo tracing the evolution of No Room for Wild Animals, the nature book and subsequent critically acclaimed film about the Albert National Park that underwrote Grzimek’s forays into the Serengeti a few years later. The book and film lectured viewers about an environmental crisis threatening animals and their habitats, one that stemmed exclusively from the human rapacity born of a population explosion and the taint of Africa’s haphazard westernization. Under these circumstances, the park was no place for African husbandry or hunting.

In the Serengeti, Grzimek again drew on film to repackage his Congolese education in “The Serengeti Shall Not Die,” another highly successful collaborative effort with his son, Michael. With the iconic zebra stripes painted on his small aircraft and land rovers, the Grzimeks reached out to German-speaking audiences with emotional nature stories that highlighted impending threat. He crowd-sourced funding for his mission with the message that individuals in post-war Europe could save something beautiful with only a modest contribution. As Lekan tells it so well, Grzimek’s life reflects both his time and his idiosyncrasies. Ultimately, the book enlarges for readers the imperialist mindset that became a geographical reality with real long-term consequences for nature and our understanding of parks as places in Africa.

I think that Our Gigantic Zoo rewards it readers with several vital lessons for Africa’s conservation.

First, in forming nature reserves and national parks, colonial governments relied on historical knowledge that was inherently racist and mythological. Colonial states and their allies in international conservation organizations normalized stories of racial hierarchy and sanguineous purity among Africans in order to determine who belonged in the park. At Albert National Park, for example, “Pygmies” who had supposedly lived in the forest since time immemorial, and who continued an existence as primitive cogs in natural systems, belonged. Latecomers, such as “Bantu” farmers or “Hamitic” herders, had no such claim. To make matters worse, these groups had interbred and threatened to disturb the park’s natural purity. Academic history has repeatedly called out these racist and ahistorical renderings but they live on through the power of nature films and conservation fundraising.

Second, the green imperialism behind park formation in eastern Africa meant turning thousands of square miles into internationalized spaces of operation that continued to be governed by western imperatives into the post-colonial era. Park creation thus politicized on a global scale Virunga’s forests and Serengeti’s wildebeest migration in newly independent African states, who failed to exert much, if any, influence over the process. Park ownership and policing power thus came to belong to generously funded conservation organizations. Today global
environmental governance remains top-down, authoritarian, and largely non-democratic.

Third, Grzimek’s green vision drew heavily on conveying pseudo-science through film in order to popularize the American national park idea in eastern Africa. His legacy continues through nature shows on television networks like Nat Geo Wild.

Fourth, we need more African histories of national parks. Lekan has given us Grzimek’s story, one in which Africans played only bit parts. We need new stories from the field relating how Africans have responded to the parks in their midst. Historians and human geographers have only begun the work.

In closing I would ask, given the knowledge that Lekan has so skillfully provided us with, how are we to reconcile Africa’s national parks as anything but artifice? Can parks enclosed by electric fencing and guarded by armed conservation soldiers be understood as something more than local symbols of oppression? Are democracy and parks ultimately incompatible?
ENVIRONMENT AND ENLIGHTENMENT

How should scholars understand German conservationist Bernhard Grzimek and his quest to convince the world that Africa's Serengeti ecosystem should become "our gigantic zoo"? In his wonderful new book, Thomas Lekan provides a multitude of answers. He guides us into Grzimek's early life as an animal scientist and Nazi functionary who later became the celebrated director of the Frankfurt Zoo without, however, having come to terms with his Nazi past. When Grzimek remade himself in the 1950s and 1960s as the "Noah" who would lead Africa's animals to safety, that undigested past resurfaced repeatedly if obliquely in his global conservationist activities. Grzimek's life might be read as a triumph for his success in building a worldwide audience of millions, many of whom contributed money to support his conservationist projects. But, as Lekan elegantly shows, that very success was tinged with the detritus of Germany's unexamined past, both its recent Nazi one and its more distant but no less fraught African colonial one. Today, most Germans, and many non-Germans, lionize him as a pioneer of German ecological consciousness and the "Father of African Conservation" (p. 7), yet in doing so they elide a less heroic story in which old Nazi themes and imperial tropes were recycled in a neo-colonial framework that helped sell a new vision of Africa to global audiences. In the waning years of European empire and the opening ones of African independence, Grzimek's mission came to center on creating a vast landscape within which endangered species could peacefully live out their lives. Yet that mission, Lekan argues, ignored Africans—their voices, plans, habits, struggles, histories, hopes, and needs—and encapsulated the perils of "thinking locally and acting globally." Grzimek had "thought locally" by making moral and scientific claims about nature from his home in West Germany in the 1950s-60s, then erased his very situatedness by universalizing his claim: Africa's nature was worth saving (by whom? a West German conservationist!) because it belonged to the entire world. If considered within the frame of German history, then, Grzimek emerges as a charismatic figure who elided less savory aspects of his country's past while building a following of millions for his conservationist message; if considered, however, on a stage that includes Africa, Grzimek appears as a more complex figure, both less heroic and with less power to shape the world than his stardom might suggest. After all, his most famous project—to "save the Serengeti" on conservationist terms—failed when Tanzania's first leader Julius Nyeyere decided that conserving "our gigantic zoo" on terms acceptable to global conservationists created less money and more headaches than it was worth. Anyone who knows Tom will recognize in this book, and my attempt to summarize its major themes, his infectious exuberance. Every page is brimming with ideas and facts and the argument has many threads and layers. Like having a conversation with Tom, the experience is one of drinking a multi-layered and very bubbly champagne cocktail.
In my comments, I focus on just one source of the fizz by asking Tom to reflect on what his story might suggest to future scholars about the importance of enlightenment (Aufklärung) in the meteoric growth of global environmental movements and ecological consciousnesses. This is a thread that runs throughout his book, yet receives no specific articulation. "Two-thirds entertainment, one-third enlightenment," after all, was Grzimek's motto as a TV personality. I do not mean Enlightenment as an eighteenth-century movement that ended with Romanticism, but rather enlightenment as a living project that continued to develop throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Germans spoke in those years of Volksaufklärung, Volksbelehrung, and Volkserziehung, by which they meant a project of mass education and uplift bordering on advertising and even propaganda for this or that cause. Launched in the eighteenth century, for instance, medical enlightenment sought to teach Germans to avoid all the mistakes that prematurely shortened life. Much ink was spilled on topics like mothers who accidentally killed their own infants by smothering them while co-sleeping in an overly warm and soft featherbed. The tone was highly didactic, even preachy, and Germans, usurpingly, paid little attention. But by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, medical enlighteners had become much more influential by learning to leverage the new media of mass communication to get their message out in a way that was both highly visual and emotionally resonant. So adept did Germany turn out to be at this kind of mass enlightenment that it produced didactic objects with near-universal recognition lasting to the present day. These included physician Fritz Kahn's vision of the human body as an industrial palace and the Dresden Hygiene Museum's transparent man / woman figures which introduced millions to the inner workings of their own bodies. Even after the Nazis perverted enlightenment by establishing a Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda to shape public opinion at home and abroad, Germans held onto their enlightenment dreams. In the same years that Grzimek was deploying books, films, zebra-striped airplanes, TV shows, and so on to save the Serengeti, in fact, the reconstituted Dresden Hygiene Museum was sending the transparent man / woman figures in "Hygiene Buses" to East Africa to teach Africans a thing or two about their body's inner anatomy, another supposed "universal." For Grzimek's generation, in short, enlightenment had become a very German practice for communicating knowledge, building consensus, and persuading recipients to adapt various "truths" as self obviously natural ones. Not only was Grzimek clearly a master of popular enlightenment in this very German mode, his entire project of thinking locally and acting globally encapsulated the paradoxes and erasures inherent in the enlightenment enterprise itself.

Grzimek's story is redolent with the power and pitfalls of the enlightening impulse. Already famous at home for his Nazi-era animal stories and directorship of the Frankfurt zoo, Grzimek vaulted to international fame with his bestselling 1954 book No Room for Wild Animals. After becoming a literary sensation in West Germany, the book appeared in 27 further languages and reached 7 million readers by 1960. So successful was the book that Grzimek and his son Michael quickly secured funding to travel to the Congo to turn their conservationist message into a film. Screened in 63 countries, the film reached an even wider audience than the book and won West
Germany’s most prestigious film prize. Disney may have pioneered nature films by making human encounters with wild animals thrilling, but the Grzimeks went further by dramatizing the message that Africa’s animals were facing apocalypse. Shots of wild animals innocently going about their daily business were interspersed with scenes revealing the gathering forces of ecological catastrophe: populations burgeoning after public health measures removed the continent’s "natural" Malthusian checks of famine and disease, bulldozers chewing up the jungle to make way for soulless new metropolises, and Western tourists with cameras slung around their necks swarming in for a photo op in Africa. The message was clear: Africa’s nature faced mortal threat from the forces of modernization and only the heroic interventions of global conservationists to protect natural habitats in national parks could save it. Those were themes Grzimek continued to develop in his Oscar-winning film *Serengeti Shall Not Die*, his long-running TV show *A Place for Animals* (which captured 70% of West Germany’s available TV viewers), and elsewhere. Yet, as Lekan so adeptly shows, there was a great deal going on outside the pages and frames of Grzimek’s books, films, and publicity stunts. Africa, Lekan argues, was a projection screen onto which mostly Western activists built "our gigantic zoo," but beyond the screen were Africans themselves struggling with their own tensions, needs, and dreams. Grzimek had left them out. And perhaps historians have, too. The author challenges scholars in his introduction to resist the temptation to ontologize global environmentalism by seeking its origins in purely impersonal factors such as climate change, urging them instead to pay attention to the myriad human conflicts in and across various world regions that produced what we now call global environmentalism (pp. 10-11). This, then, returns me to enlightenment as a strategy for making claims about what’s natural seem true by erasing the socio-political contexts and human actors involved in or excluded from the truth making. As you think about scholars who come after you, Tom, what can you tell them about locating, unpacking, and understanding the role of enlightenment in producing modern environmentalism?
Comments by Jeff Schauer, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Probably no continent more than Africa, and no protected space more than the Serengeti, is more closely associated with herds of big game perambulating across large spaces. Nor with the opportunity for the world to descend upon and enjoy those spaces. During the 1960s at the First World Conference on National Parks, United States Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall referred to the Serengeti National Park as "one of the finest game sanctuaries in the world," adding that by his reckoning "the world’s travelers will add far more to [Tanzania’s] economic growth than would any alternate use of these lands." This characterization of the Serengeti as a premier wildlife sanctuary and destination, and the blithe insistence that the use of this land for wildlife conservation was the only logical—and indeed ethical—approach for African governments to take, represent key facets of the world that Thomas Lekan interrogates in his monograph, Our Gigantic Zoo: A German Quest to Save the Serengeti.

Lekan, whose earlier work examined the intersections between culture and conservation across Imperial, Weimar, and Nazi Germany, has turned his attention to Bernhard Grzimek’s campaigns to invest West Germans in the future of the Serengeti ecosystem in northern Tanzania. Waged during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, Grzimek’s conservation campaign on television and in the corridors of power in East Africa is widely-recognized and often-mentioned in its broadest of contours by scholars of conservation in Africa, but little-considered for its potential significance, and generally unexplored at any length as an example of the wider phenomenon of "thinking locally and acting globally" (10) in the world of decolonizing Africa and postwar Europe. This is a richly-contextualized study, in which “West Germans’ anxieties about modernization and American influence in postwar Europe” (79) and West German film censorship (184) get interwoven with colonial mythologizing around Maasai (148) and Tanzania’s Cold War politics (216). Indeed, integrating these perspectives, themes, and historical frames together around Grzimek, Germans, and the Serengeti is what makes this book a distinct global conservation history.

Lekan begins with Grzimek the zookeeper of Nazi and postwar Germany and charts his early journeys to Africa, where he was confronted by different models of park management and narratives of population and race. Rich analysis of the process of filmmaking and the films themselves set the stage for Grzimek’s ascent to television fame and conservation authority, and his focus on the Serengeti as an ecosystem both uniquely—in Grzimek’s views—in need of salvation and beguiling in its potential both for practical conservation work and for energizing global audiences. Grzimek’s collisions with their own and British ethnolinguistic categories—around Maasai communities—becomes the occasion for discussing the power and limits of the fortress conservation model. Lekan explores the geo- or eco-politics of this

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conservation work in both the context of national-era Tanzania and the international conservation scene, and ends with meditations on the limitations of Grzimek’s campaigns and an exploration of their broader ramifications.

*Our Gigantic Zoo* is not a biography, although it might come close to the method/genre of “biographical research” or the “life history approach.” However, more than nearly any other piece of scholarship on conservation in Africa, it focuses on the work of a particular individual, ground usually ceded to the immense and often immensely self-aggrandizing genre of conservation memoirs. A more critical perspective on the work of a particular individual—within their broader contexts—is a welcome and clearly fruitful intervention. This focus is in this case partly a testament to Bernhard Grzimek’s outsized influence on the conservation world of eastern Africa during the transition between the colonial and national periods.

Lekan reveals substantial benefits of such a focus. Rather than individual actors entering the story as they arrive in the Serengeti ecosystem, and ceasing to be of importance as they depart, and therefore missing what drew them to their interventions and what they carried away with them, this fuller treatment of Grzimek as a global actor allows us to see with a greater degree of precision and in more granular fashion how at least one strand of the conservation networks much-alluded to in the broader literature actually functioned as conduits of (mis)information, money, scientific knowledge, and political practise between global (particularly German in this case) constituencies and an African political-ecology. Rather than remaining the sole focus of the narrative, Grzimek’s labors link a broad set of communities and agendas. Frequently, scholarship offers us either close analysis of a particular ecosystem or a study of global networks of influence. Here we have our cake and eat it.

There are some possible drawbacks to such a focus. It can potentially obscure the influence of other individuals, privilege particular examples or forms of connectivity, and at times render the relative “global” significance of the case study opaque. In some ways these are churlish critiques which simply serve to highlight the necessary choices and parameters that every scholar makes and draws to create a study with boundaries that make it meaningful and significant. But Lekan’s use of Grzimek is precisely so useful because Grzimek is not the sole focus, but rather himself a point of connectivity. The book explores figures like John Owen and Derek Bryceson, but I wonder what, for example, greater attention to the role of a figure like Solomon Ole Saibul as a point of connectivity to a new generation of Tanzanian bureaucrats and conservationists with local roots would bring to the story. Of course, the archive’s very form leaves some individual presences muted, and can make it difficult to effectively source initiative and causation, creating a reliance on

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4 Among historical scholarship, Jane Carruthers’ *Wildlife and Warfare: The Life of James Stevenson-Hamilton* (Pietermaritzburg: UKZN Press, 2001) is the exception, and it is very much a biography.
private papers and memoirs that privilege international and expatriate perspectives and recollections.

The description of the connectivity around the Serengeti as an “ecological contact zone” (78) is convincing and evocative, but some of the connections seem thin, or perhaps thinly focused on Grzimek’s labors with less attention to what “contact” looked like for the wardens and game scouts, tourists and scientists, whose encounters were the enduring product of Grzimek’s pathmaking. Finally, Grzimek and the Frankfurt Zoological Society are clearly among the most significant individuals and institutions working on the Serengeti, given their focus on the ecosystem, the long-term nature of the relationship they built, and the obviously effective nature of Grzimek’s campaigns. On the other hand, to what extent might their influence, as measured in the historical record, be amplified or shrink when compared to the work of institutions like AWLF that sought more wholesale transformations of the East African conservation world, or local conservation societies even more quotidian in their labors. Similarly, the claim that the Serengeti controversy became “referendum on the United Kingdom’s capacity to rule” (172) seems a slight exaggeration given the multitude of nationalist claims and actions at work on the eve of independence. On balance, though, among environmental and conservation histories often characterized by reference to relatively anonymous individuals standing in for categories or types, this is a crucial intervention, and should serve as a call to other scholars to better populate some of our histories, not as biography, but as a method for tracking change, causation, thought, and activism.

*Our Gigantic Zoo* is also particularly effective at turning the supposed virtues of “thinking locally and acting globally” on their heads. In Lekan’s sophisticated telling, this process, undertaken by Grzimek and urged upon Germans, generated inequalities shaped by larger cultural and economic and historical preoccupations of West Germans and the essential coloniality of conservation as institutionalized in thought and practice in East Africa and beyond (78-80). The resulting “god’s eye perspective” allowed the “international community of enlightened conservationists” (141) to shower down prescriptive policy or raw violence as they chose (132-3). However, what does it mean that those taken as thinking and acting in this fashion are Grzimek and his compatriots? To be sure, they are the point of departure for this investigation. But the destructive hubris of the global north—and its particular iterations in the Federal Republic of Germany in the wake of the fascist era and in Tanzania after the chaos of colonialism—needn’t overshadow the varieties of thought and action occurring on and around the Serengeti, and the ways in which each of these reflected local preoccupations and global contexts. The intellectual, political, and managerial labors of Tanzanian actors of various sorts—particularly in chapters five, six, seven, and perhaps most powerfully in the epilogue—get ample attention. But the overriding contexts and conclusions remain global in relation to Grzimek’s world, reminding me of injunctions to think through the “belong[ing]” of
“temporal benchmarks” as a way to ensure that the diverse contexts for thought and action are represented.\(^5\)

*Our Gigantic Zoo* provides much for scholars of conservation in Africa, of decolonization, and of international activism, among others, to consider. Scholars in these fields should be inspired to think through the possibilities offered by the exploration of significant figures within their wider worlds, the value of interweaving such a fruitfully diverse set of historical frames, and the value of pushing further still the provocative juxtaposition of local ideals and global action. The reality of ecological crisis in our own era, and what promises to be the enduring, nay dominant, character of that crisis for the foreseeable future calls out for as many modes of analysis for thinking through paths to the future as we can muster. Those, like Lekan’s *Our Gigantic Zoo*, that model caution about the power dynamics behind universalizing claims for the salvation of nature, are particularly necessary.

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Thomas Lekan identifies the topic of his *Our Gigantic Zoo: A German Quest to Save the Serengeti* as a chapter in German environmentalism, but it is so much more. Centering his analysis on the parts of Bernhard Grzimek’s career related to wildlife conservation in Africa, particularly Tanzania, the book’s reach is far broader. How can one describe the way in which Lekan’s research expands in a multitude of directions? The scope of some works of history is like the concentric circles formed when a stone is thrown into a body of water, widening out from one center. In Lekan’s hands, it’s more like a large rock shattered into dozens of smaller pieces before piercing the water’s surface, each one producing separate, ever-widening arcs of historical topics and context. As a result, a book about one German conservationist takes deep dives into the histories of post-World War II international conservation thought (haunted by dark Malthusian assumptions), Cold War-era West German diplomacy, animal behaviorism and territoriality studies, the nature film industry, twentieth century German tourism, the German television and film industry, African “customary” law in the colonial period, savanna ecological science, and early independence-era Tanzanian politics. Even this diverse list is just a sampling of the many fascinating twists and turns this book takes in its exploration of Grzimek’s influence at home and abroad.

This book joins a welcome recent trend of transnational environmental histories that draw extensively on the works of Africanists and which views the continent’s residents, leaders, and policies as critical actors in shaping the ultimate outcome of foreign influence on African environmental history. These include Bernhard Gissibl’s *The Nature of German Imperialism* (2016), Corey Ross’s *Ecology and Power in the Age of Empire* (2017), and Jeff Schauer’s *Wildlife between Empire and Nation in Twentieth-Century Africa* (2019). They all appear to be worthy inheritors, in different ways, of Richard Grove’s magisterial *Green Imperialism* (1994). The authors of each of these works conducted demanding transnational research, and Lekan’s book benefits from years’ worth of intellectual labor on three different continents. One welcome outcome of this research is that Lekan can highlight novel sources on which Tanzanianists can draw to explore the nation’s environmental history. The rich correspondence between key African and European power players in wildlife conservation collected in the Frankfurt Zoological Society’s archive is especially compelling. Lekan rightly calls a 1972 letter from Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere to Prince Bernhard of the World Wildlife Fund a critical revision of the 1961 Arusha Manifesto. The earlier document set out Tanzania’s commitment to protecting its wildlife and remains a touchstone for the country’s conservation sector today. The 1972 rebuke from Nyerere, one that powerfully reasserted his country’s sovereignty over its wildlife, makes this letter a critically important document in Tanzania’s environmental history (247). It must have been an exciting find.
Lekan clearly immersed himself in a series of Africanist historiographies to produce this book. His citations cover all of the major works on conservation and environmental history in East Africa, of course, but he also consulted works on colonial governance, Tanzania’s postcolonial political culture, Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere’s career, and a deep dive into material on the ethnic groups most affected by conservation controversies like Maasai and Ikoma people. He engages with each of these topics with insight and sophistication. And this leads me to my first few questions for Lekan: as an “outsider,” what do you see as some of the more interesting or important trends in Tanzania’s environmental or conservation histories? What questions were raised in your research that Tanzanian specialists are best-placed to answer or explore?

Anyone deeply immersed in the ideologies and political justifications of colonial officials and early independence leaders will find Grzimek’s ideas that Lekan recounts in chapter two absolutely shocking. Here, Grzimek appears profoundly out of step with both sets of political actors, due to his evaluation of contemporary trends in late colonial / early independence-era Tanzania (and the global south more generally) concerning population growth, public health, and economic development. Grzimek believed that improvements in human and veterinary health disrupted natural selection and allowed human and livestock populations to skyrocket. This, in combination with the policies to expand economic development directly before and after independence, were the reasons that African wildlife habitat was so profoundly threatened. What’s so jarring about this is that colonial officials from every power justified European colonialism on exactly these kinds of improvements in public health and the economy. Officials viewed saving and improving African lives as proof positive that colonialism had a humanitarian side, with population growth and a reduction in infectious disease particularly serving as a form of “anti-conquest” in their minds.

As Lekan rightly notes, many of these efforts by colonial regimes were last-ditch attempts after World War II to stave off independence through belatedly investing funds into improving colonized Africans’ lives, now more under the rubric of “development” than the “civilizing mission.” And yet, there is also a long colonial history of Africans adopting dimensions of western biomedicine as one of many useful therapeutic forms to promote their own health. When Lekan writes that Grzimek understood inoculations and treatments for serious diseases as transforming a “humanitarian gesture into a crime against nature,” Grzimek not only defied what inspired colonial officials’ commitments, but also dismissed, with a disturbing nonchalance, the lives of thousands of Africans (46). But Grzimek’s ideas

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6 An exception that proves this rule is an apparent mix-up or conflation on page 65 between rinderpest and animal trypanosomiasis. This may be an editing error but the text suggests that Robert Koch’s prophylaxis for rinderpest made it possible for horses that would have died from animal trypanosomiasis to survive. Lekan shows elsewhere that he’s well aware of the very different etiologies of these separate diseases, so the confusion here is odd. The intent of this paragraph remains clear, though: that in Grzimek’s mind, colonial efforts to control both of these animal diseases enabled the proliferation of people and livestock to the detriment of wildlife.
also set him on a collision path with independence-era leaders who positioned themselves as the most effective stewards of development, promising to bring improvements in both public health and economy. As Lekan notes, Grzimek’s tendency to universalize likely allowed him to ignore the callousness of his appraisal for Africans: because Grzimek believed that western biomedicine erred in boosting population throughout the world it also erred in African colonies and countries. This is an absolutely chilling logic, one that would make an enemy out of efforts to enrich diets, reduce infant mortality rates, and improve survival from infectious disease. And one cannot escape making the galling observation that poor African health helped to justify European interference on the continent in the form of colonialism; now Grzimek asserted that improved African health justified European interference in setting the continent’s wildlife agenda.

Lekan offers a nuanced portrait of how Grzimek interacted with Tanzanian citizens and leaders. And yet the echoes of colonialism – one that Grzimek refused to confront – haunt the book. Rather than hold up Europeans as the exemplars that Africans should follow, as civilizing mission ideology would have it in the colonial period, Grzimek presented Europe’s experience as a cautionary tale for African countries undergoing rapid change. What each of these visions shared, of course, is the assumption that societal change led in a particular direction, and Europeans were ahead of Africans. On the one hand, ‘civilization’ awaited African societies ready to follow Europe’s example. On the other, urbanization, increased consumption, and shifts in cultural values that had led to Europe’s destruction of its wildlife, showed Tanzania and other nations what they needed to avoid as they underwent similar changes (12, 23, 88). Even the presence of the remains of both Michael and Bernhard Grzimek in Tanzanian conserved spaces (the rim of Ngorongoro crater), has a colonial-like symmetry. They make a presumably permanent claim to the site in a way that is similar to how the emplacement of the grave of Frederick Courtney Selous at the massive Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania and Cecil Rhodes’ grave in Matobo National Park in Zimbabwe helps to define these controversial spaces in largely western terms.7

The book frequently expresses Grzimek’s overriding concern for the welfare of animals in his zoo as well as their natural habitats. Lekan recounts Grzimek’s focus on animal behavior, animal suffering, animal displacement, and animal sorrow (59, 60, 132) which leads me to wonder what an animal-studies inflected examination of Grzimek’s thought could reveal? This could be especially intriguing on two fronts: the emphasis that Grzimek and so many others of the time placed on saving wildlife by consuming it (sometimes literally), and the ways that he focused on wildlife collectives, even going so far as to view a herd as a superorganism (143).

I deeply appreciate how the book contests Grzimek’s tendency to view wildlife conservation as apolitical. In the face of the Grzimek’s unrelenting refusal to

recognize how his presence and advocacy complicated politics, Lekan returns us to the very real politics of the late colonial and early independence periods. In many of Lekan’s well-turned phrases, we see his concern over the human and civil rights that conservation organizations and political leaders often imperiled. Lekan shows us Africans being “imaginatively disenfranchised” by conservationist work, how Grzimek’s mission was ultimately doomed by “environmental inequalities left by European imperialism…and African demands for environmental sovereignty,” and how Tanzanian independence failed to offer its citizens “any rights-based language by which to contest global conservation norms and the state’s narrow vision of a productive citizenry” (76, 21, 212). And yet, I’m still not sure how Lekan, in his final analysis, understands Grzimek’s legacy in Tanzania and Africa more broadly. The book is nuanced in its portrait of Grzimek: it indicates where his actions compared well to his contemporaries, while also maintaining critical attention. In the introduction, Lekan refers to this latter concern as Grzimek’s “questionable environmental, social, and political impacts of his zookeeper image abroad,” but the text frequently shows us something far darker (6). It’s quite possible to view Grzimek as a self-appointed, self-righteous conservationist who wielded outsized power—and used it with unflagging certainty—to protect this “God-given” world heritage. How would the author put it?
Response by Thomas M. Lekan, University of South Carolina

I’m deeply grateful to Kara Schlichting for organizing this roundtable and for the opportunity to engage with the thoughtful and penetrating responses in this forum. Reading over the comments is both humbling and gratifying, as these scholars’ writings in Tanzanian history, German history, the history of medicine, and the environmental history of empire have inspired my own work and suffuse the pages of Our Gigantic Zoo. When Schlichting first proposed this roundtable, we had both just started our residential fellowships at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society in Munich and the very first cases of COVID-19 had appeared in Bavaria. Less than two months later, we were both back in the US, dejected by having to depart Europe hurriedly and unexpectedly. I had doubts we could ever pull off the roundtable, as I was sure scholars would not find the time amid so many challenges and anxieties over the summer and fall of 2020. What a delight to find the finished set of responses in my email box! I’m eager to be a part of the conversations that Chris Conte, Corinne Treitel, Jeff Schauer, and Julie Weiskopf have initiated about biographical approaches, the possibilities and limits of global environmental history, and the pressing need for far more African-centered and multispecies histories of East African conservation.

As Weiskopf notes in her perceptive comments, this book began as an international chapter in the history of German environmentalism and morphed into something more trans-local (Frankfurt Zoo—Serengeti National Park) than I had ever anticipated. Because of my interests in travel narrative, I was attracted to Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of the “contact zone” because it placed West Germany and the “former German East Africa” in the same mutually constitutive framework. Perhaps more than other academic monographs of this type, my classroom experiences help to explain why I settled on the biographical or “life history” approach that all commentators critique in their responses. This was a new framing for me (PhD: European social history), one that I hammered out during a fellowship year that also included the deep dive into African historiographies that Weiskopf highlighted. Better than I have ever articulated myself, Schauer has laid out the benefits and downsides of my approach, which uses Bernhard and his son Michael Grzimek’s airplane as a metaphor for tacking between the abstract Western “global” and the textured landscapes of Africanist political ecology. I’m heartened by Treitel’s enjoyment of the fizz created by the sampling of different themes, personalities, and eras on offer though I’m also keenly aware that there are critically important African biographies and ecologies left undistilled.

My scholarly interests in transnational or trans-local approaches were evolving just after I signed off on a joint appointment between the History Department and a

8 Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).
9 Susan Ware’s Still Missing: Amelia Earhart and the Search for Modern Feminism (New York: Norton, 1993) was an inspiration in this regard.
newly created School of the Earth, Ocean and Environment. In that unit, I was asked to teach policy-oriented environmental science classes in which students often had few history classes beyond the 100-level. I found it surprisingly challenging to assign this group of students a synthetic narrative book that captured the myriad environmental injustices and authoritarian impulses of “fortress conservation” that Conte describes so deftly in his contribution while not getting too mired in organizational charts, anonymous UN bureaucracies, and scientific networks that made their eyes glaze over. Many of the students planned on entering careers in government or consulting and believed that “sustainable development” offered a win-win for wildlife and people. I was reliant on scholarship in development economics and human geography to help them assess these programs rather than the deep contextualization that historians offer.

Grzimek allowed me to create points of “connectivity” (as Schauer notes so beautifully) across several continents, landscapes, and actors (human and non-human) and to chart the unfulfilled promises of Grzimek’s assertion that package tours to Africa would allow the animals to “pay for themselves.” Focusing on Grzimek was thus as much a pragmatic as a scholarly choice, for it enabled me to use a compelling central character to hold together (tenuously, as Weiskopf vivid description of a “large rock shattered into dozens of smaller pieces” reminded me) a complex story of ecological change, conservation science, German colonial nostalgia, “customary” law, decolonization, Cold War bipolarism, and Tanzanians’ struggle for environmental self-determination. Grzimek’s story also reflected my “home advantage” in German history, and as Treitel notes, to explore the sheer oddity of a West German emerging as the morally crusading “Father of African Conservation” less than two decades after the fall of the Third Reich. Yet it’s evident that the zookeeper’s activities did not reticulate across the multitude of actors who made and remade the Serengeti in those same decades as the commentators all rightly note.

Grzimek and his son Michael’s crusade allow students and other readers to identify the many perils of “thinking locally and acting globally,” the most important of which were the imperialist, racist, and mythological underpinnings of the national park movement that Conte elucidates. Pairing Grzimek’s book chapters with film clips from No Room for Wild Animals or Serengeti Shall Not Die enabled me to teach primary source interpretation and critical-ecological analysis quickly. Students were as horrified as Weiskopf by the preponderance of fears about racial “degeneracy”—inherited from colonial and Nazi contexts—that permeated the Grzimeks’ popular zoology texts and films. Such pairings also expose the ways in which mid-century Malthusianism tended to normalize racialized depictions of the

11 There is lots of good scholarship on these continuities, most especially Roderick P. Neumann’s, Imposing Wilderness: Struggles over Livelihood and Nature Preservation in Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
Maasai and Ikoma communities, reinforcing the violent pairing of ecological and “sanguineous” (Conte) purity.

Turning to Treitel’s observations about German medicine and Enlightenment, I would stress that Grzimek knew full well that he was writing against the grain of the imperial traditions of *Volkserziehung* that had legitimated the German Empire’s self-portrait as a benign imperialist latecomer with a special sensibility for Africans’ welfare. The belief in this unique sensibility lived on after Germany lost its colonies at Versailles, notably in the Nazi propaganda films *Germanin* (1943), in which German doctors risk it all to bring a cure for sleeping sickness to African villagers despite the cruelties of the exploitive British colonial officers. He knew that agricultural improvement and public health were top priorities for postcolonial regimes as well as for East and West Germans development experts scrambling to expand their spheres of influence in the “Third World.” He gambled on the notion that he might convince Tanganyikans that their best hope for the future lay instead in sating Europeans’ hunger for animal watching and benefiting from trickle-down tourist monies. At the opening ceremony for the “hygiene buses” that Treitel describes so vividly, Grzimek made sure that small wild animal figures were shot into the air above the crowd and parachuted to the ground—a reminder that an independent Tanganyika’s national identity was still tethered to imperial elephants and lions (no wonder so many who attended were offended by the German effort). He intended his warnings about the population bomb to shock audiences and they still do: improvements in veterinary medicine and inoculations against infectious tropical diseases were in his eyes “crimes against nature.” In this way, he could distance himself from colonialism by claiming all members of *Homo sapiens*—black and white—were destructive, higher primates bent on the animal world’s destruction. The 1954 chapter from *No Room* that Weiskopf noticed, which moved from Grzimek’s musing on horses entering the backcountry to a discussion of rinderpest prophylaxis (good catch—I cannot explain the logic here!) was stricken from the English and 1973 German versions of that text. I remain unsure why: was it the erroneous disease vectors or was the Malthusian just too dark for the children that the English translator wanted to target for edification?

Gen Z’ers intuitively understand the national parks are artificial constructs—there is little pushback when we discuss the “trouble with a (de-Africanized) wilderness.” Conte inquired about the lessons we can draw from Grzimek’s story about the compatibility of heavily guarded national parks and democracy. I was so glad to see Conte begin with Virunga National Park. Bernhard and Michael always believed that the Belgian model of a strict scientific preserves was the gold standard of *Naturschutz*—not the touristic, paved over, and highly managed American national parks. Grzimek shared ecologist Jacques Verschuren’s proposition that these parks were so vast enough in territory that—if left to their own devices—they could recover the self-equilibrating qualities of a precolonial ecosystem.\(^\text{12}\) The erasure of

Leopold II’s "Red Rubber" regime in such Myths of Wild Africa are beyond disturbing. This de-humanized imaginary of national parks is structurally illiberal. Grzimek had no faith in the democratic process because politicians, in his view, manipulated citizens for short-term advantage—and animals had no lobbyists at the table. What kind of ecological enlightenment emerges from such skepticism about democracy, Treitel asks? Grzimek equated "popular education" with the alignment of public opinion to his agenda, not engaging citizens in critical debate, self-reflection, or consensus-building. In Grzimek's mind, there were parallels between the easily manipulated West Germans just emerging from the shadow of Hitler and the African "masses" who naïvely mimicked "demagogues" in their demands for self-determination. Grzimek was most comfortable wheeling and dealing with elites such as Nyerere; it did not matter much to him if Tanzania’s one-party regime was becoming increasingly authoritarian so long as it delivered on its promises of national parks and wildlife reserves. Nyerere, however, came to see that Grzimek and his green network would never deliver on their promises and turned on them in the early 1970s. To Schauer's question about the relative importance of Grzimek and the FZS, I’d underscore that the zookeeper held sway in a small window from the late 1950s to early 1970s, a time when neither the African Wildlife Leadership Fund (AWLF) nor the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) had geared up their fundraising capacities to a point where they could pour millions in private/corporate donations into East Africa. Grzimek's failure to mobilize "hegemony on a shoestring" is why I end the book with the fate of the Serengeti in Nyerere’s hands.13

In response to Weiskopf’s question about what this “outsider” notices about Tanzanian environmental history, I’d respond that the 1970s and 1980s are critically important decades for further exploration by specialists of this region, perhaps working in pairs or in interdisciplinary teams with human geographers and ethnographers across European, Asian, and East Asian archives.14 It was in these decades that Nyerere had freed himself from the Arusha Manifesto’s constraints and in which national park expansion and villagization proceeded in tandem, reinforcing sharp demarcations in land use in what were once extensive farming and grazing landscapes. Nyerere liked national parks most when their borders forced "scattered" human settlements to coalesce into villages.15 A major gap in many global histories of conservation is their tendency to miss the important differences among sub-Saharan Africa’s postcolonial political cultures.16 Tanzania stands out in its commitment to the fortress model vis-à-vis, say, Kenya, where Rueben Matheka’s

14 My "team" consisted of me and a beleaguered Joshua Grace, who generously allowed me to knock on his door constantly in the final years of completing this manuscript and who introduced me to the work of Clapperton C. Mavhunga. Josh’s book African Motors: Technology, Gender, and the History of Development will appear with Duke University Press this year.
15 A little-used travel narrative from this era makes the connection between spatial planning and villagization clear: Harold Hayes, The Last Place on Earth (New York: Stein and Day, 1977).
16 There are important exceptions to this point, notably Clark C. Gibson, Politicians and Poachers: The Political Economy of Wildlife Policy in Africa (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
work has shown a willing to practice forms of decentralized "community conservation" long before it was fashionable with the IUCN and WWF. And Tanzania continued to expand its national parks long after the Africanization of the parks department led Solomon Ole Saibull and Derek Bryceson to the conclusion that the parks would never pay for themselves. The 1970s and 1980s provide the bridge to the neo-liberal era of structural adjustment and "sustainable development," an era in which the WWF, AWF, and other NGOs with far vaster resources than the FZS sponsored wildlife management areas and “community conservation” to re-assert international/imperial conservationist discipline on Tanzania under the guise of returning decision-making to locals.

In my first draft prospectus for this project, I had assumed it would be straightforward to locate monographs that described Nyerere and TANU's conservation policies and the points of overlap and conflict with Grzimek's brand of fortress conservation. No such luck. Turning instead to archives, I found that some of Nyerere's most interesting comments on wild animal and nature conservation were scattered and contradictory, surfacing in interviews with Western journalists, comments to German or British parliamentarians, or brief lines in political or philosophical treatises about *ujamaa* and national heritage. As Weiskopf shows so compellingly in a recent article about this period, Nyerere and his compatriots pursued “wildlife diplomacy” strategically and skillfully. Pivoting off her insights, I noticed that the same leader who warned of a “Second Scramble for Africa” at Afro-Asia solidarity forums indulged West German leaders' brazen imperialist fantasies of wild Africa to leverage other kinds of resources that his government needed. He also accepted their flawed beliefs that pastoralists, especially, overgrazed the savannas and thus threatened the country's agricultural future. Following Peter Rogers, I came to see conservation as a perilous “bargain” between Western conservationists and Nyerere's socialist government, rather than a direct "imposition" of wilderness onto a powerless nation. Might it be possible to write a history of Tanzania's national environmental policy in the first decades after independence that does not assume direct continuity with colonial predecessors from the outset?

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18 A richly layered Swahili word meaning "familyhood" that Nyerere used to signify a new form of African socialism based on cooperation, community, and self-reliance.
21 In other words, what did environmental sovereignty mean for African nation-builders? A good place to start in framing such a study would be Paul Bjerk's, *Building a Peaceful Nation: Julius Nyere and the Establishment of Sovereignty in Tanzania, 1960-1964* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015.)
Clearly, there are significant risks to the life history approach, especially one centered on such a self-aggrandizing polymath as Grzimek. As Conte, Weiskopf, and Schauer assert so eloquently, we desperately need more African histories of parks, ones that de-center Western conservation science’s baseline assumptions and open the savannas, *miombo* woodlands, and rainforest highlands to what Arturo Escobar might describe as a “pluriverse” of competing ontologies (in this vein, Jan Bender Shetler’s work on the Western Serengeti and Mara Goldman’s work on Maasai understandings of animal migration come to mind).²² For scholars like me, who lack the ethnographic contexts and linguistic skills to probe these alternative ontologies, there exists a vast array of unpublished and under-utilized MA and PhD theses in the East Africana collection at the University of Dar es Salaam library that incorporate ethnographies and oral histories of communities across Tanzania that do not often appear in environmental histories.

As Schauer remind us, “contact” also looked very different for African game scouts, wardens, and tourist operators who created new professional spheres in the wake of Grzimek’s (and Mweka’s founders, as his research shows) endeavors. Elizabeth Garland’s magnificent 2006 dissertation and Ben Gardner’s recent book on “selling the Serengeti” point to this “middle ground” that tourism, wildlife management, and community conservation have created between Western conservationist organizations and Tanzanian scientists, land managers, and construction laborers that blur easy lines between Eurocentric and Afrocentric natures.²³ For Garland and Gardner, national parks and wildlife reserves are forms of biological and symbolic capital that multiple actors have tried to exploit, albeit unequally, as Tanzania “exports” its wilderness abroad. As Schauer argues perceptively, a shift just a few years deeper into the 1970s, shortly after the Africanization of the national parks authority, would bring new actors into the “contact zone,” especially that of Solomon Ole Saibull—the first African conservator of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and for a brief time Chief Warden of the Serengeti. Grzimek and his band of British ex-pat colleagues viewed the Maasai conservationist as recalcitrant, even mentally unbalanced, yet his story clearly illustrates the possibilities of reconstructing a history of African-nationalist, socialist-collectivist, and mixed-use alternatives to Western conservationism in that decade.

Conte and Weiskopf inquire in the end how we should understand Grzimek’s legacy in Africa and how and why myths of Wild Africa persist despite their well-documented environmental injustices. I have three responses to share, all of which I

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now realize I should have made much clearer in my epilogue. First, I’d emphasize the persistence of “charismatic megascientists” in the postwar generation’s fundraising efforts. One reason that the Serengeti’s “House of Conservation” frames Maasai and Ikoma as Serengeti outsiders is that the EU and NGO funders of such exhibits rely heavily on the mid-century moment of sanitized, televiuous nature to raise funds. Their donor base—individuals in their 40s, 50s, and 60s—still remember watching A Place for Animals with fondness. My brief but icy conversations with the recently deceased Markus Borner at Seronera in 2010 reminded me just how entangled and fraught the relationship between the FZS and its erstwhile founder remains. For this reason, in her 2008 essay “Elephant in Room,” Elizabeth Garland pleaded for the FZS, the AWF, the WWF, and the National Geographic Society to "exercise constraint in glorifying the accomplishments and personas of individual charismatic conservationists" in their promotional materials, but so far as I can tell, to no avail.24 These institutions need an endangered wild Africa to justify their involvement. "saving the Serengeti" has to some extent become a means, not an end.

Second, as my final chapter shows, many organizations fund pet projects that burden day-to-day operations rather than supporting quotidian management and administration. In that chapter I tried to go beyond the Serengeti region and address the promise of nature tourism through a rudimentary cost-benefit approach—did wild animals actually pay for themselves, as Grzimek and nearly every other speaker at the Arusha Conference in 1961 promised? If we begin to think about national parks as infrastructure, as capital for development as Dan Brockington and Rosalee Duffy do, then it’s obvious how disadvantaged Tanganyika was as the "poor sister" of British East Africa’s three territories in 1961.25 Tourism revenue did not, at least in the first three postwar decades, produce enough revenue to justify the Nyerere government’s substantial investment in roads, lodges, hotels, emergency vehicles, and financial "indemnification" of Ikoma and other villagers forced to relocate outside national park boundaries. Nor did Western conservationists ever make good on their rescue plan for wildlife that promised direct aid for rhinos on par with the UNESCO funds used to rescue the Nubian monuments at Abu Simbel from the waters of the Nile surging behind the Aswan Dam. Nature tourists, meanwhile, never arrived in numbers that Tanzania’s planned economy had anticipated, partly because of competition with a wealthier and infrastructurally better-endowed Kenya. When Grzimek declared that Africans were "sacrificing" their own development priorities for the sake of the global ecological commons, he was right—but this hardly meant that rural citizens had done so willingly.26 For environmental policy students interested in "ecotourism" as a lever of development, Tanzania’s experience suggests that it may be exceedingly

26 I have a brief essay, "Animal Attraction," in the forthcoming April edition of History Today with more detail on this subject.
difficult to square boutique adventures with infrastructural costs, revenue vicissitudes, and now a global pandemic. This chapter has helped my students and me to see why so many well-meaning "community-based conservation" schemes have failed to break apart the national park fortresses created in the 1960s and 1970s.

Finally, Conte’s comments about the incompatibility of democracy and national parks leads me back to Treitel’s question about the role of Enlightenment in producing modern environmentalism. We cannot understand Grzimek’s didacticism and his blithe dismissal of African calls for environmental sovereignty without contending with the Malthusian doom that pervades his writings. Treitel so rightly notes that my aim in this book is to shatter the ontology of the "global environment," which gained traction just as fears of "overpopulation" and desertification made it impossible for most observers to democratize and decolonize environmental knowledge. Though I critique integrated conservation and development projects in my epilogue, such endeavors may soon seem far more benign than the renewed fortress mentality of the Anthropocene.

In many recent works on conservation, we find a planetary ontology superseding both the global and the local. E.O. Wilson and others now call for "Half Earth" proposals to remedy the twin evils of climate change and mass extinction. My students and I have traced the lines of the revitalized habitats in these proposals, and the bulk of them lay in the Global South and outside major metropolises. Grzimek’s story cautions against "thinking locally, acting planetarily," which contains some of the same hidden dangers as the 1960s generation. Grzimek’s warnings about mass extinction in No Room for Wild Animals don’t read all that differently from Elizabeth Kolbert’s Sixth Extinction. If we substituted "climate change" for "overpopulation" in many of his books, essays, and letters, his dismissal of local prerogatives and "backward" peoples might look disturbingly familiar.

Teaching conservation policy has taught my students and me the value of the sober, old-fashioned, empirically detailed "literature review" about species and their habitats. The results have been surprising: the slower violence of local/regional factors—ranging from ranchers draining the Florida panther’s wetland habitat for cattle to toxic effluents that seep from barges and sicken protected Galapagos sea lions—pose a far greater immediate threat than climate change. My students even found that climate change is being used as an excuse not to do more on the local front. Does an Anthropocene framing centered on "climate emergency," so redolent of mid-century modern ecology, help or hinder the effort to enlighten varied publics about environmental threats? "Stop saving the planet," cries Jenny Price in her recent environmental manifesto. Ecological enlightenment need not tether itself to doomsday environmentalism.

29 Jennifer Price, Stop Saving the Planet!: An Environmentalist Manifesto (New York: W.W. Norton, 2021).
About the Contributors

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Corinna Treitel studies the interplay of modern science, medicine, culture, and politics in Central Europe. Her first book A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004) asked why Germany, a scientific powerhouse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, also hosted one of the Western world’s most vibrant and influential occult movements. Her second book Eating Nature in Modern Germany: Food, Agriculture, and Environment, c. 1870-2000 (Cambridge University Press, 2017) investigated German efforts to invent more “natural” ways to eat and farm. Professor Treitel works at Washington University in St. Louis, where she recently helped introduce Medical Humanities as a field of study and led a university-wide celebration of the Frankenstein Bicentennial.
Julie Weiskopf is an associate professor of history at Gonzaga University, where she also serves as the Fulbright Program Adviser. Her research interests center on the social and environmental history of Tanzania in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Past projects have included work on the histories of sleeping sickness, forced resettlement projects, and wildlife conservation especially in rural areas. Her current book project is a social history of postcolonial adult literacy campaigns.

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