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Being Vulnerable:
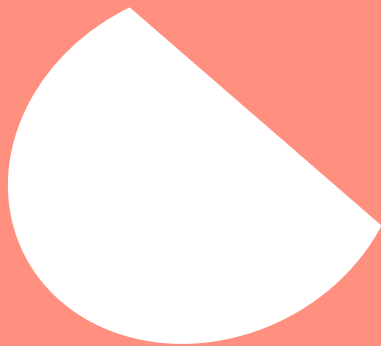Distances of the Sublime Anthropocene

by
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Being Vulnerable:

Distances of the Sublime Anthropocene
Laura Hopes

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Abstract: Being Vulnerable:

Distances of the Sublime Anthropocene

Laura Hopes

This project by the artist and researcher Laura Hopes develops from a methodology built around the idea of the 'vulnerable practitioner', open to failure, seeking collaboration and acceptant of unknowns. Her practice has become, through collaboration with others and her own acceptance of vulnerability, a slower, lengthier process, where her assumptions are constantly challenged and obstacles unpicked. The project's expanded practice encompasses writing, conversations, film, performance, installation and multi-disciplinary exchange.

Using these diverse tools, she investigates, through artistic research, what has traditionally been understood by the terms Sublime and Anthropocene and seeks to understand where their meanings may have coincided throughout the geologic and human history of this era, the Anthropocene.

This project explores these terms within the philosophical categories of the Sublime namely; aesthetics, rhetoric, and distance, with particular focus upon human use of land; through agriculture, extraction, dispossession, ruination and practices of settler-colonialism. Hopes reviews and argues for a synonymy between these terms through the lens of her collaborative practice within three specific projects; *Marginalia*, Ruins and *Speedwell*. During this process of moving through different distances of time and physical distances of engagement, she tentatively uncovers possibilities for a 'new' Sublime Anthropocene. It is telling that the artistic projects, forged through collaboration, remain to a degree unfinished, always offering a further possibility.

This Sublime Anthropocene is acknowledged through a more evenly distributed precarity among and between species, a rupture of linear models of distant history in favour of a layered and ongoing temporality, and a polyvocality which offers space for multiple 'tellings' of these experiences. Hopes offers no easy solutions to this time of environmental and societal crisis but instead suggests that vulnerability and an openness to unknowing may be a more powerful response than false forms of 'solutionism', where the solution will suit the solver, or at best be done on behalf of others.

Contents

A note to the reader

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The broad commentary of this thesis can be likened to an alluvial plain: formed through sedimentation, melting glaciers or other geological events that wash, erode material, settle and accrue. Within this plain, systems and phases of the academy's exploration of theories of the Sublime and the Anthropocene are challenged, interwoven and unspooled. Multiple voices are invoked, the vulnerability of being a research practitioner is unpacked, and distances of experience are tested.

This flattened land could initially be viewed as a linear temporality, spanning the multiple pasts and futures of the Anthropocene; a 'Sublime Anthropocene' vast in its entangled trajectories. Perhaps this commentary's span could be limited to human history, to the boundaries of anthropic time. Within this plain there then emerge spikes (possibly the 'golden spikes', the geologic markers of temporal boundaries that Kathryn Yusoff alludes to in her work on inhuman geography in *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*). These towering megaliths emerge, like coral bommies or hydrothermal vents in the seabed; a new crust forming along tectonic plates; complex organisms clustering. These spikes signify symbolic points within a constant unfolding of the Anthropocene; moments where historical interwoven trajectories coalesce as signal events, marking a shift; a particular upthrust of violence or a collapsing of hierarchies. As must surely be anticipated, these moments, like the Anthropocene itself, are not singular events, they are, rather, processes, with all the unknowability and immeasurability that incurs. As such, they challenge the linearity of time, possibly feeling its boundaries, experiencing the circularity and asymmetry of time, rather than asserting epochs.

Both of these elements (the sedimentation and the spikes) acknowledge the constantly repeating cycles of planetary violence and the ongoing trauma enacted through the Sublime Anthropocene. Locating the spikes at specific intersections of histories does not isolate them within the constraints of that historic point in time, but instead recognises the ongoing temporality and the unfolding impact enacted within each geologically and socially symbolic moment.

Certain spikes of specific temporalities are addressed within three artistic projects I have undertaken (namely *Marginalia; Theatre of Ruins; Speedwell*). These spikes penetrate the overall research thesis (set out in three chapters), emerging from a methodological approach that involves reading and writing in distinct voices, exploration and negotiation of distances, multiple conversations, collaboration and an investigation of shared and individual vulnerabilities. The intention of this methodological diversity is that the vulnerable sublimation or surrendering to the senses sought within the Romantic Sublime, can be reactivated and then used as a tool to critique the dominant centrism of discourses around the Anthropocene. My artistic research collapses the terms Sublime and Anthropocene together, uncovering a shared synonymy and genesis. These terms connote an externalised gaze, distancing the self from others, often embodied within a colonial or Western-centric outlook Both terms convey mastery over an environment, of dominated humanity and more-than-humans, dispossessing these groups and turning them into fetishized commodities.

A 'Sublime Anthropocene' is a cumulation of global events so vast in magnitude as to be unrepresentable, and its catalysts are of such knotted complexity that a singular response is rendered dumb and irrelevant. None of the projects explicitly answer or solve the problems of a 'Sublime Anthropocene' but come, with different degrees of impact, to address and have conversations with these

concerns, through site-specificity and collaborative practice. The artistic research explores, activates and argues for a networked response, comprised of human and more-than-human voices, mirrored then in the broader commentary which urges for an attentiveness to not knowing and the attendant vulnerability that accompanies this speculative exploration. It does this to reject the assured dominance of narratives of the Sublime and the Anthropocene and offers in its stead collaborative ways of knowing that recognise the need for shared learning to grow beyond a human-centric model of knowledge. This perspective informs both the commentary and the artistic projects which emerge.

Within each artistic project, the practice is informed by a complex assemblage of multiple voices, histories and agencies. The distinct collaborative process is mirrored by the need to write specifically to the concerns of each project and has engendered distinct vernaculars incorporating shared, common, repeating vocabularies. This is manifested through the stylistic techniques deployed: *Marginalia* invokes a performative poetic voice; *Theatre of Ruins* unfolds as a polyvocal assemblage expressed through script, dramaturgy and workshopping; *Speedwell* incorporates manifold testimonies/conversations/broadcasts. The intention for gathering these perspectives is to create a platform for a more holistic understanding, comprising multiple lived experiences negating or sublimating the existence of a solitary privileged viewpoint proffered by the Sublime Anthropocene. These artistic projects anchor us vertically back into the chronology of the Anthropocene, while at the same time operating transversally with each other. Therefore, the thematic undercurrent of the entire work, beginning with the 'right' to look, to space and to time; are evidenced in the structuring of the chapters themselves, potentially offering an alternative take on issues such as climate, land, and oppression. Each associated chapter operates in relation to the next and the previous, circling the core ideas of the 'Look', 'Time' and 'Space' that operate as

subheadings. These three themes could proffer an alternative vector of analysis for the reader that might operate tranversally across chapters. The lofty aim perhaps is to shift from a solitary 'truth' to a common ground, a shared understanding of a planetary, multi-agential need to respond to the violences, and to the spiralling, hyperobjective realities of the Anthropocene.

There is a strong intention for the (human and more-than-human) polyvocalities within the three featured projects to have the opportunity to be received in the stylistic vernacular particular to their form, be it poetry, broadcast or playscript, independent from the various forms of research undertaken. The stories they tell are rooted in contradictory, sensuous, lived experiences, relatable to an epochal continuum or mesh of temporalities. Any conclusions reached do not speak explicitly to all of the concerns raised by the research. They fidget, elide and quiver, offering further tangents to pursue, strings to pull, norms to evade. These projects perform research, test depths and explore faces of history.

While the singular artistic voice is arguably more evident in the sweep of the broader commentary, it is something I wish to take care with; composing, selecting and weaving strands together to represent the diffractions and entanglements. The artistic projects are all enacted by vivid entanglements; trans-disciplinary and multi-agential in nature, striving for their own polyvocality. The commentary makes an attempt towards a tangential authorship using trickster techniques borrowed from the mythological literary traditions, remaining attendant to the margins and sympathetic to dominated or more-than-human perspectives.

In this editing, open to the diverse 'languages of life', I am an unreliable narrator, by dint of my centralised perspective. Therefore, this solipsistic purview is broken by the spikes and composed of a multiplicity of alternative or othered histories. Shakespeare's

The Tempest, written in the temporal crucible that birthed the transatlantic slave trade, offers a multitude of voices that toy with notions of historical veracity, from the trickster Caliban to Ariel, and these spokespersons lure and confuse, meddling with the temporality of linear character progressions. These figures are similarly reimagined and transmuted from West Africa into West Indian folk tales as the trickster, Ananse, the god of all knowledge of stories.

These figures best embody the notions of the singular and the multiple that through the artistic projects and the commentary I try to convey. Using their meddling techniques, my aim is to submerge my singular perspective within a web of others; to remain alert to the moments when my thinking falls back upon inherited Eurocentric presumptions; and to trouble, provoke and invert existing academic assumptions of both the Sublime and the Anthropocene. Vulnerability and power are central too to the idea of the trickster, in that he or she may speak to flatter, to survive, to pass on knowledge and history, or to speak truth to power.

The text, as it appears in printed form, therefore, will be formed of a critical exploration into the entangled characteristics of the Sublime and the Anthropocene; their temporalities, histories and ongoing immanence. These themes will be interlaced with investigations into the ingredients crucial to their make-up; the commodification of lands and people, the violences unleashed through global capitalism as enforced through colonialism, and the contemporary and future ruins enacted climactically and environmentally through the global reach of capitalism. At significant points in the historic unfolding of the narrative surrounding the Sublime Anthropocene, the 'spikes' of the artistic projects will emerge, to focus in more closely upon one temporal moment within the structure of this system.

The artistic projects and the research, sediment and spike, comprise a text and paratext which offer different strata of a diverse chorus that describes, or gives access to a multiplicity of trajectories to create a new story, which recognises distances and vulnerabilities and foregrounds multiple worldly perspectives, multi-species, multi-faceted histories of the unfolding Sublime Anthropocene. The intention is to foreground perspectives that are perhaps marginalised by traditional research methods, but to also reckon with platitudinous Western myths of indigenous societies being 'at one' with 'nature'. As the artistic research unfolds, it uncovers a new and different understanding of what the Sublime Anthropocene can represent, how it can formulate a response to the challenge, to paraphrase Anna Tsing and Donna Haraway, of finding life in the anticipatory ruins of the future, and of finding a new way of living and dying together.

A Note to Reader
#1 of 10 books
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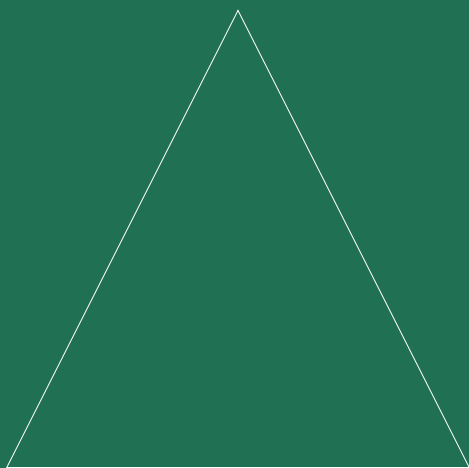
MOUNTAIN

MOUNTAIN

In mythic tradition, the Mountain is the connection between the Earth and the Sky. Its highest summit touches the sphere of eternity, and its base branches out in manifold foothills into the world of mortals. It is the path by which humanity can raise itself to the divine and the divine reveals itself to humanity…"For a mountain to play the role of Mount Analogue," I concluded, *"its summit must be inaccessible, but its base accessible* to human beings as nature has made them. It must be *unique* and it must *exist geographically*. The gateway to the invisible must be visible."

René Daumal, *Mount Analogue,*
a Tale of Non-Euclidean and Symbolically Authentic
Mountaineering Adventures[1]

The Anthropocene, a contested term defined by researchers Crutzen and Stoermer, [2] describes the geological epoch which we now inhabit, an era where the biggest impact upon the environment and indeed, the surface of the earth is man-made. This artistic research seeks to understand the concepts and experience of vulnerability and distance with specific reference to the Sublime and the Anthropocene. It considers the naming of this epoch,[3] and the power that this act confers to the 'namers', or gatekeepers of the term 'Anthropocene' within academia and particular disciplinary territories. Using a methodology based upon multiple ways of knowing, the artistic research considers more-than-human ontologies. The term 'more-than human' foregrounds the need for multispecies collaborative practices and the requirement of basic dignity that should be afforded to the earth as a complex symbiotic system of which humans are a small part. This methodology proposes a blended, networked approach to future modes of communal living as a potential sustainable planetary practice. In doing so, it argues for a move away from humanist-centred epistemologies, and the associated dangers of universalising theories which tend to assume an equality among humanity, and aims to create a platform for commonly overlooked or marginalised epistemologies.

During this process, the terms 'Sublime' and 'Anthropocene' are reviewed through a historiographical lens, appraised, and then applied in a contemporaneous setting. Can these terms, and the modes through which they have traditionally been understood, signify and become useful tools for uncovering the structural global inequalities that have led to an unevenly distributed experience of climate emergency? Can they offer a reckoning through which to rectify the platitudinous assertion of universality? In this repurposing of terms, vulnerability becomes a key issue as its meaning shifts from weakness towards a shared condition of reciprocity; not merely as a state in which we view 'others' but as a shared more-than-human

condition which, if acknowledged and understood, repositions mankind *not* at the apex of a global hierarchy, but as a factor within a self-governing system. Shifting this traditional purview means evaluating distancing and distances: between the global rich and poor, between species, between precarity and comfort, between culpability and subjection. It means dissolving the physical and perceptual distances that have maintained the prosperity of one sector of one species, often through the perpetuation of an ideological inattention to the costs exacted upon others, and decentring the hegemony of dominant groups through an analysis of the processes and extractive violences that have carved out their primacy.

A focus upon shared precarity has the potential to dissipate the distances between dominant and marginalised groups: the distance of history suddenly punctures the present, the borders between territories are dissolved, and the perceptual distance between the subject and object is delimited. This simultaneity occurs in a blurred temporal space where chronologies repeat, bunch up and linger, accrete, disappear from view, and then re-emerge in both synchrony and anachrony.

In Crutzen and Stoermer's marking of the Anthropocene,[4] human history and geological time become measurably connected and coincide for the first time in history.[5] We are now living in an age when the earth has a layer of carbon laid down since the Industrial Revolution, and inhabit a surface inscribed by radiated materials since the advent of nuclear power. One could arguably date the dawn of the Anthropocene to either of these two moments, or to the first movements of agriculture, whereby the surface of the earth was altered by human actions. The cumulative effect of these behaviours is that we seem to be facing up to the reality of a sixth mass-extinction event, whereby it is not dinosaurs that we risk losing, but the human race. With this term (the Anthropocene) humans tussle

with the idea that the planet is indifferent to us as a species, and will self-regulate, and indeed prosper following our cataclysmic demise. In naming this phenomenon the Anthropocene (*Anthropos* - man), there is a recognition of human complicity in our own downfall, but at the same time, we confront an impenetrable façade, an inevitable demise that we seem powerless to alter. Contesting the number of degrees of global climate temperature gain is akin to Nero's fiddling while Rome burns. It seems a sublimely abstract concept, too 'hyperobjectively' large to comprehend,[6] impossible to represent, and the quantitative data seems to confirm our worst fears. This abstract dataset of global climate temperature gain distances us ever further from the reality, and in experiencing and inhabiting the progression within this distanced perspective, we move from the incomprehension of abstract data towards a soothed conscience and allayed fears. The feeling that it is not 'us' who are impinged upon, or that the real crisis is distant, is picked up and echoed in the discourse of climate change deniers, and forms a background against which we can lean, safe in the confirmation that it's too late to really do anything about it. From our position of privilege and comfort, we hear only whispers of disaster from far-off shores, submerged by tropical storms, deluged by floods and landslides, and it only seems to really pierce our proximal consciousness if the destination is known to us, or relatable to our own sphere of experience.

In this self-conscious handwringing, we perform an act of distancing, of drawing a line between those lives that count, and those that seemingly don't. It is a hard truth to face up to, that the naming of the Anthropocene, with its attendant vastness, is for many a mere taxonomical shift, a new label for what happens to vulnerable *others*. It is also hard to recognise that the seats at the table for formulating a response to this planetary disaster are dominated by the secure global rich, with barely an entry point for those representing and voicing the actual experiences of the horrors of

the lived Anthropocene. It is a requisite too that we also recognise that the Anthropocene has not parachuted in as a new 'terror' to wage war against, but that its foundations were laid long ago through imperialism, colonialism, racialized environmental politics, and the Western conception of nature (and people) as constant capital, according to Françoise Vergès.[7] Zoe Todd makes the acute observation that:

> [N]ot all humans are equally implicated in the forces that created the disasters driving contemporary human-environmental crises, and I argue that not all humans are equally invited into the conceptual spaces where these disasters are theorized or responses to disaster formulated.[8]

These distances implicitly convey racism, prejudice and objectification in the subjectivity of disaster, and paradoxically, those privileged enough to be invited to the conceptual space of theoreticising the Anthropocene remain distant and perceptually blind to their own implication.

So why the *Sublime*? What relevance does a romantic theory of rhetoric and landscape appreciation from the past hold within the tumultuous *now* of the Anthropocene? How does a theory symbolised by tenets of astonishment, majesty, and awe map onto a contemporary landscape blighted by industry, technology war or climate change? Byron Williston acknowledges that

> [E]ven if we could make sense of the idea of becoming one with Being, in the Anthropocene it is false to suppose that there is some pure, untainted natural sphere with which we might dissolve in this manner. Because of the reach of our socio-technological powers, the natural world is now thoroughly infused with the human.[9]

The affiliation between the Sublime and Anthropocene seems clear when surveying the terrain into which, in 1757, Edmund Burke's original *Philosophical Enquiry (...into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful),* emerged.[10] It shares the very same temporal crucible as the Industrial Revolution (which Toynbee posits as beginning in 1760),[11] and the Agricultural Revolution, (especially the years following 1750), a period when the most momentous technological advances emerged. It seems surely no coincidence that at the very moment western society was challenged to view its landscape as potential commodity and a fuel for progress, a parallel romantic and prelapsarian view of the power of 'Nature' to emotionally transport one developed. This yearning for the mystical, transcendent power of landscape also occupied a central role within popular art, literature and music. Simultaneously, not only was a commercial gaze focussed upon the commodification of minerals such as copper, slate, and coal of this country, but also on the lucrative commodities that foreign lands held. With developing technologies, the near monopoly on the slave trade exercised by Portuguese slavers until 1640 was lost, and in the 18th century, Britain's slave ships carried 2.5 million of the century's 6 million slaves from Africa.[12] While the English Lake District flew the Sublime flag during the era of the Romantic poets, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* marked the capitalist progression of the Industrial Revolution's expansion into the colonies and empire.[13]

The brooding sensorial engulfment of Conrad's novel and the Sublime narrative of the protagonist's voyage embodies the centrism of the individual, the gaze of the solitary outsider, and a separation or fear of the other. The subjectivity inherent to Sublime experiences necessarily prioritises the emotions and affectivity of the individual, and focuses on the individual's discrete encounter. This singular experience of sublimation, of the ineffable, of the unpresentable, and overwhelming hyperobjectivity tacit to the idea of the Sublime are indeed densely entangled with explorations

of the Anthropocene. In this historic sense, both terms – the 'Sublime' and the 'Anthropocene' – connote a certain privileged, dominant anthropocentric narrative, far from the vulnerability that will later on be argued to be the central feature of a contemporary understanding of the Sublime Anthropocene.

The Wanderer Above a Sea of Fog by painter Caspar David Friedrich (1818), perhaps the Ur-symbol of the Sublime protagonist, inhabits this lofty realm. Its subject gazes out above an indeterminate landscape, entrenched within his embodied perspective, clothed formally and clasping a walking cane, both an explorer and overseer. His position above this rocky terrain appears to offer a fearful physical precarity, but he appears unruffled, his stance coolly relaxed. This figure was co-opted by Nazi propagandists as a symbol of an intense German nationalism, and the attendant myth-making of the fatherland. There is a certain mastery implied in his stance, indeed the cane could double as a flagpole to 'claim' this territory, whose murky depths below conjure up Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*;[14] the unknown, the sublimated, the other. Pre-figuring the German occupation of Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi by 60 years, the wanderer of this 1818 study could be interpreted as a hero of Germany's 1813 Wars of Liberation: his garb identifies him as a resistance fighter against Napoleon's imperial forces, yet his confident gaze over these territories implies a calm mastery of this unruly environment. He occupies the problematic dualistic perspective proffered by the Sublime: simultaneous mastery of and sublimation by landscape. This digression illustrates how traditionally both the Sublime and the Anthropocene inhabit territories of cultural hegemony but also physical and emotional precarity. These interconnected terms share certain behaviours and emerge out of very particular historical and political contexts; both fuelled by an economy built upon global colonial and imperial machinations of theft and subjugation. These terms imply a certain subjugation of 'nature', including its human and non-human agents,

and implicit to that opaque territory is an impenetrable vastness that is not representable. [15] This uneven distribution of experience, of agency and autonomy, between those enacting subjugation, and those subject to its violence, creates and enforces the system of what Vergès refers to as an 'asymmetry of power'.[16] This results in an entrenched societal asymmetry of experience: the Anthropocene was not and *is* not an abstract concept for those already subject to it. Similarly, there is no need to generate the Sublime, if we understand this experience as potentially revealing a shared vulnerability (as outlined later in this artistic research), for those already experiencing precarity. The romanticisation of the natural is "rooted in privilege. Only those who enjoy a lifestyle sufficiently protected from the ravages of nature have the licence to romanticise it."[17]

Later chapters argue that an experience of the Sublime is a way into a greater empathic understanding of the Anthropocene, the features of this moment having greatly changed since the Sublime exploits of adventurers in the 18th century. Jacob Lund wryly remarks that it becomes increasingly difficult for the Western subject living in the Anthropocene to 'enjoy' any feeling of the Sublime.[18] In the Anthropocene, humans have become a geological force and have realized belatedly our part within the overwhelming system of nature previously imagined as a separate and remote phenomenon. He quotes the philosopher Bruno Latour:

> To feel the Sublime, you needed to remain 'distant' from what remained a spectacle; infinitely 'inferior' in physical forces to what you were witnessing; infinitely 'superior' in moral grandeur. Only then could you test the incommensurability between these two forms of infinity. Bad luck: there is no place where you can hide yourselves; you are now fully 'commensurable' with the physical forces that you have unleashed; as to moral superiority, you have lost that too![19]

This description of inferiority (that could also be characterised as precarity, or vulnerability) should now be a hallmark of any contemporary understanding of the Sublime in the age of the Anthropocene, a marked sea-change since the dominant trope of heroics and conquest of landforms and dark unknowns. It is the aim of this artistic research to use the potentially illuminating power of an experience of the Sublime, and the shared precarity it induces, to uncover an understanding of multi-species vulnerability in the Anthropocene.[20] Slowly it would appear that even among the global rich, some imperilment is beginning to make its presence felt. Anna Tsing describes it thus:

> Precarity once seemed the fate of the less fortunate. Now it seems that all our lives are precarious - even when, for the moment, our pockets are lined. In contrast to the mid-twentieth century, when poets and philosophers of the global north felt caged by too much stability, now many of us, north and south, confront the condition of trouble without end…[21]

The stability and the assured progress that were offered by the Enlightenment and the Industrial and Agricultural Revolutions produced the conditions of comfort and permanence necessary for the thrill-seeking endeavours of the Sublime adventurers of the Romantic era. Their quests for the visceral included the sensorial charge of the cliff-edge, the crashing torrent; and extended to the conquest of fearful geographies: human, physical and cartographical. However, as previously outlined, the experiences of these locations of the Sublime historically operated from a position of safety. "When in aesthetic judgment, we consider nature as a might that has no dominance over us," writes Kant, "then it is dynamically sublime. If we are to judge nature as sublime dynamically, we must present it as arousing fear."[22]

There is, however, an appreciable distance between a Kantian experience of the Sublime: [23] where one is subject to the aesthetic, dynamic or mathematical awe of the Sublime, safely removed from the edge of the abyss, yet experiencing fear; and a Burkean physical and psychological engulfment, marked by an experience of terror. Between the theories of these two philosophers, and even amongst their own understanding of the Sublime, appears a wide grey limen or threshold between the subject and the Sublime, marked by degrees of immersion, by the extent of one's vulnerability and imperilment, gradations of fear, and one's distance from the void.

The cultural geographer Jonathan Wylie describes distance as "an originary element of what we call landscape."[24] This sense of landscape as alterity seems emblematic of the post-Enlightenment relationship between humans and land; signalling distance, otherness, withdrawal, and removal. This describes an innate sensation of introspection and withdrawal within a landscape that conjures an experience redolent of the familiar trope of the traditional Sublime. This distance could be vast or as miniscule as a 'touching distance'… yet the lingering awareness of it still maintains the meniscus, the perceptual distance or skin that separates the *human* from *it* and perpetuates the misleading sense that we are separate from nature seen discretely as a "diorama that we deplore or adore from a distance."[25] Perhaps acknowledging this mutable division could provide an entry point to a consideration of what it might mean to be post-human, to be made aware of the pitfalls of active othering, of alienation, of more-than-human agents and technologies.

The original locus of our gaze – the manner in which we perceive landscape – is situated in our cultural hinterland, our contemporary worldview, or our political hierarchy. Timothy Morton asks: "Could it be that the very attempt to distance is not a product of some true assessment of things, but is and was always a defence

mechanism against a threatening proximity?"[26] A sensation of human vulnerability or diminution within landscape, especially one deemed Sublime, has always acted as a distancing device. Could the separation of the self and other afford the possibility of perhaps greater perception or capacity for reflection? This perceptual distance can be mediated, dialled up or scaled back and within this liminal space, degrees of immersion can be tested, and scales of the Sublime explored. Here, the limits, edgelands, and verges mark the line between terror and safety, offering a frisson engendered by occasionally overstepping that mark. As Jean-Luc Nancy states in *The Sublime Offering*: "[t]he Sublime is a feeling, and yet, more than a feeling in the banal sense, it is the emotion of the subject at the limit. The subject of the Sublime, if there is one, is a subject who is moved."[27]

This limit, the boundary of distances of the Sublime experience as delineated by Nancy, is echoed too in the perceptual distance conjured by history and any notions of personal accountability in the Anthropocene: our craven anxieties demonstrably wonder if the date of the advent of the Anthropocene might implicate the culpability of certain groups of humans and at the same time excuse others? Perhaps the scholar then digresses into considering timelines of the Anthropocene; wondering if it should be pinned to the nuclear tests at Bikini Atoll, the quintessential image of the Sublime Anthropocene? Crutzen and Stoermer date the Anthropocene to the onset of the industrial revolution, when the first layers of carbon deposits began to be laid down, but should it shift instead to the agricultural revolution; the corn laws which surely are the start of globalisation in its capitalist framework? Morton states that "the Romantic period is the very advent of the Anthropocene, when a layer of carbon is deposited by human industry throughout Earth's top layers of crust. It doesn't seem like a random coincidence, the epochal event of carbon deposits in Earth…"[28]

All of this quavering over the historical and contemporaneous terrains, topographies and temporalities of the Sublime Anthropocene appears synonymous with the hyperobjective perceptual engulfment of Burke's Sublime. The complex mesh of human histories interlaced with these soils, from the Roman Empire, colonial extraction, the 'natural philosophies' of the Enlightenment through to contemporary posthuman narratives; all of these become incomprehensibly overwhelming. This vastness, combined with a dangerous intimacy – to paraphrase Morton, its 'in-your-face-ness' – underlines the key sense of precarity, the varying distances of time and geography that are a feature in the perception both of the Sublime and of the Anthropocene. Our contemporary viewer requires new observational devices to perceive this collision of environmental disaster and awesome magnitude, to determine their own position, to acknowledge their own complicity.

In the Anthropocene humanity is at danger of being recognised by its lack of humanity in the moment when other humans become designated as capital or commodity, as invasive species, or as conspicuously over-consuming among non-human agents. The horrors of colonisation or environmental disaster are alarmingly easy to ignore, an inattention that our global markets and consumer tendencies are blithely complicit with and exploit, as Robert Macfarlane states:

> One of the agreements tacitly made by consumers with these industries is that extraction and its costs will remain mostly out of sight, and therefore undisturbing to its beneficiaries. Those industries understand the market need for alienated labour, hidden infrastructure and the strategic concealment of both the slow violence of environmental degradation and the quick violence of accidents.[29]

Like the 'beauty lines', lines of trees which mask the surface mining of West Virginia,[30] this luxury of ignorance masks the dangerous ease with which one might use the term Anthropocene, voiced in critiques by Françoise Vergès, Zoe Todd and Kathryn Yusoff, among others. As Vergès describes, there is a danger in the easy usage of the term Anthropocene "because it does not challenge the naturalized inequalities, alienation, and violence inscribed in modernity's strategic relations of power and production. It is an easy story to tell because it does not ask us to think about these relations at all."[31] The works of Anna Tsing, Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti make clear that "the hopelessly hyperactive pointing and naming" are key dangers to be mindful of within any exploration of the Sublime Anthropocene.[32] Todd's distrust in this evolution of the term 'Anthropocene' is well-founded, and she cites the work of Swedish scholars Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg:

> [They] highlight the manner in which the current framing of the Anthropocene blunts the distinctions between the people, nations, and collectives who drive the fossil-fuel economy and those who do not. The complex and paradoxical experiences of diverse people as humans-in-the-world, including the ongoing damage of colonial and imperialist agendas, can be lost when the narrative is collapsed to a universalizing species paradigm. As Malm and Hornborg state, "a clique of white British men literally pointed steam-power as a weapon—on sea and land, boats and rails—against the best part of human-kind, from the Niger delta to the Yangzi delta, the Levant to Latin America."[33]

Just as not all humans are equally responsible for the forces that created the disasters driving the Anthropocene, Todd highlights that "not all humans are equally invited into the conceptual spaces where these disasters are theorized or responses to disaster formulated."[34]

Burke's Sublime is well known for its ability to sublimate – it is not for women whose aesthetic association is beauty - similarly it requires a sophisticated level of aesthetic appreciation, quite unsuited to all but the best-read, most-travelled privileged. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* invokes the Sublime menace and fear represented by the traditionally othered and there is a tendency *still* within narratives of the Anthropocene, to perpetuate these divisions.

Lund argues evocatively that a contemporary experience of the Anthropocene and its attendant precarity forces a cancellation of our distance to overwhelming natural forces, the loss of a secure position from which to experience something as a Sublime spectacle. This is a slowly dawning revelation for many; a process rather than a one-off event. Lund's comment reiterates that there is no need to generate the Sublime for those already experiencing a loss of security or in grave danger. However, there remain huge numbers of those who are still perceptually far removed from the reality of this emergency. As with the variable perceptual gradations of immersion possible between Burkean or Kantian Sublime experiences, the distances between knowledge and experience seem scarcely travelled by those who are comfortable, whose needs continue to be met. Both the Anthropocene and the Sublime have long occupied a territory seemingly delineated by circles of increasing perceptual and bodily distance radiating from the centrism of a single human subject. This treacherous myopia induces manifold consequences: a blindness and moral superiority which disregards the experience of the other, and an inability to recognise the needs and rights of more-than-humans. This inattention extends to fellow humans and fellow more-than-human agents alike: to land, to consumer practices, to cyberspace. Wylie points out the assumptions that accompany this inattention:

> With these kinds of instances there is of course the potential for assuming that 'physical' or 'geographical' distance in

the classic sense will always tend towards indifference and ignorance, whereas proximity, and in particular visibility, will contrastingly induce empathy, and senses of care, duty and responsibility. But once again, of course, spaces of distance/proximity are more complex in practice. Drone controllers working for the US Army on remote attack and assassination operations are more likely to suffer post-traumatic stress disorders, at least some studies show;[35] the tension they experience between terrible intimacy and terrible distance must be at the heart of this.[36]

In attempting to explore the tension of the distances between myopic inattention and terrible intimacy, it is necessary to develop a methodological enquiry that draws on a variety of disciplines, from a multitude of perspectives. If we examine the expanding notions of the Anthropocene (including the 'Chthulucene', 'Capital-ocene', 'Plantation-ocene' or the 'Anthrobscene' of Donna Haraway, Jason Moore, Anna Tsing, and Jussi Parikka respectively); within what Rosi Braidotti terms the post-human milieu, we find that any recognition of a Sublime moment must also reckon with an intimate, non-distanced entanglement of humans with other species, technology, and the environment. Taking the feminist techno-science of scholars such as Haraway as an important starting point, [37] this artistic research borrows from cultural theory, literature, cultural geography, the classics and history among other disciplines to assist with the enquiry into whether there is any need for an experience of the Sublime in this age of the Anthropocene. Are humans already too blinded and terrorised by the enormity of the Anthropocene, already too precarious to succumb to the aesthetic spectacle of the Sublime? There is a certain obscenity in any individual's Sublime quest for a similitude of, or brush with fear, when elsewhere from the depths of daily-lived fear, alternative forms of escapism are required. What possible purpose then could an experience of the Sublime serve, and who might it serve?

One possible avenue of utility for an updated version of the Sublime (that explores the potential of shared vulnerability), is in the tackling of what Morton refers to as 'moral apathy'. This is engendered by an individual's sense of engulfment in the vastness of the ecological information 'dump mode' given the enormity of the Anthropocene the quality of which Morton defines as a 'hyperobject'.[38] A hyperobject also by dint of its very enormity and non-representability connotes a sense of Kant's mathematical Sublime, which distinguishes between mathematical estimation of size (apprehension) and aesthetic estimation of size (comprehension):

> There is no difficulty with apprehension, because it can go on to infinity; but comprehension becomes ever more difficult the further apprehension advances, and soon reaches its maximum, namely the aesthetically greatest basic measure for the estimation of magnitude.[39]

Faced with this ineffable infinitude, the individual's response is, more often than not, to bury their heads in the metaphorical sand. But Morton insists on the proximity of the hyperobject, and the implicit complicity of humans as a part of nature, not distinct spectators of environmental catastrophe. He states that:

> It is hyperobjects whose presence guarantees that we are in the next moment of history, the age of Asymmetry. With their towering temporality, their phasing in and out of human time and space, their massive distribution, their viscosity, the way they include thousands of other beings, hyperobjects vividly demonstrate how things do not coincide with their appearance. They bring to an end the idea that Nature is something "over yonder" behind the glass window of an aesthetic screen.[40]

We operate again in this space between the distance proffered by Kant's analysis of the Sublime and the threatening proximity within Burke's. What we lack, importantly, with Burke's hyperobjective entanglement, is a perceptual distance within which we can rationally comprehend these complex realities, and our complicity within the realities of the Sublime Anthropocene. This potential perceptual immersion sits alongside Giorgio Agamben's definition of what it means to be contemporary:

> Those who are truly contemporary, who truly belong to their time, are those who neither perfectly coincide with it nor adjust themselves to its demands…. But precisely because of this condition, precisely through this disconnection and this anachronism, they are more capable than others of perceiving and grasping their own time.[41]

Agamben's definition signals the possibility for a transcending of this engulfed state towards an accommodation of "disconnection and anachronism". This position chimes with Latour's removal of any perceptually comforting distance in the contemporary Sublime that ruptures our position of separation, and of solitary contemplation. Suddenly our centrist view is confronted by the trajectories and histories of others, unspooling in what Lund describes as the 'contemporary contemporary':

> This interconnection and bringing together of different times and experiences of time at a global or planetary scale, and their taking part in the same historical present, is what characterizes our present, what constitutes what I propose to call the contemporary contemporary.[42]

There seem to be two ways in which contemporaneity might resonate with the Sublime: firstly because it can be regarded as an ungraspable magnitude that exceeds any individual subjective

experience or perception; and secondly, because of its temporal structure where unifying succession and progression is replaced or challenged by instantaneity and temporal co-existence. This sense of being a very small part of a greater temporal co-existence is echoed in Tsing's description of our species-wide precarity in the age of the Anthropocene and is equally embodied by the fact that an experience of the Sublime has the ability to induce in the spectator, experiencer, or audience a sensation of vulnerability, of sublimation. This production of vulnerability allows for a different positioning and affords a more decentered or fragmented sense of power, agency, and subjecthood; themes which will be returned to throughout the commentary. This relates to Paul Piff and Dacher Keltner's research term 'the small self': "we conceptualise the small self as a relative diminishment of the individual self and its interests vis à vis something perceived to be more vast and powerful than oneself."[43]

Piff and Keltner's research demonstrates that experiencers respond more positively to playful explorations of complex ideas and become more attuned to a shared sense of global responsibility after an affective encounter such as an experience of awe or the Sublime: a 'peak experience' or moment accompanied by a euphoric mental state. This conforms to understanding the notion of the Sublime as an overwhelmingly affective encounter, which Delphi Carstens believes to be:

> A sense of undomesticated sublimity, the product of a spectrally stimulated imagination, (also) animate forms of Romantic prose and poetry that sought to 'habituate the mind to the vast'. The haunted protagonists of Keats and Shelley's writings, for instance, express nature's sensuous powers by being totally unafraid to venture across the abyss of uncertainty.[44]

Could this sense of the small self, heightened by an experience of the Sublime be one way of avoiding the moral defeatism and apathy provoked by the surfeit of ecological warnings surrounding the Anthropocene? A way of eluding what Glenn Albrecht in 2003 refers to as 'solastalgia': a "form of psychic or existential distress caused by environmental change?" [45] Could this sense of full-body inclusion in the experience of the Sublime Anthropocene, which engenders an accessing of the small self, act as a way of forcing a wedgeinto the crack in the overwhelmingly hyperobjective edifice of the Anthropocene?[46] This confirms the perspective of Carstens, who outlines that "the insistence of Romantic rebels (such as Keats) for the pedagogical importance of negative capability (being at home in uncertainty), dark sublimity and *horror vacui* (the dread of infinitude) still have relevance in these posthuman times."[47]

At this point it is important to consider towards whom any invocation of the small self or 'small subject(hood)' is directed. As stated previously, those most subject to the asymmetric realities of the Anthropocene do not require any insertion of spectatorial devices, or Sublime moments to cause an affective encounter with the precarious location of the small self. They are all too aware of the hyperobjective 'in-your-face-ness' of the Anthropocene.[48]

It is problematic however, to draw this line between 'we' and 'they' and using these pronouns not only raises the spectre of non-binary identification and how these terms are used, but also confirms certain cultural stereotypes. Continuing this division risks entrenching this research within a privileged positionality of the global rich and academic hierarchy which, as previously argued (following Todd and Vergès), is a part of the problem. Can one define which audiences, experiencers, or spectators need an encounter with their 'small subject(hood)' so as to better understand the vastness of the Anthropocene? Dancing between the danger of didacticism and the potential marginalising of subjecthood is the artist, inhabiting the role of the trickster; attempting to sublimate the subjectivity of artistic research through the conduit of alternative

voices, temporalities, and human or more-than human bodies. By claiming the power of indeterminacy and uncertainty, might this methodology of the artist play with the uneasiness of these multiple temporalities? Rather than inhabiting the role of cultural commentator or gatekeeper, perhaps an opening-up of temporal multiplicities is best explored through the device of contemporary art, by an artist mindful of the power of vulnerability, and to the potential in opening-up the conditions for bringing to bear the small self? Lund describes contemporary art as a

> [M]atter of articulating contemporaneity, that is, of articulating the temporal complexity that follows from the bringing together of different times in the same historical present (but not of turning it into a question of the impossibility of representation in itself). Contemporary art may even be said to take part in the very production of the idea or concept of contemporaneity.[49]

What the artistic projects offered in this commentary make explicit are affective explorations of landscapes of the Sublime Anthropocene where these distances are tested, where matter is activated and revealed as agentic in the process of meaning-making; where the materials, sites, human and non-human histories are all given voice. In doing so, these spaces of possibility can open up to an exploration of the multiple trajectories, non-human voices and temporal complexities that constitute these territories: the city, the field, the vista. These particular trajectories, geographies, voices, histories, geologies and biologies are uncovered and explored through the projects unfolding within the artistic research. Sally Mackey describes researchers as "the vulnerable practitioners and knowledge creators. They are the subjects of the research as well as the authors of its ideas: researcher and the researched, the insider, the practitioner-researcher, and the researcher as auteur."[50] This awareness of being a 'vulnerable practitioner'

is the methodology used for the creation of new knowledge or terrains of possibility that these terms (Sublime and Anthropocene) afford or uncover. The artistic research challenges the way that power is centralised within traditional readings of the Sublime and the Anthropocene and moves towards a more distributed networked model, a meshwork of shared agency. In rejecting the absolutism inherent to established interpretations of the Sublime and the Anthropocene, and in rejecting the model offered with an inequitable imbalance or asymmetry of power, this artistic research becomes open to the relativism of the vulnerability, the relativism of multiple voices making up a whole, the paradoxical power in being part of a larger mesh of small selves.

The artistic research is built upon the methodology of noticing the distances of the Sublime Anthropocene, being attentive to these thresholds and looking *around* oneself as a radical resistance to what Todd describes as the "hegemonic tendencies of a universalizing paradigm."[51] Todd suggests that we need "joyful and critical engagement through many forms of praxis".[52] A playfulness attendant to that vulnerability, that openness to the 'peak experience', could, in turn, create change. How we gaze, and have gazed at landscape, at a view external to our bodies, was noticed, analysed and extolled during the Romantic Sublime. An uneasy mixture of controlled vulnerability and mediated threat, this historic gaze upon a Sublime landscape was mirrored in the wider Eurocentric view upon a global landscape. The challenge for a contemporary gaze in a Sublime Anthropocene is not merely to perpetuate an external linear gaze that radiates from the singular self, but to recognise the porosity of our bodies as parts of nature and to allow for a multi-dimensional gaze that traverses bodies, space and time. The history of and steps towards new versions of this gaze will form the offering of this artistic research.

Endnotes

[1] René Daumal, *Mount Analogue, a Tale of Non-Euclidean and Symbolically Authentic Mountaineering Adventures* (New York: Overlook Press, 2004), p31-32.

[2] Paul. J Crutzen and Eugene. F Stoermer, "The "Anthropocene"", *Global Change Newsletter*, no 41 (2000), p17-18, www.igbp.net/download/18.316f18321323470177580001401/1376383088452/NL41.pdf

[3] Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble, Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), p100. Haraway states: "I along with others think the Anthropocene is more a boundary event than an epoch, like the K-Pg boundary between the Cretaceous and the Paleogene. The Anthropocene marks severe discontinuities; what comes after will not be like what came before. I think our job is to make the Anthropocene as short/thin as possible and to cultivate with each other in every way imaginable epochs to come that can replenish refuge."

[4] Crutzen and Stoermer, "The Anthropocene," p17.

[5] Jacob Lund, "Contemporaneity, a Sublime Experience?" in *Aesthetics in Dialogue: Applying Philosophy of Art in a Global World*, ed. Zoltán Zomhegyi and Max Ryynänen (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018/2020), p47.

[6] Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects - Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), p1.

[7] Françoise Vergès, "Racial Capitalocene" in *Futures of Black radicalism*, ed. Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (London and New York: Verso, 2017), p73.

[8] Zoe Todd, "Indigenizing the Anthropocene" in *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, ed. Heather Davis and Etienne, Turpin (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), p244, http://openhumanitiespress.org/books/download/Davis-Turpin_2015_Art-in-the-Anthropocene.pdf

[9] Byron Williston, "The Sublime Anthropocene" in *Environmental Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (2016): p170.

[10] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of*

the Sublime and the Beautiful, (1758, reprinted, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p36.

[11] Daniel Wilson, "Arnold Toynbee and the Industrial Revolution: The Science of History, Political Economy and the Machine Past," *History & Memory* 26, no. 2 (2014): 133-161, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/histmemo.26.2.133

[12] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), p237, whereby Nixon argues that if, in J. M. Coetzee's terse assessment, "it is certainly true that the politics of expansion has uses for the rhetoric of the sublime," that expansionist thrust found a potent set of story lines and images in the traditions of American exceptionalism animating the work of foundational American studies thinkers."

[13] Todd, "Indigenizing the Anthropocene,"p244.

[14] Joseph Conrad, *The Heart of Darkness*, (1899, reprinted, London: Penguin Books, 1983)

[15] Vergès, "Racial Capitalocene", p76, who cites Jason Moore as commenting that "the Anthropocene is a catchy term that makes for an easy story: Easy, because it does not challenge the naturalized inequalities, alienation, and violence inscribed in modernity's strategic relations of power and production. It is an easy story to tell because it does not ask us to think about these relations at all."

[16] Vergès, "Racial Capitalocene," p75.

[17] Kenan Malik, "Lets Stop Romanticising Nature" (online news article), *The Guardian*, 10 May 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/may/10/lets-stop-romanticising-nature-so-much-of-our-life-depends-on-defying-it

[18] Lund, "Contemporaneity, a Sublime Experience?,"p47.

[19] Bruno Latour, "Sharing Responsibility: Farewell to the Sublime," in *Reset Modernity!* ed. Bruno Latour, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), p169

[20] Robert Macfarlane, *Underland, A Deep time Journey*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2019), p77: "the Anthropocene, for all its faults, also issues a powerful shock and challenge to our self-perception as a species. It exposes both the limits of our control over the long-term processes of the planet,

and the magnitude of the consequences of our activities. It lays bare some of the cross-weaves of vulnerability and culpability that exists between us and other beings now, as well as between humans and more-than-humans still to come."

[21] Anna L. Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World – On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p2.

[22] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1987), p119.

[23] Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, translated by John T. Goldthwait, (BERKELY, CA: University of California Press, 2003), p46-7

[24] John Wylie, "The Distant: Thinking toward Renewed Senses of Landscape and Distance," *Environment, Space, Place* 9, no. 1 (2017): 1-20, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/envispacplac.9.1.0001, p18

[25] Macfarlane, *Underland*, p103.

[26] Morton, *Hyperobjects,* p27-8.

[27] Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Sublime Offering" in *The Sublime,* ed. Simon Morley, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2010), p47.

[28] Morton, *Hyperobjects,* p164.

[29] Macfarlane, *Underland,* p311.

[30] Leslie Jamison, "Fog Count" in *The Empathy Exams: Essays,* (London: Granta Books, 2014), p140-1: "almost all of west Virginia's forest has been cleared at some point since the 1870s – in multiple waves – for the sake of salt and oil and coal and lumber and gas. But it looks so green, I say. I tell them about my drive south – those lush hills, their lovely curves receding into the middle distance. Drew nods. Yep, he says. There's no surface mining near the highways. Potemkin forests! I feel like an idiot. Cat tells me to look out for what they call beauty lines – rows of trees planted along hillcrests to mask the vast moonscapes of mine-ravaged land beyond…Drew says that some of the land here has been mined so much it's essentially on stilts, barely holding itself up. They call this land honeycombed."

[31] Vergès, "Racial Capitalocene," p76.

[32] Macfarlane, *Underland*, p113

[33] Todd, "Indigenizing the Anthropocene," p244.

[34] Todd, "Indigenizing the Anthropocene," p244.

[35] Wylie, "The Distant", p25, where he references a recent discussion in Amit Pinchevski "Screen Trauma: Visual Media and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder," in *Theory, Culture & Society* 33, no. 4 (2016): 51-75."

[36] Wylie, "The Distant," p6.

[37] Cecilia Åsberg and Nina Lykke, "Feminist technoscience studies", *European Journal of Women's Studies* 17, no. 4 (2010): 299–305.

[38] Timothy Morton, *Being Ecological*, (London: Pelican Books, Penguin Random House, 2018), p12, whereby Morton questions "the ways in which we talk to ourselves about ecology. I think the main way – just dumping data on ourselves – is actually inhibiting a more genuine way of handling ecological knowledge."

[39] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, p135.

[40] Morton, *Hyperobjects,* p174.

[41] Giorgio Agamben, "What Is the Contemporary?", in *What Is an Apparatus and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2009), p40.

[42] Lund, "Contemporaneity, a Sublime Experience?", p40, where he references Peter Osborne as stating: "what seems distinctive and important about the changing temporal quality of the historical present over the last few decades is best expressed through the distinctive conceptual grammar of con-temporaneity, a coming together not simply 'in' time, but of times: we do not just live or exist together 'in time' with our contemporaries – as if time itself is indifferent to this existing together – but rather the present is increasingly characterised by a coming together of different but equally 'present' temporalities or 'times', a temporal unity in disjunction, or a disjunctive unity of present times."

[43] Paul. K. Piff et al., "Awe, the Small Self, and Prosocial Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 108, no. 6 (2015, p884, https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/psp-pspi0000018.pdf

[44] Delphi Carstens, "Cultivating a Dark Haecceity: a Pedagogy of the Uncanny and Dark Transports," *parallax* 24, No. 3 (2018): p348. Carsten states: "[f]or these poets the sonorous transports offered by sublime objects, dark and indeterminate in their dimensions, have a distinctive

pedagogical function, inducing in a mind a degree of delightful horror, bringing the senses into a state of suspension. In the sublime fear of losing [oneself], in immensity [in] the devastating impressions of [a] supernatural power, the self-image of the present is pressed forward in an anticipatory, imaginary recovery of self on another plane,' writes Fred Botting explaining the backwards and forwards momentum of such dark-Romantic moves; movements aimed at ontological renewal in the midst of times of uncertainty, terror and crisis."

[45] Macfarlane, *Underland,* p317.

[46] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An introduction*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p7. Schechner introduces Diana Taylor's wedge theory, as "a wedge in the institutional understanding and organisation of knowledge.".

[47] Carstens, "A Dark Haecceity," p344.

[48] Morton, *Hyperobjects,* p60

[49] Lund, "Contemporaneity, a Sublime Experience?", p43

[50] Sally Mackey, "Applied Theatre and Practice as Research: Polyphonic Conversations," *The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 21, no. 4 (2016): p481 who believes that "[r]esearchers are often the vulnerable practitioners and knowledge creators. They are the subjects of the research as well as the authors of its ideas: researcher and the researched, the insider, the practitioner-researcher, and the researcher as auteur. This self-positioning focus is evidenced in much writing (or related forms of documentation) about PaR. Indeed, it is noticeable that most practice as research texts are edited collections, some with unusually large numbers of contributors (e.g. Rose-Riley and Hunter 2009) perhaps reinforcing the abundance of self/selves in the writing. More, many collections include several voices of artists (Freeman 2009; Barrett and Bolt 2010) with the artist's voice as researcher-practitioner within his, her or their work."

[51] Todd, "Indigenizing the Anthropocene," p252.

[52] Todd, "Indigenizing the Anthropocene," p252.

Introduction - Mountain
#2 of 10 books
Laura Hopes © 2020
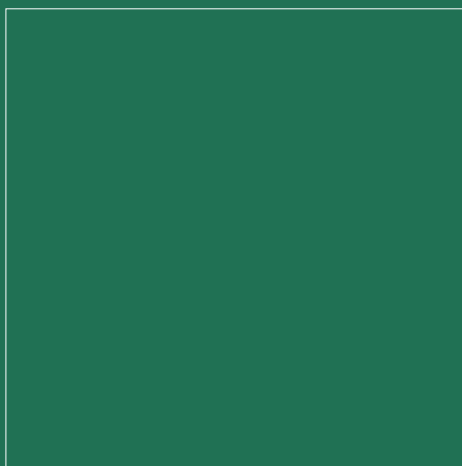
FIELD

FIELD

So was it any wonder that Philippi observed for the second time
the clash of Roman forces in a civil war,
and gods above did not think it a shame that we, with our own blood,
would once again enrich wide-spreading Emathia and the plains below Haemus.
Nothing surer than the time will come when, in those fields,
A farmer ploughing will unearth
Rough and rusted javelins and hear his heavy hoe
Echo on the sides of empty helmets and stare in open-eyed amazement
At the bones he's just happened upon.

Virgil, *Georgics*, Book One, Lines 489-496[1]

This chapter will be look at some of the themes surrounding the literal and conceptual terrains investigated in this wider commentary upon a Sublime Anthropocene; that of land, its uses and histories, its agency. Moving through a historically chronological perspective, this chapter explores land ownership and the attendant settling and unsettling of humans and more-than-humans.[2] The co-development of commodifying and extractive practices in pursuit of economic progress will be demonstrated as intrinsically entwined with a consumerist and often white supremacist gaze. Using land as a conduit for exploration of vulnerability and distance takes us into embedded hierarchies of access to land and the slow violences still on-going upon humans and more-than-humans in colonial or plantation-system strategies of land-use. It also encompasses 'slow violences' which Rob Nixon describes as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all."[3]

The language used in defining access to or exclusion from land in historical and ongoing contemporary temporalities are explored alongside the situated knowledge embodied by the gazes upon land and landscapes, particularly iterations of a removed gaze which perpetuate dominant power structures of separation and difference. A close attention will also be paid to the delineation of place and space, and the agency particular to humans and more-than-humans, implicit to the current constructions of landscapes that signal the Sublime Anthropocene. This analysis (of human and more-than-human relations) recurs throughout the thesis but in this chapter is thematically linked to material and ideological concepts of land.

I offer here a brief historiographical illustration of the embedded histories, slow violences, and imperial hierarchies of land particular to my own locality, Dartmoor, a granite outcrop of moorland in the South-West of the UK; a living archive and repository of human and

more-than-human engagement. The first agriculture occurred on Dartmoor in the post-Ice Age period of 4000 BC, resulting in the Dartmoor 'Reaves,' field systems of long strips of land beginning in 1600 BC, which are still visible today. The comprehensive deforestation of 'Dartmoor Forest,'[4] which led to the search for alternative fuels, culminated in the Industrial Revolution, and much of the moor was actively mined for minerals until the early 20th century. Not only was the land, as commodity, industrialised in the pursuit of precious metals such as copper and tin, but it was also razed for china clay and subject to alternative experimental agricultural technologies. During the late 18th and early 19th century, as part of a general interest in agricultural innovation, a group of wealthy landowners acquired land on Dartmoor and began attempting to improve it using modern techniques. They established new farms and built huge enclosures, creating another layer in Dartmoor's farming landscape. By the 1830s Dartmoor's unsuitability for improvement envisaged by these landowners was becoming apparent, and activity reduced with many of these farms becoming abandoned over the course of the next century. The ebbs and flows of population from the high moors to the valleys and back again correspond to the climate-based vagaries of the epoch. In each population wave the soil is altered, walls are constructed, or watercourses rerouted. As outlined previously, the global can be visualised in the local; evidence of the 'Little Ice Age' can be witnessed in the abandoned 16th century farmsteads; the casualties of wide-ranging conflicts are shown in the case of the capture of Napoleonic French prisoners of war, followed quickly by multi-ethnic American prisoners of war from the 1812 conflict confined in Dartmoor Prison. These prisoners quarried the stone that built their prisons, then 'improved' much of the surrounding landscape by clearing the granite 'clitters' (glacially transported stones) littering the newly enclosed pastures. What Nicolas Mirzoeff called 'signal figures';[5] the overseer, the missionary and the insurgent, could be recognised as analogous to Dartmoor in the

figures of the quarry foreman; the zealous industrial agriculturalist, and the mutinous prisoner of war. The symbols of the capitalist expansions of the Anthropocene; the establishment of enclosures and subsequent resistance by the mobility; the colonial-/capito-appetite of the East India Company or the Virginia Company; the silver-hunger of Hernan de Cortes, the establishment of global trade routes with its inexhaustible need for timber, bodies, minerals, metals – each of these globally historic actions can also be detected within this small 365 square miles of boggy moorland.

Space

Land as a term has much in common with taxonomies and etymologies of the Earth. Earth, in its multiple definitions can traverse vast scalar ranges as well as temporalities; for instance, one can use the word 'earth' to describe a handful of soil, or the tilled composite of a field; equally it can operate at a planetary level. At each of these scales, the impacts of the Anthropocene can be felt, intuited, and seen. At a purely geological level, the earth we inhabit is scarred by millennia of human and (often coerced) more-than-human engagement. The earliest crop rotations and forest clearings imposed by subsistence farmers extensively exposed the soil to the atmosphere, the relocation and sifting of earth through extractive practices of mining and fuel production have all remodelled the planet's skin and flesh. Continuing our temporal trajectory with an examination of the contemporary granular makeup of soil – now containing carbon deposits and radiated materials – one sees that the surface of the earth is pockmarked with the indexical scars of an ongoing Anthropocene. These marks not only indicate the resultant interface of human engagement (a physical archive of stories of industry, survival and profit), they also reveal the trajectories of different power structures of feudal systems, animal husbandry and ownership, the use of different forms of labour, and how natural resources are commodified.

To many cultures the idea of owning land is anathema, and to others it is central to long-held ideas of selfhood and statehood. This paradox is revealed most starkly at the heart of colonial, imperial or Commonwealth practices of enclosing or erecting artificial boundaries connoting ownership of or exclusion from land. Central to the 'Scramble for Africa' by European powers between 1881 and 1914 – a period known to historians as the 'New Imperialism' – was the idea of ownership, of partition, of claiming land and planting one's country's flag into the land. The fallacy of ownership in this sense is in stark contrast to models of guardianship or custodial duties embodied by the incumbent autochthonous inhabitants of these invaded territories. The idea that written rights or human-signed contracts might confer access to, or ownership of land, appears ludicrous if culturally the land is held to be alive, autonomous, and agentic. The foundations of this capitalist urge of dividing, creating boundaries, and withholding access are embedded throughout histories of invasion and domination, and illustrated by the roman concept of *latifundia:*[6] large-scale enclosures of land that form the closest approximation to industrialized agriculture in Roman Antiquity, and whose economics depended upon slavery. These strategies are echoed across many strata of global history, one notable example being the act of expropriation enacted upon the peasantry in England in the middle ages.[7] This included the disbanding of armies and feudal retinues, the closure of the monasteries, which eradicated the medieval system of charity, and the enclosure of arable lands, leading to the eviction of smallholders and tenants, thereby denying thousands of people access to commons. This created a vulnerable underclass of vagabonds, wanderers, and itinerant workers who could no longer rely on a subsistence model for survival and were therefore subject to the whims of a much more distanced and destructive capitalist system.

This partitioning and enclosing of lands (seen visibly in the enclosures act),[8] from field-scale to nation-scale, was a key tool of control and domination that was further enacted through plantation-based slavery and colonial practices. The commodification of lands and bodies that formed the core skeleton of plantation-based slavery operated upon both a literal and metaphorical panoptic vision.[9] This tactic afforded a centralised surveillance view over subjugated peoples tending to the subjugated earths that were sculpted and scarred to satisfy industrial and commercial demands for sugar, for minerals, for food. Small-scale subsistence practices of commoners were wiped out wherever this disembodied and often remote extractive gaze focussed and settled, with individual needs subsumed within a greater project of factory-farming of peoples,[10] and of goods. The physical exclusion from a personal means of production and livelihood ushered in a hierarchical system whereby landlords became dependent upon indentured or precarious labour and employees were forged out of those whose lifestyle had hitherto operated autonomously. Wrapped up in the enclosing of these lands was the societal creation of boundaries between classes of capitalist systems of supply and demand, which bent the soil towards the commodifying of crop monocultures, trade, surplus, and profit. It also necessitated a fragmentation of long-standing communities by introducing the need to travel for work and trade, and the criminalising of those seen as idle or unable to fend for themselves.

Market forces established during this period included demands for particular products (e.g., labourers), and a move away from subsistence farming, which dramatically enforced the alteration of earth and the Earth's surface that had begun with the advent of agriculture (from the first harvesting of seeds over 10,000 years ago).[11] From this original action, relationships with and to land altered irrevocably, with a gaze now focussed upon the speculative pliability or viability of certain landscapes, their makeup and aspect

now under intense scrutiny. Perhaps the copse of trees nestling in the crook of a valley was successful because of its sheltered location, its position in relation to the watershed, the compass point it faced? Could it support instead a crop of barley, of hops, of vines? The ontologies of land used for subsistence by prior generations suddenly needed addressing and updating in the face of these new demands upon the land, demands which were focussed upon the creation of surplus for trade, and for personal economic comfort. The upheaval legitimised by this progressive advance, then afforded the reconstituting of terrains once-considered fixed or inhospitable. The possibilities of changing the shape and surfaces of landforms for more productive agriculture led to a massive repurposing of land through monumental projects of drainage and terracing, which led to the rerouting of watercourses, and ultimately irreversible deforestation. Many of these scars still litter our landscapes today, although they may now appear or be read as 'natural'.

These projects which necessarily required huge amounts of human labour in the seemingly impossible reimagining and restructuring of the land, are endorsed within Virgil's *Georgics:* "... *Labor omnia vincit*" (Steady work overcame all things),[12] written to encourage Romans to become farmers. As with *latifundia*, these projects required the application of enormous reserves of workers, often indentured or enslaved, to carry out huge private and civic projects. Hands perceived by the authorities as lying idle or at risk of rebellion were pressed into transforming land into a viable commercial concern, an action repeated throughout expansionist imperial narratives. Seen simply, the move from small pockets of land being tended to by individuals and families or collectively within communities, towards a system of larger units of land being singly-owned but worked on by labourers employed piecemeal, was enacted on several continents throughout history, and remains part of a wider relational continuum of capitalism and its desire for surplus. This can be seen in the zero-hours contract workers of

today, in the industrialization and collectivisation of the late 1950's Chinese 'Great Leap Forward', and in the galley-slaves of the late middle ages in the Mediterranean and the peasants who built the Egyptian pyramids at Giza. The asymmetries of power, exacted through the enclosures of land for the benefit of commanding individuals, prevail at the expense of the indentured majority and, and is the foundation of the Anthropocene, as felt and witnessed contemporaneously.

A discourse of this 'Ground Zero' of the Anthropocene would not be complete without a digression to the term *terra nullius*, which, while it could be seen as a direct translation, also carries the weight of each of Mirzoeff's complexes of visuality. The term has been weaponised in imperial and colonial histories as a strategy for the removal, preclusion, and forced abandonment of peoples from land. The Roman legal term *res nullius*, meaning 'worthless things', was applied to wild animals, ruined buildings or barbarous people. Once deemed as having no owner, these people, places and things could then be legally seized. Terra nullius as a legal term and colonial strategy has been variously applied to the entire continent of Australia, Svalbard, Greenland, Western Sahara, Canada, the South Island of New Zealand, and several desirable segments of Irish territory seized and settled by the British, typically targeting the sovereignty of indigenous peoples. In the details of this action, land is designated worthless and liable to claim by a dominating force, judged to be superior than that of the current inhabitants. The action applies the forces of the Roman Empire's policy of *imperium sine fine* (sovereignty without end) to land and leaves no corner of useful land undominated or available for common usage. This authoritarian strategy of starving and subduing land and people has been highly effective, and serially repeated across dominated and marginalised terrains, producing a visible tactic of dominion duplicated in globally distributed plantations and reservations. The tactic of *terra nullius* could be seen as in direct opposition to

the promise of '40 acres and a mule,'[13] oft expressed in commons protests, liberation and post-plantation narratives as the basic requirements for a freedman's self-sufficiency (a promise often broken). Not merely a martial strategy of roman imperial origin, *terra nullius* has been more contemporaneously applied in colonial territories, and in some cases is still contested, such as the Mabo precedent in Australia.[14] In the case of Connaught/Connacht in Ireland, the first political and religious violences forced peoples onto unproductive land, strategies which were sometimes deliberately or unwittingly re-entrenched and re-enacted during later periods of famine, war and migration. The idea of a 'no-man's-land' which terra nulllius enforces is therefore taxonomic or categorical in its implication: that it is not land deemed fit for a certain class or hierarchical group of man, but to be left to or stolen from the barbarous, the disenfranchised, the overlooked or the conquered – the vulnerable.

That empirical or imperial mapping of territory is a political act seems unequivocal in the context of establishing colonies and the claiming of already-occupied land in the name of a sovereign. Throughout history, borders are imposed or at times deemed porous or impenetrable, significant or to be overlooked. These seemingly fluid, liminal spaces are obviously charged with meaning and histories that tie them inextricably to their inhabitants, human or more-than. The over-arching aim in categorising territories is explicitly linked to narratives of state-sponsored domination and 'divide and rule' strategies, with the added value that comes with the extraction of minerals or materials and the concomitant exploitation of those who fall into those societal subsections previously described and inscribed by the laws of terra nullius. The capitalist imagination is, however, hosted by a hungry beast, insatiable in its appetite for the fuel of progress. Whether oil, timber or coal, or the fuel of bodies that cleared land and sowed cash-crops, the extractive gaze of the capitalist project roams hungrily, often untroubled by international borders, indigenous heritage or

sovereign claims. The tantalising phrase *terra incognita,* which lurked in the peripheries of historic cartographies to indicate unknown land and undocumented terrains beyond Eurocentric exploration, dangled a sublime allure to the imaginative speculation of those charting allegedly new continents. For a long period, these maps relied upon the blur of the monstrous, literally demarcating this territory with illustrations of dragons. However, once the worked soil in colonised terrains became insufficient to meet the global market's needs for sugar, spice, slaves and fuel, these terrains came under scrutiny, the monstrous unknown beckoning once more. By the end of the 19th century, the period of invasion and exploitation had exhaustively charted, assessed, and mapped these topographies, judged them valuable and productive, or cast them as useless to the expansionist designs of the capitalist project. The divisive power of these colonial strategies furthermore embedded binary notions of belonging and ownership to these regions, as outlined by Achille Mbembe:

> In every country where socio-political configurations before European penetration were already marked, regional differences have been accentuated. Initially this was due to the impact of colonial policies of "exploiting" the territories conquered in the nineteenth century, and later to the impact of the forms of political control instituted after direct colonization. In many cases, the gap between the formal attributes of borders and their economically and culturally changing properties grows ever wider. Conflict has arisen almost everywhere that ethnic groups claiming to enjoy a ius soli feel overtaken economically by a majority of "outsiders". The feeling of belonging is forged and identities reinvented increasingly through the medium of disputes over what belongs to whom and through manipulation of "indigenousness" and ancestral descent.[15]

Notions of home, belonging and outsiders are inextricably linked with existing delineations of place, and the possible histories that it connotes. The linking of the idea of the 'local' to place can be attractive, particularly in a globalised system, which leaves notions of the local unmoored. The idea of the local can, however, be reactionary and exclusionary, and can be complicit in representing an opportunity for a 'retreat to place' as Doreen Massey describes it,[16] which insinuates a tempting withdrawal to the known, to the cosiness
of *hygge*,[17] an erection of boundaries that reject alien invasion or difference. Massey describes the ambiguous role that place plays in this imagined battle between hospitality and nimbyism:[18]

> Horror at local exclusivities sits uneasily against support for the vulnerable struggling to defend their patch. While place is claimed, or rejected, in these arguments in a startling variety of ways, there are often shared undergirding assumptions: of place as closed, coherent, integrated as authentic, as 'home.'[19]

The hunger for 'home', for safety and self-actualisation is certainly a valid and common multi-species desire, particularly in the uncertain times signified by an acknowledgement of the Anthropocene. It speaks not only to this epoch but has been an evolutionary driver throughout global history and resonates strongly with Deleuze's distinctions between exhaustion and tiredness which form an important part of the next chapter, "Ruins". Counter-intuitively, in the process of instituting place, in the delineation and erection of these boundaries, Massey states that places are also implicated in the making of global relations and forces.

If this notion of place is accepted, then one way of thinking about place is as particular moments in such intersecting social relations, nets of which have over time been constructed, laid down, interacted with one another, decayed and renewed.

Some of these relations will be, as Massey describes:

> [C]ontained within the place; others will stretch beyond it, tying any particular locality into wider relations and processes in which other places are implicated too. This blows apart any hard-fast distinction between local-global - both are implicated in the very process of mutual formation. Place is a process.[20]

Look

As illuminated here, in order to reap the maximum possible return from land, the invention of a greedy and remote extractive gaze was necessitated. This gaze did not dwell only at surface level but penetrated and mapped the depths; it roved beyond borders, it imagined distant coastlines, it wondered at what lay on the other side of the mountain; what lay beneath it. This type of gaze upon the land and the appropriation of its associated commodities entrenches a certain right to land that Isabelle Stengers, in her essay "Reclaiming Animism" describes (before rejecting the notion) as "the acceptance [of the] hard truth that we are alone in a mute, blind, yet knowable world – one that is our task to appropriate."[21] This purview aligns with my previous descriptions of the solitary heroic figure symbolising the Romantic Sublime, poised above the unknowable abyss, and in many ways, would be analogous to Laura Mulvey's description of the 'male gaze'. Mulvey states that "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly."[22]

This gaze adheres strongly to Edmund Burke's division between the Beautiful (female) and the Sublime (male),[23] and the patriarchal determinism enfolded within these extractive gazes; gazes which project meaning or value onto a pliable and passive 'female' Earth.

This gendered description of the multidimensional transformational gaze which unearthed valuable minerals and indentured human labour in overturning the soil echoes what Mirzoeff describes as the 'right to look'. Mirzoeff describes three main complexes of visuality, each originating in a particular temporality and power structure, yet overlapping and conspicuously unfinished. The first system he describes as the 'Plantation Complex' (1660-1865), symbolised by the overseer, the second the 'Imperial Complex' (1857-1947), embodied by the missionary, and finally, the 'Military Industrial Complex' (1945-present), personified in the counterinsurgent.[24] These complexes signally align visuality to power structures, from the panoptical overseer (alluded to previously) of labouring slaves on the plantation, to the military endeavours that cartographically visualise the battlefield, and closely related to what Achille Mbembe describes as the 'right to dispose.'[25] Visuality's goal, in this case, "… is to maintain the authority of the visualizer, above and beyond the visualizer's material power."[26] The cartographic technologies and industrially developed ability to travel the globe under an imperial or capitalist banner embedded these histories of conquest, claim, and entitlement. They ennabled a system of rule that we today see repeated all over the world, a rule marked by its strategy of classification through "naming, categorising and defining – a process Foucault defined as the 'nomination of the visible'."[27] Taking this taxonomy to the realm of the human; to the visible and invisible, the process renders a fault-line through societies, empires and nations, confirming the asymmetries of experience, of access to materials, and of the privilege of the 'right to look'. Mirzoeff cites Herodotus' example of the Scythians of antiquity blinding their slaves to prevent them from escaping, he then goes on to assert that "[i]t cannot but also suggest that slavery is the removal of the right to look."[28] This is compounded later in the Jim Crow era, with laws prohibiting those "classified as 'colored' of 'reckless eyeballing', a simple looking at a white person, especially a white woman or person in authority."[29] Mirzoeff points out that these

tactics of blinding were repeated through the hooding of prisoners in Abu Ghraib,[30] with those holding such a fragile power unwilling to be witnessed committing abuses.

These complexes of visuality are not constrained to our waking hours, for the conspicuously unfinished speculative dreams of 'new worlds' of endless resource linger uneasily in the restless capitalist imagination, and the lure of terra incognita still seems to trouble the sleep of those hoping to continue the colonisation project into the virgin territories of Mars, or the still uncharted canyon depths and mountain ranges of the sea. The term terra incognita refers to unexplored or unmapped lands but also implies a territory of the imagination. It is interesting to counter the cartographic urge with how Caspar Henderson describes, in his book *A New Map of Wonders,* the way

> Shamans in pre-agricultural societies see the lands they need to know through methods akin to daydreaming or lucid dreaming. We in our highly technological culture often rely on maps – graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes or events in the world. But there is no hard and fast line between maps and dreams because maps, however objective they may seem are only interpretations. A map is always a way of groping through the unknown.[31]

Whilst remaining cognisant that the "map is not the territory,"[32] rather, a Walter Benjamin-esque telescoping tool of the past through the present,[33] through the aforementioned complexes of visuality, it is important to recognise not only the structural agency of cartography, but the powers conferred through the construction and usage of maps. The ability to distance afforded by these remote tools of visualisation bestowed a proxy power over subjected lands and peoples, but it was a flattened, hegemonic

idea of a universalised terrain which could be bent solely to profit and surplus. This gaze not only removed many of the complexities involved in enacting this capitalist pursuit, but also overlooked the fluidity of land, and often the impossibility of committing land's contingencies, its ebbs and flows, onto paper. Contemporaneous lacunae on maps may variously be placeholders for mining works, an indication of military complexes, or awaiting the final decision in disputed warzones. In this sense, the limbic states they inhabit shift between that of *terra nullius* and *terra incognita,* their definition slipping in accordance with their human usage and usefulness. It is pertinent to acknowledge the possible futures of certain lands that may currently or subsequently be deemed null, when their soils are exhausted, their technologies obsolete, their floodplains stripped of soil through erosion or deluges, the drinking water made brackish by rising sea levels or their useful workers gone, fleeing to friendlier climates where human survival may yet still be possible.

Semantic discourses over how to describe a territory from afar are a trace echo of the vital significance that the naming of places can have. Much as the commissioning of cartography confers power to an external gaze, the 'right to name' could be held as an equal imperative as the 'right to look' (and the right to time and space described in this chapter). The alien legacies of mountains, rivers, islands and lakes attributed to major or minor royals, explorers or colonists exact an enduring violence of wilful obstinacy and wrong footedness, riding roughshod over indigenous traditions, religious and cultural symbolism and a deep lineage of land rights. As the geophilospher Kathryn Yusoff points out, "the ownership of strata and surface - surface bifurcation in Australia and Canada by the Crown continue to unsettle native title and reservation lands. Thus the classificatory logics of geology have implications for ongoing colonialism."[34]

Time

If we extrapolate access to visuality with access to land or territories, then only those with power hold the 'right to look' at land and the consequences are manifold: rather than a tradition of working with land for the rationale of subsistence, the land itself becomes a commodity, and those without the right to look become mere tools or hands in its upkeep. Withholding the right to look is a violence enacted upon the inhabitants or traditional users of the land, and also removes autonomous agency within and upon the land. The restrictions are not only placed upon the bodily experiences; the removal of the right to look, to traverse, to touch, to work for one's own benefit, but they also translate into psychological boundaries where the ability to possibilitate is confiscated along with the freedom to imagine. Spatial imaginings such as these bear a corollary to temporal scales. The right to look and its withdrawal could be compared to the right to time; to use or experience it autonomously. The durational qualities of time are, in the Sublime Anthropocene, not currently equally distributed. The maxim 'Cash rich, time poor,' means that those possessing the wherewithal to spend their way out of the drudgery of production, can and will do. Their time is deemed too valuable, hard to contain like quicksilver. The time of the indentured labourer, casual worker or the slave, on the other hand, is deemed expendable by the architects of the various complexes of visuality, and yet the experience of it must feel endless, an infinitude of Sisyphean revolutions. As Emma Cocker states:

> The fabric of time can be made to stretch or pucker, ruche or fray. With experience, it can be pulled thin and sheer as delicate gauze or gathered up into thick impenetrable creases. In certain states of mind, time seems to pass by too quickly and yet on reflection has produced dense, complex folds.[35]

Time here operates in manifold, duplicitous multiplicities: your time can belong to others, as a commodity to be expended at their whim, any claim of your own is pushed to the margins of the day, like the Amazon warehouse workers measuring out their time in toilet and cigarette breaks. This illustration of the expropriation of waged labour-power refers, naturally, to Marx, however this is not my specific approach. The monotony of time stolen and bent to factory production is in some form of symbiosis with another reading of temporality: historical time.

A common feature of the different historical spikes of this anthropocenic commentary are their durations, their commingled distances, proximities and overlapping ongoing-ness. The scars of the first forest clearings brought about by the advent of agriculture still linger, and the vestigial architecture of plantation-based slavery echoes still in the use of transient agricultural workers. The continued removal of indigenous peoples from ancestral homes or hunting-grounds, the encircling of reserves; these actions could be read as specific incidents in history or as ongoing features of our global crisis of subjectivity. This leads to the chronic condition of chronological reflexivity, where we are doomed to repeat the violences, the inequities, the asymmetries of the past in the present, and where the looming shadow of the past violences refuses to be pinned to that time, and continues to inflict itself upon successive generations. Whether through policy, society, privation or privilege, the right to (one's own) time is clearly never hermetically sealed from the past but is a product of one's cultural conditioning and is politically charged by being tied to living labour.[36] Equally, where historical time was and is forcibly withheld or channelled at an imperial or commercial level, whatever reparations may come forth, no matter how unlikely, the violences still linger, haunting and permeating the present.

The critical theorist Mackenzie Wark states that "the Anthropocene introduces the labor point of view—in the broadest possible sense—into geology."[37] This lithic inscription makes clear the correlation between geology and extractive capitalism, and reiterates Marx's assertion in Capital of the links between slavery, indenture and the advent of capitalism: "the veiled slavery of the wage-workers in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world… Capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt."[38] Drawing further upon this claim, Yusoff urges us to recognise the genesis of this monstrous creation; she reiterates the need to make explicit the links between capitalism, slavery and the Anthropocene: "there is a need to de-sediment the social life of geology, to place it in the terror of its coercive acts and the interstitial movements of its shadow geology – what I call a *billion Black Anthropocenes*."[39] She goes on to identify the uncompromising radicalism embodied by those with historic and ongoing experience of slavery, who continue to counter the crushing violences of slave-based capital.

> There is an invisible agent that carries those Golden Spikes, in their flesh, chains, hunger, and bone, and in their social formations as sound, radical poetry, critical black studies and subjective possibility realized against impossible conditions: there are a billion Black Anthropocenes that are its experiential witness…[40]

This aeon of bodily, politically, and ecologically experienced pain continues unassailably in the light of Britain's Abolition debt of £20 million, taken out in 1833 to pay off disenfranchised slave owners, in compensation for their 'loss of human property' and only recently paid off in 2018.[41] That this debt has been so thoroughly serviced despite the absence of any forms of apology or reparation is astonishing. Therefore, any process of decolonising the Anthropocene, through acknowledging its implicit universalising

tendencies and the subjugated-human scaffolding sacrificed in the building of it, must also address the hubristically overconfident Eurocentric reliance upon the Cartesian primacy of the gaze. The concept of the 'noösphere',[42] as cited by Crutzen and Stoermer, is a free-floating "knowledge or information society,"[43] one that would seem to have the remarkable ability to geo-engineer a solution to the planetary catastrophe of the Anthropocene. The hubris behind this concept and its failure to magically materialise is a replication of the violence of European colonialism and confirms that the 'noösphere', as Heather Davis and Zoe Todd describe it, merely reiterates

> … a Euro-Western division of mind/thought from land…the noosphere which considers thought separate from – and above – geology and biota replicates the foundational and epistemic violence of European colonialism which Lewis and Maslin propose caused the Anthropocene.[44]

Intellectual wrangling over the demarcations or namings of the advent of the Anthropocene has an equivalent in some of the disputes surrounding discourses of space and place and their relative understandings. The cultural geographer Doreen Massey, in her work *For Space*, unpacks some of the received understandings of these terms, particularly with regard to time. In her explorations of domesticity, memory, and globalisation, she rejects the notion of space being fixed and posits that it is rather, a state of ongoing becoming, composed of multiple trajectories. She describes it as "the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny… as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity… always in the process of being made."[45] Massey goes on to question the primacy of time and received notions of its boundless possibilities,[46] and the limiting academic subjugation of space in this formula. In doing so, she calls to question the generalisation made by Henri Bergson and

Ernesto Laclau among others, that "space is so widely imagined as 'conquering time'," much as the philosopher Edmund Burke designates the Sublime as a male domain and beauty as female. Massey reflects upon these forms of disparity within gendering of categories and states that:

> It seems in general to be perceived that space is somehow a lesser dimension than time: one with less gravitas and magnificence, it is the material/phenomenal rather than the abstract; it is being rather than becoming and so forth; and it is feminine rather than masculine […]. It is the subordinated category, almost the residual category, the not-A to time's A, counterpositionally defined simply by a lack of temporality, and widely seen as, within modernity, having suffered from deprioritisation in relation to time.[47]

Massey argues that the dangers of this academic schism, and the universalising tendencies of globalisation more widely, render space as a limited sphere of understanding, turning "geography into history, space into time" and warns "that cosmology of 'only one narrative' obliterates the multiplicities, the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space. It reduces simultaneous coexistence to place in the historical queue,"[48] and is redolent of John Law's One-World World.[49] The danger of this view of a historical backlog, or 'time-lag' as perceived on her part,[50] is also echoed in the work of Mirzoeff, Vergès, Lund, and Mbembe,[51] who outline the asymmetries enacted through this rejection of a coeval reading of the unfolding temporalities and the problematic insistence upon a universal 'we' to whom the Anthropocene, among other contemporaneous calamities, is happening. Lund states:

> Modernity as a discourse of progress, acceleration, and teleology therefore also constitutes a practice of totalization, which excludes those who do not comply with its

parameters. It attributes lateness to colonized nations and subaltern subjects, and progress is thus defined in terms of the projection of certain—that is, Western—people's presents as other people's futures.[52]

The assertion, that both space and place are constantly becoming, or processual entities, summons thoughts of time, the uneven hierachy between space and time, and the complicated relationship inherent to perceptions of spacio-temporality. At this point it is useful once again to consider the 'contemporary contemporary' (outlined in detail in the following chapter) as a networked space of the interwoven trajectories that Massey alludes to: an unfolding, layered and hyperobjective mass of historical triggers that give birth to multiple skeins of multi-species experience at local and global scales. These trajectories continue to accrue intimate and monumental layers of sedimentation and translation in complex multidimensional relations. This mass of inter-relations resonates strongly with Benjamin Bratton's theory of 'The Stack' and his self-described 'accidental megastructure',[53] which ranges from global through to individual user-scales. The vastness of this accretion conjures the engulfment of the Sublime through one's inability as an individual user to ever truly disentangle one's own personal trajectory from the far-reaching tentacles of history. The fleeting recognition of one's singular irrelevance in the passage of time is mirrored in the crushingly monolithic immensity of geological time. It is the task of the Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy, the constituent body of the International Commission on Stratigraphy, to decide whether or not the evidence exists to designate this epoch the Anthropocene. The Subcommission group's objective, which is the establishment of a standard, globally applicable stratigraphical scale, is determined temporally in the fossils and geological layers of the earth's crust. The results of the binding vote by the 'Anthropocene Working Group' (AWG) currently pin the dawn of this epoch to the early 1950s: "the sharpest and most globally

synchronous of these signals, that may form a primary marker, is made by the artificial radionuclides spread worldwide by the thermonuclear bomb tests from the early 1950s."[54] While the term is in common usage beyond the disciplinary boundaries of geology, the setting of temporal boundaries by the AWG can at times seem painfully tentative against the background of accelerating global warming. Any frustrations that one might feel at this perceived slowness, however pale into insignificance against the vast backdrop of the continuum of global time.

That one might be able to witness in 'real time' the dramas of the Anthropocene; that one might be able to identify probable causes, protagonists, or alternative genesis, are microscopic scratches of detail upon the surface of this temporal, geological edifice, the earth. Thinking around the Anthropocene then necessarily transgresses the geological academic borders and disciplines and seeks answers in the humanities, in protests, in global movements. As Rebecca Solnit explains, "if fields of expertise can be imagined as real fields, fenced off and carefully tilled then a process of [ontological] walking takes a path that trespasses through a dozen fields."[55]

In apprising the indexical archive of human existence upon the planet, one can note the carbon deposits that resulted from the industrial revolution, or measure the post-nuclear testing levels of radiation in our soils, but many ephemeral traces will never be embedded into the rocks that are the stratigraphic determiners of an new epoch, once again raising Massey's fears that the telling of the Anthropocene is "embedded in a biopolitical tale of applying stratigraphic thinking to ideas of cultural and biological progression."[56] The idea of newness conversely leads us into deep geological time, a theory which arose in the eighteenth century. James Hutton postulated an analysis of soil renewal as a systemic result of rock erosion and formation, cyclically maintaining land as

fit for human habitation. His theory of unconformities developed from documentary evidence of the visible schism between different ages of rock strata, which left him concluding that in these samples "we find no vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end."[57] As Robert Macfarlane describes it: "Deep time is measured in units that humble the human instant: epochs and aeons, instead of minutes and years. Deep time is kept by stone, ice, stalactites, seabed sediments and the drift of tectonic plates. Deep time opens into the future as well as the past."[58]

In contrast to this rock-fixed evidence, the geologist Jan Zalasiewicz describes the "perversely counter-geological" fact that the change outlined by Paul Crutzen – the thinning of the circumpolar stratospheric ozone layer because of CFCs – leaves "no stratigraphic trace that I am aware of. It is a ghost – albeit one that is convincingly driving significant change in a planetary machine."[59] In the particular case of CFCs, the failure to see the marks in the planetary geology resulting from human actions, seems to refute the Eurocentric desperation to see ourselves everywhere, to recognise ourselves in the face of god, to place ourselves at the centre of the narrative. If multi-disciplinary thinking moves to accept that not all environmental ruptures have left geological traces; that lithic memories may not have documented, for example, the European violences of the trans-Atlantic slave-trade, and its resultant carbon dioxide drops, then perhaps, unbound by strata or fossils, a process of decolonising the Anthropocene can begin whilst simultaneously opening up the narrative beyond the human.

Contribution

While wading through the sedimentation of our own waste; the 'grostesque hybridity' of our plastiglomerate fossils of the future,[60] we must attend to the present pasts of the more-than-human and use this knowledge to formulate responses to the now and the future world. Carboniferous rocks retain the haunting "memory of

something else entirely – of a world of primeval swamp forests, with amphibians and giant dragonflies, but without flowers, or birds, or mammals."[61] The agency of land, its constituent rocks, soils, root systems, rivers, its vibrant matters,[62] need to be acknowledged and learnt from, in tandem with sustainable forms of living that already exist among many species and communities. This must of course be done without recourse to any romanticising of indigeneity, any reductive tropes of the 'magical negro', or any "exclusivist localisms based on claims of some eternal authenticity."[63] Much as Ramachandra Guha (the sociologist and environmental historian cited in Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*) has "resisted sentimentalizing traditional" cultures as peopled by "natural" ecologists,"[64] Vanessa Watts, as cited by Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, describes a concept of indigenous Place-Thought as

> the non-distinctive space where place and thought were never separated because they never could or can be separated. Place-Thought is based upon the premise that the land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts.[65]

Starting (again) from this point, without a universalised notion of humans at the centre of all meaning, can perhaps offer a realistically scaled perspective of our own importance. The sublime vulnerability that this entails, the 'intimate immensity' that Bachelard speaks of also alludes to the 'infinite indifference' described by John Wylie.[66] As Macfarlane points out: "the half-life of uranium-235 is 4.46 billion years: such chronology decentres the human, crushing the first person to an irrelevance."[67] For as many of us experience in our own communities, and as Donna Haraway outlines in her thoughts on critters and companion species, intimate indifference is the hallmark of the rough and tumble of life when lived as a multi-species family.

To meaningfully circumnavigate the perceptual impasse of the Anthropocene, we clearly need to belie the misgivings or misunderstandings that maintain any divide between nature and culture, while acknowledging humans' state as part of nature and as natural beings; not separate or superior to nature, but as agentic critters. Haraway uses this term to refer "promiscuously, to microbes, plants, animals, humans and nonhumans, and sometimes even to machines,"[68] therefore engendering the dualistic possibility of existence as both architect and subject of the Anthropocene. Any identification of this paradoxical condition needs to trespass the borders and boundaries of states, national parks or ecological disaster zones, to acknowledge the agency both of land and its constituent parts and any bodies in the margins or spotlight. The right to look; the right to time; the right to space; and the right to name are bound up in this commingling of humans and more-than-humans. Narratives of invasion and domination, marroonage and migration are in danger, in their distanced gaze, of missing the dense interweaving of the multiple trajectories that the land is made of. The hyperobjective engulfment that the Anthropocene induces risks simultaneously alerting us to our own precarity while removing the impulse or wherewithal to respond to it.

There are a number of different chronologies cited as the origin event or ground zero of the Anthropocene, and indeed the academic quibbling over its advent often signposts the cultural positioning of the speaker more than it determines or fixes a date. In my research, I have ranged through the histories of Imperial Roman pastoralism, the Industrial and Agricultural Revolutions within Britain, to the 'Scramble for Africa' and the Atlantic Slave-trade. All of these historical moments exist and stake a claim within a chronology of the Anthropocene. Each of them can be traced in geological time with a corresponding 'golden spike,'[69] signifying a measurable and distinguishing departure from a previous time period. Each of these historical and geological shifts are resonant to

my own sphere of research, but there are equally extreme collisions of history and geology, and resultant anthropocenic-induced climate change in many other cultures, of which my knowledge is scant. Like most humans, my myopic focus of interest circles around my own sphere of experience. I thrill to Virginia Woolf's depiction of the 1677 'Frost Fair' in *Orlando*,[70] and I am astonished that the Little Ice Age which allowed for the fair and afforded the invasion of Copenhagen can trace its origin to the shifts in carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, which were a result of the Black Death and the colonisation of the Americas. However, it becomes much more real to me when I can pick out the traces linking the local to the global, to the three complexes of visuality, in the ruins of farmsteads on my local Dartmoor, abandoned and unsustainable during the plummet in temperature that the Little Ice Age wrought. Sadly, it is a truism that the empathy engendered by news of weather-induced famines, of climate refugees, becomes much starker and less easy to ignore when it is on your doorstep. Foodbanks, shelters for the homeless, flooding, apathetic government, and dwindling supplies of drinking water are quickly becoming hallmarks of all but the most privileged localities, symbols of Morton's hyperobjective proximity of the Anthropocene. Recognising the global in the local and reclaiming that the right to look, and the associated rights to time, and to space should be for all, would appear to be one way of avoiding the sublime engulfment of the global Anthropocene, while acknowledging the sliver of influence each of us has.

A Sublime Anthropocene demands a multi-scalar gaze which takes in the micro-unknowns of soil whilst remaining alert to the networked macro-nature of Nature'. This system of which we are a functioning part, links us indelibly to the very ground we traverse and of which we will at some point become an ingredient. As David Abrams shows us in *The Spell of the Sensuous*, this traversing of the earth so often happens without us realising, and when we do, we reduce it to a static assemblage the better to perceive it:

The life-world is the world that we count on without necessarily paying it much attention, the world of the clouds overhead and the ground underfoot, of getting out of bed and preparing food and turning on the tap for water. Easily overlooked, this primordial world is always already there when we begin to reflect or philosophise. It is not a private, but a collective dimension – the common field of our lives and the other lives with which ours are entwined… the world as we organically experience it in its enigmatic multiplicity and open-endedness, prior to conceptually freezing it into a static space of 'facts.'[71]

The challenge of the Sublime Anthropocene then, for we vulnerable entities that make this earth their home, is to venture further, armed with a multi-scalar, multi-directional attention; mindful both of existing complexes of visuality, but also deeper, more-than-human gazes. The wistful desire for 'home' and 'place', when living in the ruins, is not rooted only in nostalgic narratives of the past or speculative mirages of the future, but is a processual, shared endeavour. Community will be unfolded and made with those who we already know, and truly become by the inclusion of those we can hardly imagine.

Endnotes

[1] Virgil, *Georgics,* translated by Peter Fallon, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p23.

[2] Melissa Michelle Parks, "Tracing a Discursive Term: An Ecological Explication of the More-than-Human Construct," a Presentation at *Waterlines: Confluence and Hope through Environmental Communication*, The Conference on Communication and Environment, Vancouver, Canada, June 17-21, 2019 https://theieca.org/coce2019, p2, where she states: "From its roots in David Abram's (1997) philosophical and phenomenological work *The Spell of the Sensuous*, the focal concept of the more-than-human has found its way into many disciplines including communication, geography, philosophy, literary, and techno-science…as a replacement for terms that have come under contemporary scrutiny for reaffirming and perpetuating dominant ideological orientations of human-nature separation. The term more-than-human discursively functions to dismantle dominant dualistic ideologies, particularly that of the human-nature divide. Additionally, it decenters the human, discursively reducing anthropocentric power and redistributing value to nonhuman entities and systems. Finally, it creates new imaginings for humanity itself. As a form of discursive rupture, the term illuminates 'new' imaginings for members of our planetary ecosystem—humans included."

[3] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), p2.

[4] not actually a forest but a hunting park as decreed by the King

[5] Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Right to Look,*" Critical Inquiry* 37, No. 3 (2011): p480.

[6] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, trans. John Healey (London: Penguin Classics, 1991), Book 18, p7, line 35, where he is translated as stating: "The men in former days believed that above all moderation should be observed in landholding, for indeed it was their judgment that it was better to sow less and plough more intensively. Virgil, too, I see agreed with this view. To confess the truth, the latifundia have ruined Italy, and soon will ruin the provinces as well. Six owners were in possession of half of the province of

Africa at the time when the Emperor Nero had them put to death."

[7] Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (London: Verso, 2000), p17.

[8] Living Heritage, *Managing and Owning the Landscape,* "Enclosing the Land", https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/towncountry/landscape/overview/enclosingland, which describes the enclosures act: "Originally, enclosures of land took place through informal agreement. But during the 17th century the practice developed of obtaining authorisation by an Act of Parliament. Initiatives to enclose came either from landowners hoping to maximise rental from their estates, or from tenant farmers anxious to improve their farms. From the 1750s enclosure by parliamentary Act became the norm. Overall, between 1604 and 1914 over 5,200 enclosure Bills were enacted by Parliament which related to just over a fifth of the total area of England, amounting to some 6.8 million acres."

[9] Mirzoeff, "The Right to Look," p476.

[10] Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra,* p46, where they state: "In West Africa, cape Coast Castle was erected in 1610 by the Portuguese, operated by the Dutch, and finally taken by the English in 1664; the Dutch were also busy off Dakar, establishing, with the labor power of African and European workers, the slave-trading post of Goree Island in 1617. The earliest European trading factory on the west African coast, Elmina, was rebuilt in 1621."

[11] Melinda A. Zeder, "The Origins of Agriculture in the Near East," *Current Anthropology* 52, no. S4 (2011): S221-235. Accessed June 28, 2020. doi:10.1086/659307, p222.

[12] Virgil, *Georgics,* trans. Peter Fallon, (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 2006), p10, Book I, line 145–6, which Fallon translates as: "Hard work prevailed, hard work and pressing poverty."

[13] Eric Foner, "Reconstruction: United States history," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, accessed April 03, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/event/Reconstruction-United-States-history., Foner states how: "[t]he dream of '40 acres and a mule' was stillborn. Lacking land, most former slaves had little economic alternative other than resuming work on plantations owned by

whites."

[14] Yogi H. Hendlin, "From Terra Nullius to Terra Communis: Reconsidering Wild Land in an Era of Conservation and Indigenous Rights," *Environmental Philosophy* 11:2, (Autumn 2014): pp. 141–174 All rights reserved. ISSN: 1718-0918, p144, where he states:

"A lively debate has developed since the celebrated 1992 Mabo v Queensland case brought terra nullius to international visibility, ruling that Australia in fact was not terra nullius at the time of the state's founding, opening the door for significant land concessions to Australian aboriginals."

[15] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 2001), p86, www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppkxs.,

[16] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005), p5.

[17] *Merriam Webster Online*, s.v. "Hygge," accessed 28.06.20, https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/what-does-hygge-mean. "*Hygge* is a quality of coziness that makes a person feel content and comfortable. It›s also often used as an adjective meaning cozy or comfortable."

[18] *Merriam Webster Online*, s.v. "Nimby", accessed 28.06.20, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/NIMBY. This is defined as "opposition to the locating of something considered undesirable (such as a prison or incinerator) in one's neighbourhood,"

Not In My Back Yard = NIMBY.

[19] Massey, *For Space*, p6.

[20] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1994), p120.

[21] Isabelle Stengers, "Reclaiming Animism," in *Animism: Modernity through the Looking Glass,* ed. by Anselm Franke and Sabine Folie (Berlin: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Konig and Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2011), p1.

[22] Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures (*London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1989), p19.

[23] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1758, reprinted, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p47.

[24] Mirzoeff, "*The Right to Look,*" p486.

[25] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p25. Mbembe notes that "colonial sovereignty rested on three sorts of violence. The first was the founding violence. This is what underpinned not only the right of conquest but all the prerogatives flowing from that right. Thus it played an instituting role, in at least two ways. First, it helped to create the space over which it was exercised; one might say that it presupposed its own existence. Second, it regarded itself as the sole power to judge its laws—whence its one-sidedness, especially as, to adopt Hegel's formulation, its supreme right was (by its capacity to assume the act of destroying) simultaneously the supreme denial of right. A second sort of violence was produced before and after, or as part and parcel of, the conquest, and had to do with legitimation. Its function was, as Derrida speaks of a somewhat different issue to provide self-interpreting language and models for the colonial order, to give this order meaning, to justify its necessity and universalizing mission—in short, to help produce an imaginary capacity converting the founding violence into authorizing authority. The third form of violence was designed to ensure this authority's maintenance, spread, and permanence."

[26] Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Visualizing the Anthropocene," *Public Culture 1,* May 2014; 26 (2 (73)): p216.

[27] Mirzoeff, "The Right to Look," p476.

[28] Mirzoeff, "The Right to Look," p481.

[29] Mirzoeff, "The Right to Look," p482.

[30] Karen J. Greenberg, and Joshua L, Dratel, *The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib*, (2005), New York, p1214.

[31] Caspar Henderson, *A New Map of Wonders – A Journey in Search of Modern Marvels* (London: Granta Publications 2017), p229.

[32] Massey, *For Space*, p28

[33] Esther Leslie, "Telescoping the microscopic object: Walter Benjamin, the collector", in *De-, Dis-, Ex-: The Optic of Walter Benjamin,* ed. Alex Coles (London, UK: Black Dog Publishing, 1999) p59.

[34] Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), p83.

[35] Emma Cocker, 'The Fabric of Time', in *The Yes of the No* (Sheffield: Site

Gallery, 2016), p106.

[36] Karl Marx, "Wages of Labour" *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, Marxist Archive, Marx's manuscripts 1844, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/wages.htm

[37] Johnathan Sturgeon, "Civilization Is Doomed! McKenzie Wark Takes on the Anthropocene", *Flavorwire* (online magazine), April 29, 2015, https://www.flavorwire.com/516562/flavorwire-exclusive-civilization-is-doomed-mckenzie-wark-takes-on-the-anthropocene.

[38] Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, Chapter Thirty-One: *Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist*, (Moscow: Progress, 1961) p759-60.

[39] Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, p59-60.

[40] Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, p59-60

[41] David Jays, "The Scandal of the £20bn bailout to slave-owning brits," (online news article) *The Guardian*, 26 January 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/jan/26/juliet-gilkes-romero-the-whip.

[42] Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, "On the Importance of a Date, or, Decolonizing the Anthropocene," *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 16, no. 4, (Dec. 2017): pp. 761-80, p768, https://www.acmejournal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/1539. They describe that "[i]n their seminal article that introduced the term Anthropocene to the written canon, simply titled "The Anthropocene," Crutzen and Stoermer (2000: 17-18) rely upon the concept of the 'noösphere' to articulate their position. They define the noösphere as "the world of thought, to mark the growing role played by mankind's [sic] brainpower and technological talents in shaping its own future and environment" (2000, 17), a concept they credit to P. Teilhard de Chardin and E. Le Roy (2000,17)."

[43] Paul. J Crutzen and Eugene. F Stoermer in "The "Anthropocene"", *Global Change Newsletter*, no 41 (2000), p17-18, www.igbp.net/download/18.316f1832132347017758000141/1376383088452/NL41.pdf

[44] Davis and Todd, "Decolonizing the Anthropocene," p768-9.

[45] Massey, *For Space*, p9.

[46] Massey, *For Space*, p29.

[47] Massey, *For Space*, p29.

[48] Massey, *For Space*, p5.

[49] Arturo Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds* (Durham, MA and London: Duke University Press, 2018), p66.

[50] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p73, where he states: "In short, contradictory dynamics are at work, made up of time-lags, disjunctures, and different speeds; it is too easy to reduce these dynamics to simple antagonism between internal and external forces. More starkly, the developments now under way combine—and, in Africa, are creating systems in such an original way that the result is not only debt, the destruction of productive capital, and war, but also the disintegration of the state and, in some cases, its wasting away and the radical challenging of it as a "public good," as a general mechanism of rule, or as the best instrument for ensuring the protection and safety of individuals, for creating the legal conditions for the extension of political rights, and for making possible the exercise of citizenship."

[51] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p73. Mbembe echoes this specifically through the prism of slavery, perhaps the apogee of this turbo-capito-acceleration: "The slave trade had ramifications that remain unknown to us; to a large extent, the trade was the event through which Africa was born to modernity."

[52] Jacob Lund, "Anachrony, Contemporaneity, and Historical Imagination," *The Contemporary Condition #13*, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019), p17.

[53] Benjamin H, Bratton, "The Black Stack", *e-flux* (online magazine), Journal #53, March 2014, (https://www.e-flux.com/journal/53/59883/the-black-stack 2014),

Bratton states: "Today, as the *nomos* that was defined by the horizontal loop geometry of the modern state system creaks and groans, and as 'Seeing like a State' takes leave of that initial territorial nest—both with and against the demands of planetary-scale computation—we wrestle with the irregular abstractions of information, time, and territory, and the chaotic de-lamination of (practical) sovereignty from the occupation of place. For this, a *nomos* of the Cloud would, for example, draw jurisdiction not only according to the horizontal subdivision of physical sites by and for states,

but also according to the vertical stacking of interdependent layers on top of one another: two geometries sometimes in cahoots, sometimes completely diagonal and unrecognizable to one another. The Stack, in short, is that new *nomos* rendered now as vertically thickened political geography. In my analysis, there are six layers to this Stack: *Earth, Cloud, City, Address, Interface, and User."*

[54] Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy, "Results of binding vote by AWG (Anthropocene Working Group)," (online report), 21.05.2019, http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/anthropocene/

[55] Rebecca Solnit, *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007) p2.

[56] Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, p79.

[57] John Playfair, "Biographical account of the late Dr James Hutton", Transcript. *Royal Society Edinburgh,* 5, (1805), pp39-99. https://worldaroundus.org.uk/reorientation-gallery/deep-time

[58] Robert Macfarlane, *Underland, A Deep time Journey* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2019), p15.

[59] Jan Zalasiewicz,"The Extraordinary strata of the Anthropocene." in Serpil Oppermann and Serenella Iovina, *Environmental Humanities: Voices from the Anthropocene,* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016), p118.

[60] Macfarlane, *Underland*, p321.

[61] Zalasiewicz, "The Extraordinary strata" in Oppermann and Iovina, *Environmental Humanities: Voices from the Anthropocene,* p117.

[62] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter, a political ecology of things* (Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010), p2.

[63] Massey, *For Space,* p20

[64] Nixon, *"Slow Violence,"* p xii

[65] Vanessa Watts, "Indigenous Place-thought & Agency amongst Humans and Non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go on a European World Tour!)." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2, no. 1: (2013), p 21.

[66] John Wylie, "The Distant: Thinking toward Renewed Senses of Landscape and Distance," *Environment, Space, Place* 9, no. 1 (2017): 1-20, www.jstor.

org/stable/10.5749/envispacplac.9.1.0001. Wylie describes feeling: A sense, in part, of the infinite indifference of the non-human object world. This, it seems to me, is almost the other side of the coin, the insistent opposite, to the sense of 'oneness' with landscape…"

[67] Macfarlane, *Underland,* p409.

[68] Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble, Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), p169.

[69] Michael Irving, "When and how humans triggered a new geological epoch," *New Atlas* (online magazine), January 16, 2018, https://newatlas.com/anthropocene-golden-spike/52982.

"…that sounds like more than enough evidence for the existence of the Anthropocene, but before it can be formally recognized in the Geological Time Scale, a "golden spike" needs to be identified. That's a reference sample of rock layers (or strata) where those key markers are different from earlier layers, clearly showing the transition between two time periods."

[70] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2016), p20.

[71] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), p41.

Chapter 1 - Field
#3 of 10 books
Laura Hopes © 2020

MARGINALIA

Title: *Marginalia*
Date: 18.07.18
Place: Newton St Cyres
Collaborators: Katharine Earnshaw and Mary Quicke
Media: Performance Lecture with Film
Duration: 21:03 minutes
Iterations: *Ingenious Soils, Devon and Exeter Institute 2018*
                Quicke's farmshop 2018
                Land/Water conference 2019
                Porthmeor Studios 2020

How would you teach someone to farm? Is that the same as teaching someone about farming? In ancient Rome, Virgil wrote a poem, the *Georgics,* which aimed to explain the farming year to everyone. It's a poem that covers crops and cows, soil and stars, and the human place in the universe.

Virgil has been hailed as the poet laureate of the Anthropocene for the manner in which he pre-figured contemporary ideas surrounding biodiversity, crop rotation, and the dangers of monocultures. The poem explains *arvorum ingeniis,* the 'ingeniousness of soils'. Soil is a hard-to-define substance: it is old and new; it grows life and is the thing into which everything disintegrates. It is animal, vegetable and mineral. When it becomes 'land' it is inherently political; as 'earth' it prompts a consideration of the wider environment.

Made in collaboration with Katharine Earnshaw (Classics, University of Exeter) and Mary Quicke (Farmer, Quicke's Farm) in the summer of 2018, *Marginalia* documents the literal and metaphorical unearthing of the entangled nature of soil, using walking, deep listening, tasting and the use of metal detectors to trace the layers of contemporary and historical materiality at Quicke's Farm.

Written for returning veterans of war, Virgil's *Georgics* depicts farming as both martial and agricultural activity. Talking to Mary, it is clear that 'Nature' is as slippery a concept now as it was in ancient Italy. *Marginalia* explores the *Georgics* by responding to Virgil's description of the soil, of his prompts to see the soil as blood and stone, as time-made material. In this artwork we see here a meditation on taking the words to the field; we see an experience of the *Georgics.*

Given free rein to select areas of Mary's farmland in which to conduct my research, I chose to focus upon two areas of the farm that seemed to chime most strongly with descriptions that had

caught my imagination on initial reading of the *Georgics;* the field and the margins. My wider artistic research gave me several strong ideas of what the field appeared to represent: surface; depth; soil and the commingled idea of the multiple and the singular; of culturing. Similarly, the field's inverse, the margins, initially represented for me diversity but also worthlessness in economical or agricultural terms. My initial ideas were very much framed by an assumption of the martial aspects of agriculture, of farming being yet another iteration of the Anthropocene.

The edges, hedges, and margins of fields have lain untouched for much longer than the field itself, and may contain a wider range and longer age of plants, trees and animal homes, but as a temporal archive of more-than-human interaction the temporal tension between the field and the margin remains a paradox to be explored.

What emerged in the course of making this work was that the field emerged as no monoculture, but a historical sedimentation of human and non-human affect upon the field, almost alluvial, whereby the larger chunks sink to be covered by a silting of temporal stratification. In this reading, the monocultures imposed by modern agricultural techniques are defied by the dense and rich historical record of the human and non-human intervention into the very soil.

These tussles are what I have endeavoured to convey in *Marginalia,* the rich edges holding and defining the dense field, acting as the paratext, making up the whole. I have contrasted footage of its hedges and edges, its boundaries and surfaces, its imagined depths, and used a variety of scales to explore and even collapse the distances between the multiple and the singular. This is portrayed in the hugely magnified, gilded grain of soil examined under a microscope, compared to the hand-held lump, the swaying bean

tops made like with the braille-like treetops indexing the parameters of the field. The tones of the metal detectors mark a deep attention to unknown materials, histories ancient and modern.

Could there be a helmet, a javelin in this terrain, or is the human touch more visible through the serried ranks of crops?

Conversations with Mary extended these ideas of unknowns and illuminated the multiple unknowns in each stage of the cheese-making process, from the soil to the grass, to the rumen to the skins of the cheese. These invisible universes and unknowability in general became central to the project *Marginalia* that reflected my engagement with 'Ingenious Soils' but also to my artistic research and the broader outcomes, with regard to possible ways forward.

Though our collaboration we interrogated our cartographic, temporal, and holistic views of the environment. Through investigation into the affective components of place and the incursion of human objects into wild environments, we aimed to conceptualise ideas of 'real-world' versus 'represented' objects, the materiality of landscapes, land management, and temporal/spatial histories. The performance lecture *Marginalia* explores the interlinked spatial topographies of land and time. Through these explorations, distances of experience are tested, matter activated and revealed as agentic in the process of meaning making – materials, sites, human and more-than-human histories are all given voice.

Performance/Lecture transcript

What is your experience of landscape?

Do you recognise it from books you have read?
Do you appraise it with a farmer's eye?
Do you feel it with your hand?

These provocations form the premise of a three-way collaboration with Dr Katharine Earnshaw and Mary Quicke. Katharine is a classicist with a keen interest in material ecocriticism and cognition, whose expertise centres upon Latin and Greek Hexameter poetry. Mary is the fourteenth generation of the Quicke family to farm the land at Newton St Cyre's, producing prizewinning cheese. Katharine drew us together to explore our differing relationships with land, how each of us approached it in a different way.

This project brings an awareness to the gaze, to the view, to scenery – to a god's-eye view, or to the poet's eye. Perhaps Mary and Katharine, inhabit these gazes; the God's and the Poet's? Employing an ecocritical methodology, as well as practical knowledge, and an exploratory curiosity engenders the need to think on several scales at once, ranging from the global to the molecular, from the sky to the ground, from the God's or Poet's eye view, to the ant; the soldier of the ground.

These distances: of time, of experience, of culture are explored here, in the field and the forest. They are read on both a metaphorical and literal plane; territories within which to unpack multiple scales, temporalities, histories and voices.

The ground is carpeted in the furry caterpillar-catkins of chestnut trees, planted to provide fenceposts, their serrated nettle-leaves translucent.

Mary intimately knows this land, each stile and hedgerow, the dates of trees planted, the best slopes for different crops. She reads its curves from a map like braille.

The Quicke woods are populated by stands of foxy Giant Redwoods, huge already in a lifetime, creating still cloisters of snapping twigs and feathered needles that insinuate their way into every sock.

To Mary's family's land, an audience (of classicists) are invited to listen, to learn, to taste, to tread. Our shared journey begins in woodland, planted by Mary's father and grandfather.

Robert Pogue Harrison describes how Enlightenment practices which reduce forests to a material resource project a shadow conception of the forest as 'embodiment of anti-modern values'.

In this shadow ideas of the forest emerge as a space of the non-rational and sanctuary or, conversely, of the humanist's terror of a world that transcends human grounding.

'A culture is no better than its woods,' wrote WH Auden, and Michael Symmons Roberts and Paul Farley state in their book, Edgelands, that "perhaps every culture gets the woods it deserves."

All the myths and mysteries of forests linger in our peripheries, and as we walk it seems we time-travel through the lifelines of these trees, accompanied by war-stories of wild-boar on the rampage, squirrels decimating saplings, dying badgers dragging their TB-wracked bodies through cow pastures. This world, despite the human hand evidenced in the straight rows of trees, does seem to transcend our human grounding; we are hushed, observant, on the back foot.

Anna Tsing talks about the shared temporality of humans and the first pines grown in Finland 15,000 years ago: "From a human point of view, that was a long time ago, hardly worth remembering. Thinking in terms of forests, however, the timeline from the end of the Ice Age is still short."

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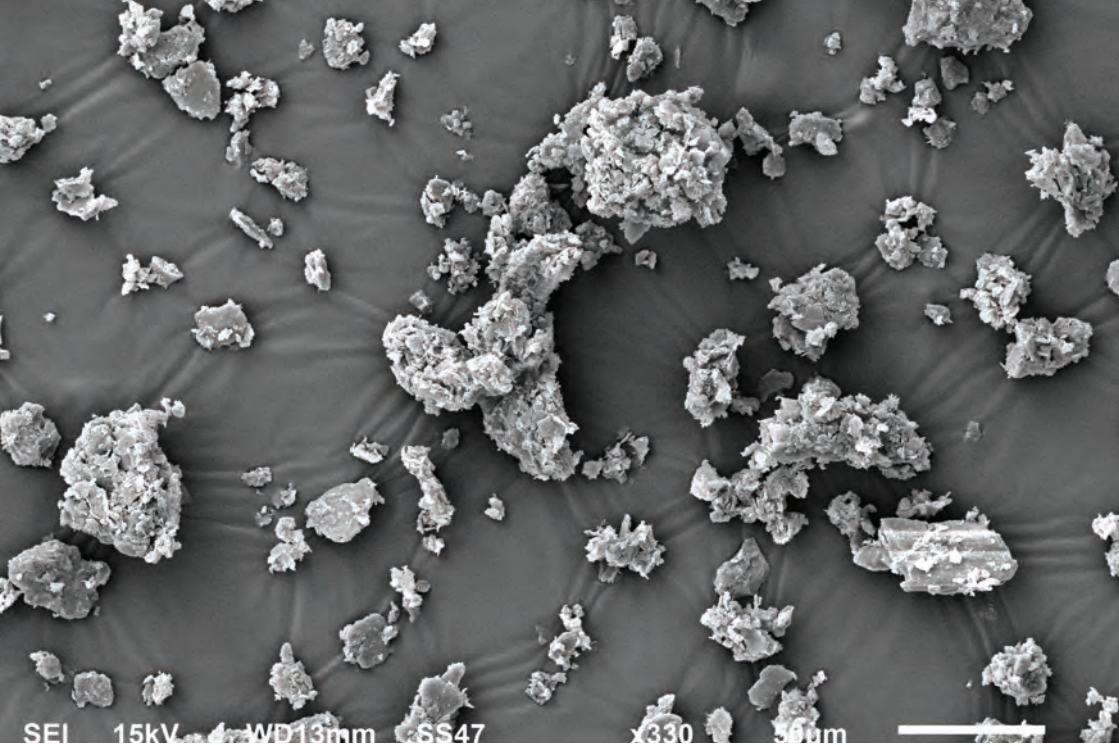
This Benjamin-esque 'telescoping' of the past into the present, reiterates an ambivalence or indifference to perceived human impact or the topographies of time.

Virgil states:
"what joy to set my sights
On fields no mattock ever scratched, that owe no debt to human effort"

Roberts and Farley remind us that;
"An unseen, untouched English landscape is a myth. We know that a long and complex interaction between constant natural processes and more recent human activity has largely formed all the landscapes we can see today, and that landscape is indivisible from the human world… The idea of the locus amoenus – the place of clement and balanced climate favoured by the gods themselves – has haunted the way English landscape has been viewed".

Despite knowing this, despite knowing the history of the planting of these trees by Mary's forebears it still feels, as we pass from the shaded woods into the margins of the fields, that we have moved from the Arcadian or pastoral ecology espoused in the 18th century by Gilbert White to the more imperial ecology of Carolus Linnaeus.

White, and others, were heavily influenced in their Pastoral or Arcadian ecology by their readings of Virgil's *Georgics* and later *Eclogues.* But the *Georgics* is neither a whimsical reflection on the pastoral versus wilderness, nor is it merely an agricultural almanac. It offers all this as well as being a philosophical treatise, giving varied advice upon what constitutes the 'ideal roman'; the 'soldierfarmer' (words conjoined in tribute to Donna Haraway's 'natureculture').

It recommends when to sow seeds, when to fatten lambs, how to deal with snakes "the scourge of cattle" and how to prune saplings (pinching the buds out with your fingertips). Poets such as Virgil would have been treated, in their time, as deities and as such, the impact and import of the books constituting the *Georgics* would have been huge.

Initial reading of the *Georgics* gives strong ideas of what the field would appear to represent: culturing, surface, depth, soil as multiple and singular. The inverse, the margins; diversity; worthlessness in economical or agricultural terms; possibility; temporal difference. Roberts and Farley describe the edgelands as complicated, unexamined places that thrive on disregard, and state that historians now believe that the Romans favoured such 'edgelands' as their place of execution.

The figure of the soldierfarmer relates to ideas of Jussi Parikka and Rob Nixon, who write about the idea of culturing the soil, inflicting a 'slow violence' upon the environment, or describe the power structures inherent in the idea of '*terra nullius*'. David.W.Orr

describes an Iowa cornfield as a "complicated human contrivance" resulting from multiple technologies. These offer an assumption of the martial aspects of agriculture, of farming being yet another iteration of the Anthropocene.

The term anthropocene, generated by Crutzen and Stoermer in 2003, describes the geological epoch which we now inhabit, a geological era where the biggest impact upon the environment and indeed, the surface of the earth is man-made.

Jacob Lund outlines an important temporal aspect to the Anthropocene describing how "human history and geological time become connected and coincide for the first time in history." We are now living in an age when the earth has a layer of carbon laid down since the industrial revolution, and inhabit a surface inscribed by radiated materials since the advent of nuclear power. One could, however, date the Anthropocene to the first agriculture, the surface of the earth indexically marked by mankind's scrapings. This ranging through timelines of the Anthropocene is echoed in the temporal ebbs and flows within the *Georgics,* the unfixed topographies of time.

In this scratching, this battle with the earth to eke out an existence, Virgil's soldierfarmer of the *Georgics* is exhorted not to fight against the soil, but instead he is encouraged to make attempts to listen to its rhythms, to be attendant to its nuanced needs and whims.

A section of the text describes a soldierfarmer of the future, ploughing a field richly fertilised by the blood of the fallen upon what was a significant battlefield of the Roman Civil War. He does not recognise the significance of the weaponry; indeed, he has already forgotten the war that is so preoccupying a force for Virgil and his contemporaries.

>...Heaven above did not demur at Macedon and the broad
>Balkan plains being twice glutted with the blood of our
>fellow citizens.
>Yes, and a time will come when in those lands the farmer,
>as he cleaves the soil with his curved plough, will find
>javelins corroded with rusty mould, or with his heavy hoe will
>strike empty helmets and marvel at gigantic bones in the
>upturned graves...

The field fertilised with blood; ideas of 'Blood and Soil'; localism
and nationalism; *Blut und Boden;* this interconnectedness of blood
and soil seems apt considering the cyclical disintegration and co-
integration of humus, bodies and leaves into soil.

With this in mind, the field, its soil and its margins become symbolic of:

> the local and indigenous
> dislocation, migrations, disruption
> dominant groups and the marginalised
> the slave dynamic of the Greeks and Romans

Timothy Clarke states that "Colonialism was, and neo-colonialism is,
primarily a matter of the 'conquest of nature', the appropriation of
local resources." He makes the link that "There is a close connection
between destructive monocultures in food production, exploitative
systems of international trade and exchange and the institution of
the modern state."

This asymmetry of experiences is central to an exploration of the
Anthropocene. Just as the farmer marvels so we can at how the
Georgics seem so timely, contemporary even, in its exploration of
nationalism, civil war, migration, biodiversity, monoculturalism and
non-human agency. Virgil has been described as the "poet laureate"
of the Anthropocene for his prescient anticipation of contemporary

anxieties and reflections upon global issues impacting upon the environment, its use, its people.

Just as the farmer was dumbfounded when faced with his recent unknown history, it is a hard truth to face up to, that with the very naming of the Anthropocene, we perform an act of othering, of drawing a line between those lives that count and those which appear not to.

It is a requisite that we recognise that the Anthropocene has not parachuted in as a new 'terror' to wage war against, but that the foundations of the Anthropocene were laid long ago through imperialism, colonialism, racialized environmental politics and the Western conception of nature and people as constant capital (as Francoise Vergès reminds us).

The farmer cleaving the soil reveals vast temporalities contained within; the soil's materiality and agency in the making of meaning. The classicists scan with metal-detectors, listening to its constituent parts. A visceral consideration of what belongs, what is of the soil and what is other. The 'classicistdetectorists' are unable to dig; only to listen to possibility and mystery. The field's speculative material culture supplants the reality of bottle tops and coins.

Mary's role of custodian and guardian of the land is clearly not martial; her acute knowledge of the soils and its microflora and fauna echoes Virgil's writing on identifying the ideal soil types for different crops; by mixing with water, observing the colour, packing down with the hands or tasting the grains. This very physical engagement with the materiality of the location is echoed in Mary's descriptions of particular fields – of cob settlements reclaimed into the ground, mineworkings abandoned, particular etymologies linked to their usage and histories.

Walking, looking and listening doesn't seem enough; a more bodily activation of the poet's advice is required. Imagine tasting this soil, exposed to the scorch and dew. Dense or dry, crumbing your scored fingertips or smearing dark, then drying to dust.

Soil is single and multiple grain, clump, field, ground-up, ground, earth, the earth. A compound of animal, vegetable and mineral; a cyborg cipher of technology; human and non-human; Agentic and alive but made through death and decomposition.

> The fatter earth by handling we may find,
> With ease distinguished from the meagre kind:
> Poor soil will crumble into dust; the rich
> Will to the fingers cleave like clammy pitch.

As with the paratext to Virgil's *Georgics,* the field is held by its margins. This margin, a cusp between labour and entropy, is tightly wrought. A presumption pertains that if the farmed field represents a monoculture, then the margins represent *terra nullius or incognita:* exoticized 'others', species or wastes. The temporal complexities between the field and the margin are like the poem; shifting and dense.

This periphery/edge/hedge, may have lain fallow, may contain a wider range and longer age of plants, trees and animal homes. the field lies like a plump, made bed, the smooth covers restraining and containing the aforementioned soil, 'cultured' by many hands, by much time. This smooth cover could be seen to represent the economically viable monoculture that the field offers, a crop to be harvested, a resultant surface of prior engagement.

This expectation; that the field is a repository of slow violence, an archive of the indexical marking of the martial remnants of agriculture, toxicity and technology; is challenged here, for what is uncovered on Quicke's farm is deep attention, deep listening and deep noticing of the land and its human and nonhuman agents, through the seasons, through its practical applications and historic permutations.

This blanket of field beans, so tightly sewn, woven into the studded, knotted ruby soil, then tucked neatly around the plump mound of field, offers, unexpectedly, no monoculture, but a historical sedimentation of human and non-human affect upon the field, almost alluvial, whereby the larger chunks sink to be covered by a silting of temporal stratification. The monoculture of modern agricultural techniques is defied by the dense and rich historical record of the human and non-human intervention into the very soil. The affective impact of this distance between the field and its marginal periphery less obvious now, instead more complex.
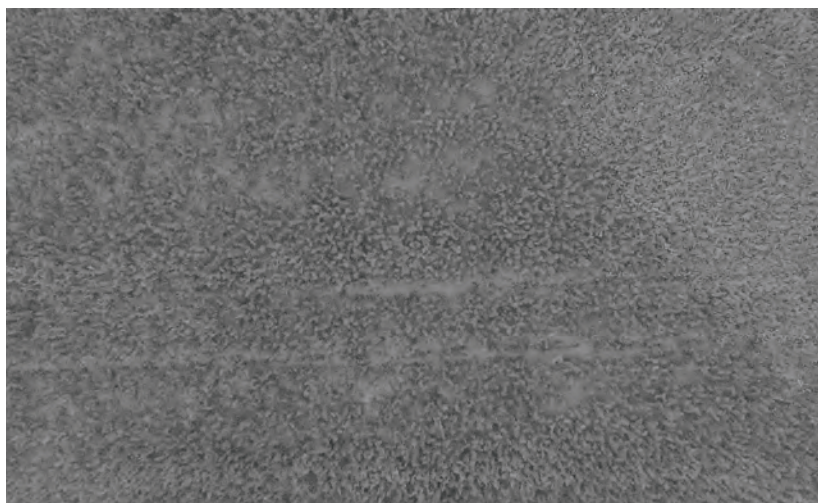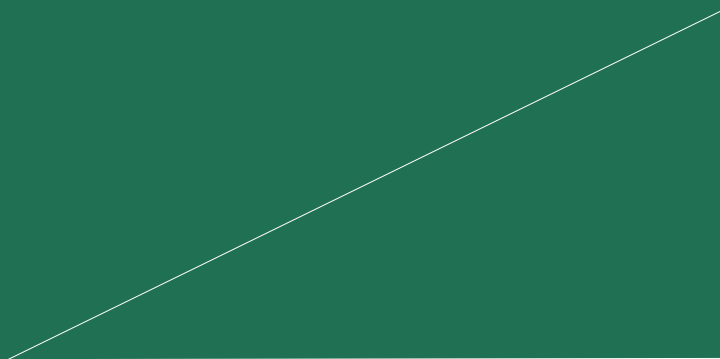
RUIN

RUIN

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear --
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away

Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ozymandias*[1]

This chapter moves from an examination of land and its usage throughout the chronological continuum of the Anthropocene, into an exploration of the idea of the ruin as a symbol of its shifting spatio-temporality. The intention is to foreground the layered and complex nature of the ruin as delimited archive of history and as an active agent of futurity. As Jussi Parikka puts it: "Times are entangled and switch places; markers of fossilised pasts appear as imagined indexes of futures too."[2] Are ruins the fossils of our recent human past, and if so, do we need to develop a geological methodology that does not merely 'archaeologise' these remnants, so that they do not appear merely as Walter Benjamin's 'last dinosaur of Europe,'[3] but view them as agential entities and 'sites of practices of experimentation with "a material reflection of temporality?"[4]

Equally, this chapter does not presume an architectural profile for the ruins. It explores various sites of ruination – the state, the body, the community, the eco-sphere – but also offers the ruins as a space of the future. We often think of ruins as being about death, but they more often pave the way. Rebecca Solnit states how

> [r]uins stand as reminders. Memory is always incomplete, always imperfect, always falling into ruin; but the ruins themselves, like other traces, are treasures: our links to what came before, our guide to situating ourselves in a landscape of time. To erase the ruins is to erase the visible public triggers of memory; a city without ruins and traces of age is like a mind without memories.[5]

The familiar ruins often depicted in classical landscape paintings, prints include Roman columns, Egyptian pyramids, and Grecian temples. These ciphers of human endeavour, of past grandeurs and powerful civilisations contain in their very heft the multiple layers of history, multiple temporalities; their hewn status representing a

scarcely imaginable past. The popularity of ruins during 17th and 18th Century Grand Tours accelerated apace hand in hand with the growth of capitalism. Emboldened by the writings of Thomas Coryat on his travels,[6] aristocratic young men began the trend of lengthy sojourns around Europe, marvelling at the remains of the Roman Forum, the wonders of Renaissance Venice, the temples and churches inscribed by the genius of Palladio and Bernini.

These architectural wonders, accompanied by sublime Lorraine-esque vistas and tumbling cataracts, informed the fashionable reproduction of ruins known as 'follies' in grand British estates which began in the seventeenth century. These anachronistic, out-of-time structures inhabiting pastoral scenes, totally at odds with their origins, connoted the quest of the souvenir-hunter obeying the urge to recreate or channel an exotic otherness from the keepsakes of his travels. The nostalgia or melancholy present in these follies is described by Thomas Whately in his 1770 *Observations on Modern Gardening*: "[a]t the sight of a ruin, reflections on the change, the decay and the desolation before us, naturally occur; and they introduce a long succession of others, all tinctured with that melancholy which these have inspired."[7] Emily Brady and Arto Haapala state that "the memories that evoke melancholy are, like other memories, vividly real, faint and sketchy or somewhere in between."[8] This sketchiness or vitality was subsequently then translated into the garden designs and follies of the 17th and 18th centuries.

The hubris conjured by the tourists' recreation of these scenes in a form of scenery speaks to a hagiography of past empires, and a quest for a reflected legitimisation of the grandeur of the imperial power complexes engineered during the industrial and agricultural revolutions. The owners of these estates sought to embed their new mansions and parks within a greater historical continuum, perhaps comparing their efforts to the might of Roman or Grecian empires,

aping architectural vernaculars lifted from the sketchbooks of Michelangelo, Piranesi and da Vinci.

The metaphorical potency of ruins has shifted dramatically over different periods, and like the ruins themselves, cannot be fixed, or pinned to a specific time and place. What they might be held to mean or represent is naturally attributable to the perspective of the onlooker and their situated knowledge (as with the gaze upon landscape explored in the previous chapter). It can, however, be instructive to analyse the symbolism of ruins over the continuum of history. As Giorgio Agamben states, "[h]istorians of literature and of art know that there is a secret affinity between the archaic and the modern, not so much because the archaic forms seem to exercise a particular charm on the present, but rather because the key to the modern is hidden in the immemorial and the prehistoric."[9] An enduring quality of the ruin of antiquity is that it symbolises power, and its fickle, quicksilver nature. The conquering Romans, while enslaving and sublimating the Greek people, simultaneously valorised and assimilated the architecture, philosophy, linguistic culture, and ruling systems of these city-states. The Romans' admiration of the Greeks was not their sole mode of imperial expression. Their conquest was also demonstrated in more obviously dominant assemblages, as Odai Johnson states:

> When Herod first built a theatre in Roman Judea, he chose for his site the demolished Synagogue. That overmapping likely had profound consequences in shaping cultural attitudes of race, conquest and assimilation. Were such practices deployed elsewhere, among other dispossessed populations? I think it quite likely that such practices were as routine as Roman template architecture.[10]

Look

The palimpsest of religions, ideologies and aesthetics as witnessed in ancient Rome can be in turn identified the world over; one example might be Mexico City's *Catedral Metropolitana de la Asunción de la Santísima Virgen María a los Cielos*. This symbol of Spanish power reaching across the Atlantic is positioned upon the site of the Templo Mayor of the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan, destroyed in 1521, and its stones used in the construction of a church by the conquistador Hernán Cortés to consolidate power in the region. This church was in turn superseded by a cathedral completed in 1873. The incorporation of the ruined stones from the temple, which was dedicated to Huitzilopchtli the god of war, confers a violent suppression of the conquered, whilst at the same time maintaining their power and aura. The almost superstitious use of these ruins and their fragmentary incorporation into the symbol of the oppressor creates a slippage of meaning, a question hovering over the locus of power. The auratic charge of these monuments chimes with the hauntology that Avery Gordon speaks of: "it is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely."[11] These stones haunt the presence of their successors, suppressors, and "leak into the present as affective disturbance."[12] This leakage also summons Robert Macfarlane's description of landscapes as 'occulting', from the nautical term denoting intermittent illumination and darkness; he describes the landscape of the Karst plateau in Slovenia as "defined by the complex interplay of light and dark, of past pain and present beauty,"[13] an optical and affective conjuring of the Sublime within place.

Our contemporary quasi-archaeological gaze can identify,[14] in this one site, the remains of empires from three marked periods within Mexican history, nestled like a set of Russian dolls, the very stones still containing the auratic power conferred by their usage. This

knowledge of the ineffable transit of temporality, and of previously lived trajectories impinges upon the present of the viewer, and casts them into a certain quality of chronologically unbounded imagination, to refer to Judith Butler, "it continues as an animating absence in the presence."[15] In this case, it is the fragmentary nature of the ruin as a "scarred text…bearing lacunae" that allows for this rumination of the mind.[16] This incompleteness and glimpse into realms of the unknown will come to be an important epistemological strand as this commentary unfolds. To be presented with an unbroken perfect façade performs an act of erasure, allowing scant handholds into the narrative. This could simplistically be embodied by the reconstruction of a site such as the Dresden *Frauenkirche*, recreated as it was before the Allied bombings of the second world war; or the razing of similar sites to afford new urban growth. Where 'spectral' traces of ruination remain,[17] an access point into prior histories is engendered. For Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in his treatise *Laocoön*,[18] a discourse upon the limitations of poetry and art, framed around the sculpture of Laocoön, the fragments come to represent all that is missing, with an abundance of visual data curtailing the agency of the viewer:

> The more we see, the more we must be able to imagine. And the more we add in our imagination, the more we must think we see…to present the utmost to the eye is to bind the wings of fancy and compel it, since we cannot soar above the impression made on the senses, to concern itself with weaker images, shunning the visible fullness already represented as a limit beyond which it cannot go.[19]

The sensory implications of the gaze (as outlined in the previous chapter), when focused upon ruins, becomes analogous to experiences of the Sublime, and Brian Dillon in his essay "Fragments from a History of Ruin" asserts that: "the ruin is made meaningful by the interposition between object and viewer, of a frail human

figure."[20] Macfarlane too conjures up the "imaginary figure…
the contemporary version of the 'last man' presence that haunted
nineteenth-century extinction narratives, or of Thomas Macaulay's
'New Zealander,' sitting by the banks of the Thames in a London
that has been overwhelmed by nature, ruminating on ruination."[21]
The sublimation of previous empires as metaphor becomes
comparable to the viewer's own frailty. This recognition of mortality
or feelings of inherent vulnerability open up the imaginative space
for the viewer to consider that they too could become subject to the
vagaries of time; that they too could fall victim to natural disaster,
war or entropy. If they position themselves as that "frail human
figure," an onlooker or witness to the ruins of civilisations, the viewer
can (at a remove) creatively explore their own ultimate demise, and
perhaps divine the fissures which will lead to its collapse. At this
melancholic point of introspection and anxiety, it is necessary to
point out once again the relative safety of that sublime perspective,
and to ask whether the viewer imagines themselves as the viewer of
the destruction and ruination laid out before them, or as the figure
within the ruins. This positional dichotomy remains at the heart of
any enquiry into the Sublime.

Dillon invokes *Les Ruines, ou Méditation sur les Révolutions des
Empires*, by the Comte de Volney, published in Paris in 1792 and
describes a section where

> The author recounts his travels among the ruins of Egypt
> and Syria, before his eye ostensibly settles on a view of
> the Valley of the Sepulchres at Palmyra, where Volney had
> never been (all that follows is imagined on the basis of
> illustrations by the English archaeologist Robert Wood).
> Overcome by a "religious pensiveness," he imagines the
> dead streets full of people, falls into a reverie on the cities
> of Babylon, Persepolis, and Jerusalem, and concludes, as
> he contemplates silted ports, fallen temples, and ransacked

palaces, that the earth itself has become "a place of sepulchres." Tears fill his eyes as he imagines contemporary France reduced to the same desuetude. A spectral figure now appears before him—the "genius of tombs and ruins"—and spirits him high into the air, from which lofty vantage he sees the globe spotted with deserts, fires, and "fugitive and desolate" peoples. It is a law of nature, Volney surmises, that all things must fall into ruin. But the apparition corrects him: the hideous earthly vision, above which he floats at a sublime distance, is not natural at all. It is, precisely, human history.[22]

One could argue that Volney's elevated god's-eye view precludes him from a truly empathic experience of the devastation, and this distance is confirmed not only by airborne height but more literally, through the absence of an actual physical encounter with this scene. This echoes the theatrical conceit of perceiving the whole simultaneously, as one never does in real life.[23] Despite his lachrymose state, summoned as it were by an almost Dickensian 'ghost of Christmas future,' this emotional torment has been afforded by engravings of a scene, by an artist's attempt to represent the unrepresentable – the Sublime – in pictorial form. The connecting of art to the Sublime, "reintroduces into the field of art a concept that Kant had located beyond it. It did this in order to more effectively make art a witness to an encounter with the unpresentable that cripples all thought."[24] The landscape and architectural paraphernalia called forth in Volney's reverie remind me strongly of the hubris associated with the imagined hero of Shelley's poem, *Ozymandias* (which opens the chapter), who urges us to "Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"[25] Much as Virgil's soldier-farmer of the future does not recognise the relics of the recent civil war (as outlined in one of the artistic projects, *Marginalia*), "the arches and the emperor's statue remind us that the survivors lived for generations among the trophies of their own

defeat, gradually assimilating,"[26] perhaps forgetting this violence, perhaps unaware of the capricious nature of time and loss, tricking us with the vagaries of pasts distant and recent.[27] In this same way the trappings of imperial glory enshrined within the stones forming the sculpture of Ozymandias have fallen and lie forgotten, inchoate as the Statue of Liberty at the end of *Planet of the Apes*,[28] with Charlton Heston's crash-landed astronaut perhaps an amanuensis for Ozymandias with his cry of "Maniacs! You finally blew it all up… God damn you all to hell!"

Volney in this scene, however, as previously asserted, is not personally imperilled by the vicissitudes of nature, nor has he been enslaved during war or had his home sacked by looters. He operates securely from a Sublime perspective cossetted by comfortable distance, an aerial feeling many of us will have dreamt of experiencing:

> Even the mundane act of searching for a route online allows us to fly in our minds wherever we wish, looking down as if from a god-like perspective that we can manipulate at will. 'The map's dissimulating brilliance,' writes the historian Jerry Brotton, 'is to make the viewer believe, just for a moment, that they are not still tethered to the earth, looking at a map.'[29]

Volney can even enjoy the spectacle to an extent, through an external mastery engendered by the lofty vantage point, and indeed he identifies the frisson key to this form of phenomenon: "[w]hile your aspect averts, with secret terror, the vulgar regard, it excites in my heart the charm of delicious sentiments — sublime contemplations."[30] The sickly schadenfreude of this sentiment is attenuated somewhat by his comparisons of the desecrated scene in Palmyra with the prospect of a France in ruins, perhaps not too great a speculative leap as the publication of his *Méditation*

coincides with the final convulsions of a nobility made precarious during the French Revolution. When France is declared a republic in 1792, Volney himself narrowly avoids the guillotine. With the reader's knowledge of this dramatically personal imperilment, the perceptual distance between Volney and the ruins suddenly dissolves, plummeting him as protagonist into the centre of such a scene. The distance proffered by photos, crudities, memoirs, engravings is ruptured. The 'genius of tombs,' gifted with hindsight that renders Volney's entanglement mockingly obvious, reminds him that this is not natural, it is human history, making a distinction between humans and nature that will be unpicked further in this and the next chapter.

As previously outlined by Anna Tsing, this time we inhabit is a state of ruins;[31] specifically, that the world is suffering the effects of a capitalist system that has commodified both lands and people, and consumed them at an unsustainable rate. Nature, including human and more-than-human entities, is finding a mode of survival, a way of navigating the ruins. The precarity of this condition, however, is often not recognised as a viable and indeed useful methodology for living. In the Western tradition, we are culturally conditioned to view the ruins of society as a *memento mori*, a reminder of an inevitable demise. Cultural explorations of this imagined state have abounded in art and literature, such as Hubert Robert's *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins*.[32] It seems we speculatively imagine our great civilisations in ruins as a methodology for navigating and exploring a collective sense of mortality or of ephemerality, and for testing our vulnerability. This historic trend is updated in the valorisation of 'ruin-porn' in the art world with projects such as Ryan Mendoza's 2016 *(White House)*; an extraction and reconstruction of an empty Detroit home in the Rotterdam Art Fair which ultimately became a permanent exhibition in the Verbeke Foundation in Belgium. Brian Doucet and Drew Philp appropriately analyse the impact of such pieces in stating that:

Ruin porn…only serve(s) to obscure the humanity and the complexity behind the city's long struggle and reduce Detroit to its ruins. We believe that Detroit's experiences with capitalism, racism and political fragmentation make it an important place to study and understand. Art can play a role in this. But the challenge for those who have an interest in Detroit is to turn curiosity into something which contributes to both the people of the city and a sophisticated understanding of its history and challenges.[33]

Once again, the culturally hegemonic 'we,' operating from an elevated perspective of comfort and privilege, can perform the act of othering,[34] through a simplistic representation of ruins that is severed from any form of collective societal responsibility. This privileged othering lurches towards the commodification of oddities (referred to in the following chapter with the case of the Caliban character), and the nostalgia and curiosity that the uncanny sometimes performs. This commentary insists that rather than a *memento mori*, a more useful tool for life in the Sublime Anthropocene might require a sustainable cycle of ruination, degrowth, naturalisation and regrowth.

The unbearable poignancy of Volney's imagined survey of Palmyra, when today Palmyra once again lies in ruins as a result of globally supported capitalist warfare, outlines the fact that we are far from a point of recognising the need for a shared precarity, as Tsing exhorts us. Instead we are blindly stumbling through these ruins taking snapshots, admiring the texture, the patina of these sites. Patrick Wright describes poignantly the view that "heritage is the backward glance taken from the edge of a vividly imagined abyss."[35] The backwards glance from the abyss must be revolved to take in not merely the 'heritage' of the past, but an immersed 360° vision of the here and now, the 'live' ruins all around us, continually unfolding

and evolving. The conceptual difficulty in getting any purchase on the enormity of this potential definition can, however, lead to somewhat simplistic symbols of a contemporary Sublime within the Anthropocene. It is easy to identify uncompromising symbols of our societal and ecological imperilment that embody the Sublime Anthropocene: these contemporary emblems might now be vast data-servers, polluted rivers, or the detritus of human life casually obliterated by Hurricane Dorian. These hard-to-comprehend, hyperobjective symbols serve to reinforce a perceptual separation and rarely puncture the distanced gaze of the individual. They remain ineffable and overwhelming (key features of the traditional Sublime) and synonymous with the hyperobjective impossibility of representing the Anthropocene. The terms both connote a certain privileged, dominant, (western)-human-centred narrative. John Wylie describes it within:

> ...the figure who gazes upon landscape is an aloof, distanced figure, detached from the life of the land. The explorer scoping out the distances to be mapped. The landowner contemplating their property from a detached vantage-point. Here, the distances of landscape involve an ethically-problematic detachment and indifference – a distance which enables command and control, which facilitates an uncaring and remote perspective. In this reading, landscape is a technique for setting the world at a distance from us, but only so that we can deny our involvement, our belonging. Or, rather, so that we can on the one hand claim that we do not belong to the world, while on the other acting as if it belongs to us, as our property.[36]

In this reading, the Sublime indicates a quasi-colonial landscape,[37] one redolent of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* or a racialized landscape to be subjugated.[38] This conquering urge or display of might

and dominion is a problematic running through any discussion of landscape, from sculptural ideas of 'landskip' or 'landschaft,' to contestations around the use of terms such as 'nature' and 'wilderness.' The distortions of colonialism, of imperialism, of land rights or the invasion strategy *terra nullius* all colour our understanding of this terrain.[39] It seems to me that concepts of the Sublime and the Anthropocene echo these problematics. From the subjective viewer of the Sublime to the human-focus implicit to anthropo*centrism*, the concepts both seem to revolve panoptically around a central protagonist or homogenised versions of the human species. The maintenance of perceptual distance of the central viewer from the heart of the danger and the apparent ease of identification averts any real engagement with the problematics of living in the Anthropocene, of the quotidian Sublime that actually engulfs and apparently remains invisible to us. It reinforces Francoise Vergès' concern that to use the term Anthropocene is "easy, because it does not challenge the naturalized inequalities, alienation, and violence inscribed in modernity's strategic relations of power and production. It is an easy story to tell because it does not ask us to think about these relations at all."[40] This story does not challenge the alienation imposed through what Avery Gordon describes as 'Social Death',[41] or the conditions suffered by 'Proximate Populations,'[42] nor does a large proportion of the research into the Anthropocene seem to critique "structures of global capitalism, colonialism and coercive state power."[43]

Space

Ideas from the Enlightenment about the characteristics of land as resource or domain tend to delineate space as static, and these limited observations are maintained by a distanced, Sublime gaze. This imagined stasis is at odds with the entangled and agentic assemblage, which the ruin represents. The distanced separation of humans from each other and from nature, seems at times a key tenet of traditional understandings of the Sublime, as espoused by

Kant and Burke. The observational distance required for a removed and safe appreciation of the Sublime either tacitly endorses our species as other, rational, superior, or positions us as engulfed by physically precarious experiences when the Sublime make its subject sublimated, in thrall, overpowered. If we hold this to be the case, we must accept that ruins undermine this concept radically, as they often occupy a territory between human agency and natural decay, traversing this liminality with ease. The German term *'ruinenlust'* emerged in the 18th century, a term to describe the frenzy of landscape arrangements combined with the avid collection of statuary following on from the aforementioned Grand Tours. De Silvey states that "this Romanticism foregrounded the symbolic aspects of the ruins, and materialised emerging ideas about the harmonic balance of nature and culture."[44] The valorising of decay within the romantic gaze tolerates 'nature' only in its most picturesque form, bearing its 'liveliness' only so far.[45] When formerly human landscape assemblages rewild, challenging distinctions surface between nature and culture, and new forms of reading the landscape take prominence, with the power balance often tipping in favour of nature. Geographer Caitlin DeSilvey quotes Qvistrom (2007), arguing that dereliction is an essentially transgressive state: "Every place has a past and a former order, and if abandoned it will quickly disintegrate into ruins or become ruderal… two closely related terms describing the transgression of the divide between nature and culture."[46]

Sublime ruins are not only easily identified burnt forests and melting mountaintops, but cities, streets, communities. If we inhabit the capitalist ruins as Tsing reminds us, is everything and everywhere in a more-than-human, hyperobjective understanding of the world ruined? Peeling back this invisibility cloak and recognising this all-encompassing proximity leads to what Jacob Lund wryly describes,[47] as the difficulty for Western subjects in the Anthropocene to enjoy the Sublime. We can't now marvel at the alpine glacier without

witnessing its retreat; it's hard to wonder at a Dubai skyscraper without acknowledging the material and human cost. Humans are geological forces, entangled in a rendering of nature that we used to see as separate and remote: "To feel the Sublime, you needed to remain 'distant' from what remained a spectacle; infinitely 'inferior' in physical forces to what you were witnessing."[48]

The fallacy of the view that humans and nature are separate is predicated on the necessity that humans are in fact nature, natural and but one element of a universal whole. Inhabiting the ruins that Tsing speaks of describes a wholly entangled process of growing and receding forces, with both humans and non-humans as actants within an unfolding Anthropocene. DeSilvey argues that "ruination presents the possibility of renegotiating the porous border between social and ecological ontological orderings, and 'interrogates dichotomies between . . . human and non-human, self and other."[49] Traditionally sublime purviews show ruins as valiantly static reminders of human action and history, despite the ravages of time and nature. However, this ignores their ongoing agency, and their status as multi-layered signifiers of the contemporary temporality we find ourselves in, the Anthropocene.[50] Rather than only providing an ending or signalling 'end-times,'[51] ruins often offer a powerful, imaginative, creative space or opportunity for unexpected and original growth and cultural production.[52] Much as Tsing describes the ability of the Matsutake mushroom to capitalise on the apparent wasteland of industrial deforestation, ruins can provide a spatial, communal, visual, virtual or actual resistance that emerges from the smouldering wreckage of modernity and post-modernity. If we recognise that ruins have agency, that through their very irreducibility and incommensurability they can catalyse and be activated by both humans and more-than-humans, perhaps communally we and they formulate a multi-agential, networked resistance to a linear model of progress? In theatrical terms, "just as every 'stage figure' is continuously woven from diverse processes

both human and non-human, so also every 'acting score' consists in a simultaneity of trajectories often beyond explicit control."[53]

The term 'theatre of ruins' is one way to connote an environment where lives unfold and are performed in a Sublime Anthropocene.[54] It emerges from the playwright Samuel Beckett's *The Capital of the Ruins,* a reportage written for broadcast in 1946 in post-war France.[55] This term is used as a catalyst for enquiry and offers a lens through which one can view contemporary issues of 'living in the ruins,' taking Beckett's own conflicted insider/outsider status as a frame of reference to position an outsider-colonial perspective alongside an often overlooked or dominated insider's viewpoint of the ruins. The necessity of elevating this insider narrative illuminates the duality of these simultaneous perspectives and offers a robust counterpoint to a contemporary trend encapsulated in the 'ruin-porn' gaze, a gaze turned upon the ruins of empire, of capitalism, or a church-state structure. If we imagine the Sublime Anthropocene as a 'theatre of ruins,' the ruins themselves inhabit multiple nuanced roles, moving between scenery and backdrop, then finding voice as the main protagonists, providing the conditions in which an audience perceives the conventions of this performance space. Much like the way a 'theatre of war' is analysed in its aftermath, we can contemporaneously consider the protagonists, scenery, background, script and dramaturgy as key elements and actants in the field. Developing a methodology which is inclusive of polyvocal enactments and performative explorations affords a questioning of the continual and cyclical potential of ruins. Action and activism are key elements of this strand; identifying ruins not as mere archives of the past, amber-like vitrines holding vestiges of life as it was, but as catalysts for or results of either sudden or unending change.

Using this analogy of the theatre raises the question of who are the audience and who the actors. If real ruins are unfolding upon this stage, then as an audience member one must begin the process

of acknowledging one's situated gaze, which in turn exposes the ethical anxiety accompanying this form of middle-class voyeurism. It demands reflection on one's own experiences of the ruins, informed where possible by a knowledge of ongoing histories of suppression, and an awareness of the governmental or global strategies of dominance that lead to the mishandling or misrepresentation of the ruins. When attempting to abandon the masterful centrist individualism of the Sublime gaze, one's individual perceptions can instead be forged through an acknowledgment of the vulnerability of the 'performers' and their pain.[56] James Thompson quotes Elaine Scarry's 'The Body in Pain',[57] stating that "if beauty 'fills the mind', pain is experienced spatially as either the contraction of the universe down to the immediate vicinity of the body or as the body swelling to fill the entire universe."[58] The shifting scales of this proximate pain can be acknowledged through a deep personal attention to people and place; through analysis of the granularity and textural materiality of life and lives enacted there.[59] However, any desire to subvert inherited ideas of people and place must cope with the structural and systemic failure in attempting to represent the lives of others,[60] and the concomitant bathos this conjures.[61] it must acknowledge the business of how we see and how we are seen and the duplicity of the image in any attempt at portraying reality. Mbembe describes these structural and affective complexities, and this treachery when he states that:

> in spite of its claim to represent presence, immediacy, and facticity, what is special about an image is its "likeness"— that is, its ability to annex and mime what it represents, while, in the very act of representation, masking the power of its own arbitrariness, its own potential for opacity, simulacrum, and distortion.[62]

Leslie Jamison, in her essay "Pain Tours (I)" summons the queasy exploration of Burke's notion of negative pain within his treatise of the Sublime, that

> a feeling of fear – paired with a sense of safety, and the ability to look away – can produce a feeling of delight. One woman can sit on her couch with a glass of Chardonnay and watch another woman drink away her life. The TV is a portal that brings the horror close, and a screen that keeps it at bay – revising Burke's Sublime into a Sublime voyeurism, no longer awe at the terrors of nature but fascination at the depths of human frailty.[63]

In reporting from the ruins of St Lô, Beckett "reveals what is really at stake: the difficulty of a reciprocal gaze between those who endured war and those who did not."[64] Bénard states that "the fabric of the report exposes its own failure, a failure of representation, thus challenging a mode of spectatorship. In short, it creates a disruption in the sensible."[65] This schism exposed by Rancière in *Politics of Aesthetics*, which Bénard describes as explaining

> …the question of fiction is first a question regarding the distribution of place. From the Platonic point of view, the stage, which is simultaneously the locus of a public activity and the exhibition-space for "fantasies", disturbs the clear partition of identities, activities and spaces.[66]

Teemu Paavolainen quotes Laura Cull when he states that "even where theatrical 'seeing' implies notions of distance, duality, or detachment , it is not from "a realm outside the material world,"[67] but from a gap between action and perception into which one has either stepped oneself or been pushed by some estranging event or material malfunction."[68] Beckett, Rancière and Paavolainen all acknowledge this gap between performance and lived experiences,

revealing simultaneously the 'partition of identities': the inhabited perspective versus the observed condition; and the pitfalls of representation upon any stage, either lived directly or witnessed at a remove. This is especially the case when, to paraphrase Silke Arnold de Simine, the stage-set is constructed from contingent, inhabited ruins which evade categorisation. This gap is entrenched too by the fact that it is potentially "ethically problematic that the ruin conflates the ravages of time, the destructive potential of natural forces and the violence of man, and that it refuses to determine meaning and control representation."[69]

Using the term 'Theatre of Ruins' offers a tool to uncover the absurdity of everyday life in the ruins of the Sublime Anthropocene and to illuminate the near-impossibility of living in these conditions. It invokes both the zoomed-in performativity of a hyperobjective deployment of the Anthropocene and the zoomed-out theatricality of the Sublime.[70] It allows for the discovery of new possibilities of a Sublime gaze upon the Anthropocene by collapsing the binary of the distanced outsider's or dominator's commercialised gaze, together with the precarity of the insider's experience. This is potently accessed in the metaphorical 'Theatre of Ruins' by considering the situated knowledge of both an audience and any performers and the dissolving of boundaries between the two. Thompson describes how "as we experience beauty intensely as both internal affect and property of an external event or object, the boundaries of the body become unclear."[71] Switching between the roles of maker, performer and audience can potentially invert the assumed hierarchies and possibilitate a dissolving of the self through a shared experience of precarity.[72] This shared vulnerability affords space to attempt the putting of oneself in another's shoes, a linguistic possibility Lund describes in Beckett's *Molloy*:

> These deictic markers, these shifters or indicators of
> enunciation - comprising verb tenses, personal pronouns,

temporary forms and spatial terms such as Molloy's 'am', 'I', 'now', 'there' and 'here' - are destined to let the individual speaker appropriate language and take over its entire resources in order to use it for his own behalf, and they can only be fully understood if the reader or listener reconstructs the position of the speaker.[73]

This process of assumed commonality may only be fleeting, and the vulnerability traditionally proffered by the Kantian Sublime experience is often temporary, artificial and mediated (adhering to a conventional theatre setting or a 'carnival of simulacra.')[74] A Burkean or Beckettian experience of the Sublime perhaps invokes a truer vulnerability; in this unsettled state where one is never only a performer or an onlooker, vulnerability can be activated as a tool of commonality; of recognising that the Anthropocene is not 'over-there' but in a rich, Morton-esque in-your-face-ness,[75] a moral apathy to be overcome.

The engulfment of the everyday Anthropocene and its quotidian proximity raises questions of whether the Sublime's distanced gaze upon wilderness or the 'other' has been reiterated at a state-level in the 'municipal indifference' indicated in a contemporary handling of the 'ruins'?[76] Have they been designated at a state-level as 'legitimate wildernesses' – an 'urban jungle'? As Arnold-de Simine describes it

> It is this seemingly ordinariness that makes these (ruins) … so uncomfortable to witness and literally brings it home that state violence and systemic inhumanity, which enable individual cruelty to thrive, are too close for comfort.[77]

Using Robert Smithson's terms,[78] sites which are marked out as ruins allow for their hiving off as ruins of the future; as empty student buildings, as the loci for corporate monopolists. These sites "carry

'the memory traces of an abandoned set of futures' (1996: 72) – in this case the false prosperity promised by global markets based on smoke and mirrors. As 'ruins in reverse', these 'buildings don't fall into ruin after they are built but rather rise into ruin before they are built.'"[79] In the designation of ruins as state-inflicted wildernesses, the requirements of human life are devalued by withholding cultural access, therefore intensifying the individualisation of sub-communities. As with the colonial 'divide-and-rule' strategies described in the previous chapter and still exercised globally, historically, and contemporaneously, this seems a politically structural strategy of keeping people separate'; of making differences obvious and contentious, marking divisions between selves and others, between the curiously uniform 'we' and unquantifiable 'they'. DeSilvey reiterates the case of Detroit, where local residents and social critics have accused these visiting voyeurs of "creating a depopulated 'ruin porn' that privileges the aesthetic charge of ruination thereby ignoring the contextual and economic and social devastation and the roles of finance and government in its creation."[80]

Citizens of these ruins are precluded from the condition that Aristotle lays out that a citizen is someone who "has a part in the act of governing and being governed."[81] DeSilvey goes on to claim that "the ability of the dispossessed to occupy and reclaim abandoned neighbourhoods can only hold out for so long against the powerful forces that work to transform 'urban dilapidation into ultra-chic'." [82, 83] The ultra-chic patination of the past also runs the risk of rendering recent history banal or kitsch: "Ruins show us again—just like the kitsch object—a world in which beauty (or sublimity) is sealed off, its derangement safely framed and endlessly repeatable."[84]

The performers on the stage of the Theatre of Ruins trespass these sealed-off divisions in their lived experience and make home and kin within that complex and intimate space. In the manner of current

geographical border-crossing methodologies;[85] they explore the interrelations between these trajectories and are bound to 'stay with the trouble.'[86] These sets of trajectories which reveal the lived truths of a space in it's becoming can be extrapolated to anywhere in the world, but these specificities are especially relatable to Beckett's descriptions of the Irish condition. They are equally relevant to his non-specificity,[87] as witnessed by Susan Sontag's site-specific production of his play *Waiting for Godot* in the war-torn locations of Sarajevo.[88] In the same vein that Beckett uses fragmentation, lack of completion and indeterminacy as agents of resistance,[89] the specificity of representation can act as a trap. Any attempts to reduce, describe or stage 'representative ruins' without recognising the live-ness of the sites induces once again a slippage into patterns of dominance, reduction and of repeating an extractive gaze, with the danger that a community's suffering is myopically borrowed.[90]

The ethics of representation emerging from 'performing place,'[91] from witnessing or sharing polyvocal inter-community trajectories which expose the geographical and social complexities of sites, must resist the perpetuation of any gaze which complies with existing state or corporation-driven extractive violence. At risk is the exploitation of a vulnerable experimental form of participatory methodology, which DeSilvey states "may be motivated by the pursuit of 'pleasurable melancholy or sublime terror'. This delight is rarely innocent, however, focusing as it usually does upon devastated spaces, lost livelihoods and home."[92] These participatory methodologies, which generate new, hidden, or alternative narratives do not rely on reductive representations and therefore possibilitate new modes of listening, spectating and attention in non-passive audiences. Gordon reiterates that

> haunting is not about invisibility or unknowability per se, it refers us to what's living and breathing in the place hidden from view: people, places, histories, knowledge, memories,

ways of life, ideas. To show what's there in the blind field, to bring it to life on its own terms (and not merely to light) is perhaps the radicalisation of enlightenments with which I've been most engaged....[93]

Radicalising the affective experience of these overlooked ontologies (a key theme of the next chapter) for audiences (and on-lookers) allows them to become part of the materiality and agency of the theatrical space within the Sublime Anthropocene, their affective 'disturbances' enriching and augmenting the mise-en-scène.[94] Perhaps it becomes "important too, to recognise that watching the pain of others compels us to act and binds us to them,"[95] and that it is no mere empty act of pathos.

Time

The historically Sublime gaze of Romanticism occupied positions of variable distances. Kantian experiences of the Sublime keep one safely removed from the abyss,[96] in the same way Lyotard's analysis of the Kantian Sublime, "(re-)interpreted as the scene of a founding distance separating the idea from any sensible presentation,"[97] maintains distance, while a Burkean physical and psychological engulfment is marked by terror.[98] Burke's hyperobjective engulfment, however, denies the perceptual distance within to comprehend the complex realities of our complicity in provoking a Sublime Anthropocene. This immediacy denies us any perceptual distance - our centrism is ruptured by trajectories and histories of others. Lund argues that contemporary awareness of the Anthropocene, and its attendant precarity forces a cancellation of our distance to overwhelming natural forces, where one cannot securely experience a sublime spectacle.

Contemporaneity therefore reactivates ruins in two ways: firstly, as ungraspable entities that exceed any individual subjective experience or perception; "Sacred or secular, every ruin is invested

with singularity by those who love it, gaze at it, loaf and wander within it, demolish it, abuse it, mourn it and make love within it."[99] Secondly, the temporality of ruins rejects any linear progression in place of instantaneity and temporal co-existence. Following Paavolainen, their associated

> textures of performativity and theatricality…[are] woven out of events and objects, time and space, doing and seeing. Depending on approach and distance, up close or zoomed out, both aspects have a degree of reality, but neither provides a transcendent perspective on the whole of reality…the abnormal extremes of our normal vision.[100]

A wholly external gaze that only proffers a flattened version of ruins, is dangerously reductive, and does not recognise that the ruins are live and non-static. Instead they are, in the truest sense of the 'contemporary contemporary',[101] thick unfolding of 'pluritemporalities';[102] continuously unfolding multiple and multiplicitous live trajectories.[103] Using the framework of the 'contemporary contemporary' possibilitates alternative iterations or chronologies of the term 'ruin' in the Sublime Anthropocene. It affords a simultaneous recognition of a constantly becoming state of the past, present, viable and anticipatory ruin; a recognition of and space for the exploration of affective conditions generated by these intertwined temporalities.

While we can unpick or identify the global, colonial or imperial forces implicated in the causation and causality of ruins, this does not then pin them to only that time, event or campaign. As outlined with the example of Mexico's Cathedral, the collaged impact of times, weathers, peoples, and beliefs upon ruins creates an intensive and at times invisible patination of affect and history; an accretion of multiple trajectories. As Thompson states "[a]ffects linger, stretching across time and space, in a way that assertions of ephemerality

seem to miss."[104] What is crucial to recognise at this point, however, is that this encrustation of information is not complete: the ruin continues its own trajectory, whether it is that pivotal natural decline and reclamation into the earth; being polished into subservience by the demands of an urban gentrification project; or placed upon a pedestal and spot-lit in a museum.

These are the accepted forms of appropriations for ruins. We recognise these trajectories or sharing systems already from anthropology, history, capitalist development practices, cultural geography, indigenous knowledge systems, architecture and ecology. What if instead of identifying the ruin as an object archiving historical human interaction, or of being haunted, "by the 'historic alternatives' that could have been,"[105] we activated these knowledge systems to identify Earth as ruin? This trope of 'the ruined Earth' is well-trodden and potentially defeatist, full of the moral apathy that Morton describes,[106] perhaps over-used during a time where the ruins of human endeavour (demonstrated by wars, industrial failings, pollution, colonial oppression, gender disparity, racial divides, forced migration) are signal hallmarks identifying the Anthropocene. However much these headline symbols are tagged to a ruined-earth-Anthropocene, there are everyday, less-visible ruins unfolding insidiously everywhere, often attracting less opprobrium. In the UK, these might be the vacuums created in districts when business rates rocket, the muttered tutting at the sight of a veil, the fields lost to flimsy housing developments, the youth clubs closed through lack of government finance, a desire line thwarted through road redirection. This 'everyday-ness' speaks most strongly to Morton's theory of the hyperobject - an entity or thing, like climate change, distinguished by its infinite, unquantifiable, unimaginable yet intimate scale. We cannot, with this degree of intimacy, push out of reach the boundaries of the Sublime Anthropocene, for we are enmeshed within its system, feeding and fed by it. In such granularity, the quotidian nature of the Anthropocene and it's all-pervasiveness becomes perceptible,

in the manner that the everyday and monumental destruction are bound together in the ruins of Pompeii: "the visual reminders of an extraordinary act of violence and destruction. In the case of Pompeii, Vesuvius's eruption in 79 AD preserved a mundane environment that would have otherwise never endured."[107]

In creating the possible conditions for the desired multiplicity of readings it is important to create a rupture,[108] one that cuts between classical representations of the ruin within the canon of sublime art and literature, that pins the ruin, like a museum exhibit butterfly, into an indeterminate past to impose a contemporaneous recognition of the ongoing live nature of ruins. It is vital to acknowledge the processual materialities which generate this liveliness and to recognise their continuing relevance and haunting affect unfolding in the everyday now.[109] The trope for the preservation of antiquities in service of heritage venerates previous powers that claim ownership and knowledge (recognised in the work of the British National Trust or to the aesthetics of the Grand Tour), and has not been the only historical mode of the appreciation of ruins. In ancient Imperial Rome, there was a concerted effort to maintain the heritage of their founding story, as witnessed in the preservation of *Casa Romuli*, the hut of Romulus the founder of Rome, among the marbled splendours of the Palatine Hill, overlooking the forum.[110] This humble thatched structure, dating possibly to around 771 BC, was repeatedly repaired and rebuilt following fires; a carefully curated and symbolic renewal of the potency of this site. Ovid alludes to the hut in his *Fasti*, Book 1, that

> Wealth has more value now than in earlier times,
> When the people were poor, when Rome was new,
> When a little hut contained Quirinus, child of Mars,
> And river grass supplied a tiny bed.[111]

This description, reminding Romans of their humble origins and the transience of power, keeps the site alive and agentic, relevant to the now. In turn, its maintenance, while reminiscent of the reverence accorded to Stalin's childhood home, keeps it live, its material agency and aura vulnerable to the vagaries of time and attention. Reminiscent of the blurred space between comfort and terror in Kantian and Burkean readings of the Sublime, in the case of ruins, this space operates as a boundary between modes of temporality. These temporalities are most specific to the past and the present, but also (unlike Volney's spectral guide who was gifted with timely hindsight) quixotic and fickle, where knowledge is often acquired just after required. This aligns with Gordon's observation of the classic psychoanalysis of trauma, which "not only misaligns our perception of time, it is, one could say, itself a misalignment of the temporality of experience since trauma is characteristically experienced belatedly."[112] Wright's view of heritage as the backward glance, literally positions the heritage 'consumer' on a pivot between the past and future;[113] a stance to be destabilised in this artistic research.

It is interesting to consider the abyssal nature of the consumer's gaze: their horror at the unknowns of the future seems to emerge from a comfort and confidence in past glories or the perceived stability of the status quo. This stereotype of heritage needs immediately dismantling in any contemporary enquiry into either new possibilities for an understanding of the Sublime or the trauma of an Anthropocene. Especially while repetitive strictures (that emerge from the power structures that favour the privileged and harm the global poor) whittle down the potential for successful global collaborative human and more-than human survival. Gordon states

> Without melodramatizing the point, I think it's fair to say that the specter of such a haunted and haunting future should

not be dismissed or trivialized; the rapidity with which hard-won civil and legal rights guaranteeing protection from authoritarian police states have been taken and given away in the name of national security should be a clear warning that the future comes often before it has been formally invited or approved.[114]

This imminent and immanent uninvited future, experienced directly by those now in the path of ecological ruination (and anticipated equally but with different effect by the Cassandras of climate emergency and power-brokers of global finance), marks a long, drawn-out pivotal change; sudden to those protected for so long, and endless to those multi-generationally at its mercy.

In these variable times, the mise-en-scène of the Theatre of Ruins creates contingent space for experimentation and vulnerability,[115] but there are limits to this condition. It is vital to acknowledge possible audience and performers' conditions of being privileged and secure enough to participate safely. Paavolainen describes how "an important distinction between distance and immediacy also becomes prevalent in Tim Ingold's performative meshwork, where 'observation seeks not to represent the observed but to participate with it in the same generative movement, coupling the movement of the observer's attention with currents of environmental activity.'"[116] Rather than there being any "contradiction between participation and observation," the one is "a condition for the other."[117] This shared terrain for audiences and performers of safety, enquiry and jeopardy, adheres to Deleuze's distinctions between exhaustion and tiredness,[118] recognising that true precarity (exhaustion) generates an inability to possibilitate,[119] whereas 'tiredness' retains the fragmentary ability to approach a semblance of selectivity or activity. Thompson describes the potential affordances that art generates in the face of this precarity: "Art is understood to have a role in the present, as a protective force with an 'in spite of' quality that enables

people to tolerate suffering not so that they become immune to it, but so that they have the energy to continue to resist."[120] The exhaustion however, of 'performers' truly subject to the political, ecological, or social whims of the Sublime Anthropocene often precludes the energy to resist at the expense of daily survival. This is at a clear disjunct from tiredness and refers once again to the paradox of Kant's comfortable position of 'enjoying' the Sublime. Perhaps this small, marginally protected pocket of energy of the tired can lead to direct action? In this context the Sublime could become an activist tool potentially waking up those who are asleep to the violences unleashed in their everyday milieu. In co-staging what an audience knows together with the unknown; in divulging what Rancière ascribes as the ability of the distribution of the sensible to reveal forms of visibility and invisibility,[121] within a Theatre of Ruins, both audience and performers can bear witness and become unsettled by the instability within several systems, reconfiguring "the performance event as a moment within and between the bodies of the beholders, the actors and participants so that the 'it' of the experience is not solely located in a physical presence on stage."[122] It is necessary also to recognise that this leaks beyond the performance space. Audience and performer experiences of precarity can then challenge the continuous reestablishment of stereotypes and hierarchies inherent to the mediated environment of 'theatre'. This shared precarity demands a discovery and occupation of a third space between acting and spectating, activating a double-edged gaze of performing and witnessing. Throughout this shared endeavour of precarity, however, remains the kernel of exhausted life in the ruins, destabilising any self-satisfaction brought about through the act of witnessing, and introducing multiple spectral marginalised consciences, eerie living ghosts at the table.

Shared precarity, as a combinatory process for performer and audience, traverses the distinctions between insiders and outsiders

and such a dissolve can engender elements of the uncanny and trespass into uncharted terrains (the *unheimlich* and its antonym *heimlich*). In a similar mode, the ruin conjures some ingredients of the uncanny:

> In the disordered and liminal realm of the ruin, there are no easy lessons to learn and nor does the disturbing fragmentary incompleteness of the ruin allow visitors to revert to empathy. The ruin insists on the forensic real but also allows for an unexpected and unsettling encounter that goes beyond pedagogically prescribed experience.[123]

The known and unknown uncanny signifiers of the Sublime Anthropocene operate within environments, districts and terrains that signify systems of home and hospitality, but also their opposite. Macfarlane cites Glenn Albrecht's term 'solastagia' as speaking of a "modern uncanny, in which a familiar place is rendered unrecognisable by climate change or corporate action: the home is become unhomely around its inhabitants."[124] The terms home and hospitality signal a shared commonality within a space and an implied generosity to outsiders, but we tend, in the words of Derrida, to attempt a difficult distinction between:

> the other and the stranger; and we would need to venture into what is both the implication and the consequence of this double bind, this impossibility as condition of possibility, namely, the troubling analogy in their common origin between *hostis* as host and *hostis* as enemy, between hospitality and hostility."[125]

The derivation of the Latin root word *hospes*, can be translated severally as either host, guest, or stranger, even enemy, meaning that the act of hospitality often remains simultaneously alert to the foreign, the dis- or mis-placed. Just as invasive species such

as buddleia are the first pioneer plants to colonise the ruins, so people sometimes depicted in the right-wing media as 'invasive', with 'flooding' tendencies, may begin to make a home in the ruins. Homes can be welcoming (*heimlich*), but can also signify exclusion that their owners may exert; a controlling and undermining hospitality, creating boundaries between who belongs or who doesn't (*unheimlich*) in the same way that Todd describes how "not all humans are equally invited into (the) conceptual spaces" that respond to the ruins of the Anthropocene.[126] Homeliness resonates strongly with themes of *oikos*, the Greek term denoting family, property, home. This basic unit of Greek society forms the root of terms eco-nomy and eco-logy, which have always been the twin catalysts of social human life on Earth but now are sharply whittled into competition as protagonists within the theatre of the Anthropocene, performing an embattled version of living in the ruins. This is endorsed in the writing of Mbembe:

> In most of the major urban centers faced with land problems, distinctions between "indigenes," "sons of the soil," and "outsiders" have become commonplace. This proliferation of internal borders—whether imaginary, symbolic, or a cover for economic or power struggles—and its corollary, the exacerbation of identification with particular localities, give rise to exclusionary practices, "identity closure," and persecution, which, as seen, can easily lead to pogroms, even genocide.[127]

It seems clear from this that although the Sublime Anthropocene shares certain modes with the uncanny, the onus upon the audience or performer is to move away from the binary divisions the uncanny represents, towards a shared precarity that is key to a revised experience of the Sublime Anthropocene.

Contribution

Any methodology of communally 'living in the ruins' will ultimately need to investigate the economy and ecology of the living and agential Sublime Anthropocene in order to fully absorb and challenge the convention that it only happens to 'others.'[128] If we are the archaeologist-inhabitants of these lively ruins, we might map their genesis, immanence and their fruitfulness in order to use the Sublime Anthropocene as a map of times of a different sort, "stretched between the layers of the past and their effect on the present…with different potentials of futures."[129] The rich precarity of being a 'vulnerable practitioner' and using the methodology of a Theatre of Ruins allows for the creation of new knowledge and generates new ontologies for both the Sublime and the Anthropocene. The challenge becomes one of telling terrible stories without losing your audience; of engendering playful performativity in a patchy Anthropocene made up of non-synchronous users; and of investigating at a granular, everyday level to encourage actual real engagement rather than the hyperobjective distance of planetary-scale descriptors. This collaborative methodology of living in the ruins challenges the powers that are centralised within traditional Sublime and Anthropocene ontologies, and moves towards more distributed networks, and meshes of shared agency. By rejecting the absolutism inherent to the Sublime and Anthropocene; by rejecting models of asymmetrical power,[130] one becomes open to the relativism of vulnerability, the shared vulnerability of the Sublime Anthropocene. The relationality of multiple voices offers a semblance of power by being part of a mesh of 'small selves' and in recognizing that there is no 'I' without the 'non-I.'[131]

The methodology of shared precarity demands that one must not only allow space for the mutability and distribution of the self, the 'I', but must also include and integrate blended knowledge forms within that empty signifier, because there are clearly no pure knowers. The methodology acknowledges that we all move between

multiple ontologies all the time, adopting, adapting, assimilating, assembling from pools of situated, cultural, experiential, indigenous, and political knowledge.

Longinus writes: "We are the slaves of money…and also the slaves of pleasure; these two violate our lives and our persons."[132] This greed and debasement is witnessed in the Africa of Mbembe's 'Postcolony' as "public power and private sovereignty."[133] Instead of yielding to the tyranny of Capitalism or of one's own self-involved desires, Longinus suggests that humans need to be vulnerable to the liberating force of sublimity. The experience of the Sublime feeds the soul with a sense of what goes beyond the mortal and the mundane; it reveals an unexpected pathway leading outward from the prison of selfhood. This is the experience needed for the performers and the audience in the Theatre of Ruins; the conditions for testing the edges of the Sublime, for plunging into discomfort, acknowledging the horror of voyeurism, engendering the conditions for possibility. These ruins cannot be fixed, pinned and taxonomized. The uncanny experience of this creative process is a metaphor for witnessing the ruins, in turn witnessing the anxiety and violence of the Anthropocene, and witnessing our own collusion. From this continually unfolding position of acknowledgment and learning, this methodology argues for a distributed, communal and collaborative response to the crisis still unfurling, and offers the bald statement by Anna Tsing, that:

> Global landscapes today are strewn with this kind of ruin. Still, these places can be lively despite announcements of their death; abandoned asset fields sometimes yield new multispecies and multicultural life. In a global state of precarity, we don't have choices other than looking for life in this ruin.[134]

Endnotes

[1] Percy Bysshe Shelley, Ozymandias in *The Penguin Book* of English Verse, ed. By John Hayward (London: Penguin Books, 1975), p290. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46565/ozymandias,

[2] Jussi Parikka, "Thousands of Tiny Futures: 0 Ruinscape," in Machinology (blog by Jussi Parikka), 5 July 2018, https://jussiparikka.net/2018/07/05/thousands-of-tiny-futures/

[3] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project,* trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), p540, where he describes how: "[a]s rocks of the Miocene or Eocene in places bear the imprint of monstrous creatures from those ages, so today arcades dot the metropolitan landscape like caves containing the fossil remains of a vanished monster: the consumer of the pre-imperial era of capitalism, the last dinosaur of Europe."

[4] Knut Ebeling, "Art of Searching: On 'Wild Archaeologies' from Kant to Kittler." *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 51 (2016): p7–18. https://jussiparikka.net/page/5/. Ebeling states: "these various philosophical and artistic wild archaeologies present not merely an image of layered pasts, but they become sites of practices of experimentation with 'a material reflection of temporality.'"

[5] Rebecca Solnit, "The Ruins of Memory" in *Ruins*, ed Brian Dillon (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), p151.

[6] Madeleine Cox, "'Coryat's Crudities' - Tourism 1611 Style!" in *Explore Shakespeare* (blog of Shakespeare Birthplace Trust), 12 Nov 2014, https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/coryats-crudities-tourism-1611-style/. Cox includes the lengthy title….

Thomas Coryat, Coryat's Crudities: hastily gobled up in five moneths travells in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhetia commonly called the Grisons country, Helvetia alias Switzerland, some parts of high Germany and the Netherlands : newly digested in the hungry aire of Odcombe in the county of Somerset, and now dispersed to the nourishment of the travelling members of this kingdome, 1611, https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/coryats-crudities-tourism-1611-style/

[7] Thomas Whately in his 1770 Observations on Modern Gardening, as cited by

Rose Macauley, *Pleasures of Ruins* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1953).

[8] Emily Brady and Arto Haapala, "Melancholy as an aesthetic emotion", Contemporary Aesthetics, 1 (2003). accessed 11.10.19.

[9] Giorgio Agamben, "What Is the Contemporary?" in What Is an Apparatus and Other Essays, trans. D. Kishik and P. Pedatella (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2009), p51.

[10] Odai Johnson, "Remains: Performance at the Edge of Empire," *Theatre Survey* 58, no.2 (2017): p238.

[11] Avery F. Gordon, "Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity," *Borderlands* 10, no. 2, (2011): p2.

[12] Silke Arnold-de Simine, "The Ruin as Memorial – The Memorial as Ruin," *Performance Research* 20 no. 3 (2015): 99.

[13] Robert Macfarlane, *Underland, A Deep time Journey* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2019), p230.

[14] Colin Sterling, "Ruins in Reverse. An Exhibition at Tate Modern," *Institute of Archaeology* 23 no. 1 (2013): 1-4. Sterling asks to: "consider the present itself through an archaeological lens, applying the language of 'discovery' and 'excavation' to artefacts and locations that few would call stupendous or beautiful."

[15] Judith Butler, "Afterword. After loss, what then?" in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, eds. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), p467–73

[16] Johnson, "Remains," p239.

[17] Alfredo González-Ruibal, "Time to destroy: An archaeology of supermodernity." *Current Anthropology* 49, no. 2 (2008): p273.

[18] Gotthold E, Lessing, Laocoon quoted in Brian Dillon, "Fragments from a History of Ruin," *Cabinet Magazine* #20 (online), (2005-6). http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/20/dillon.php, where it is described as: "An essay upon the limits of painting and poetry. With remarks illustrative of various points in the history of ancient art"

[19] See note 17.

[20] Brian Dillon, "Fragments from a History of Ruin," *Cabinet Magazine* #20 (online), (2005-6). http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/20/dillon.php

[21] Macfarlane, *Underland*, p78.

[22] Brian Dillon, "Fragments from a History of Ruin," *Cabinet Magazine* #20 (online), (2005-6). http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/20/dillon.php

[23] Teemu Paavolainen, *Theatricality and Performativity*, *Writings on Texture from Plato's Cave to Urban Activism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p270. Paavolainen states: "[w]hat the theatrical hiatus enables is the self-aware illusion of seeing the whole context at once—yet without actually engaging in it, let alone merging with it."

[24] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006), p9.

[25] Shelley, *Ozymandias* (see note 1)

[26] Johnson, "Remains," p234.

[27] John Berger, *From A to X: a story in letters* (London: Verso, 2008), p10, where Berger writes "[t]he word recently has altered since they took you…Tonight I don't want to write how long ago that was. The word recently now covers all that time. Once it meant a few weeks or the day before yesterday."

[28] *Planet of the Apes*, directed by Franklin J, Schaffner (1968; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2001) DVD

[29] Caspar Henderson, *A New Map of Wonders – A Journey in Search of Modern Marvels* (London: Granta Publications, 2017), p230.

[30] Dillon, "Fragments from a History of Ruin" (online).

[31] Anna L, Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World – On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p6. Tsing describes that: "[g]lobal landscapes today are strewn with this kind of ruin. Still, these places can be lively despite announcements of their death; abandoned asset fields sometimes yield new multispecies and multicultural life. In a global state of precarity, we don't have choices other than looking for life in this ruin."

[32] Hubert Robert, *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins*, 1796, oil on canvas, 115 × 145 cm, the Louvre, Paris.

[33] Brian Doucet and Drew Philp, "In Detroit 'ruin porn' ignores the voices of those who still call the city home," *The Guardian*, February 15, 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2016/feb/15/ruin-porn-detroit-photography-city-homes

[34] Gordon, "Haunting and Futurity," p7, where she states: "[w]ith epistemology it is possible, necessary even, to affirm otherness. Awareness of the limits of

knowledge, awareness of the impossibility of knowing it all, and awareness of the dangers of being a know-it-all are certainly important conditions of a just praxis, but they are not sufficient in and of themselves. Ontology, by contrast, takes us onto the terrain of what Michel Foucault called subjugated knowledge and to the person and their being. Persons are not merely mortal (finite beings) but living breathing complex people who cannot be approached or treated justly if there is an absolute necessity to affirm their otherness. Quite the opposite is needed by them and by us."

[35] Patrick Wright, *On living in an old country: the national past in contemporary Britain* (London: Verso, 2009), p70.

[36] John Wylie, "The Distant: Thinking toward Renewed Senses of Landscape and Distance," *Environment, Space, Place* 9, no. 1 (2017): p15. www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/envispacplac.9.1.000

[37] Paul Gilroy, "Why Harry's disoriented about Empire," *The Guardian*, January 18, 2005. https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/jan/18/britishidentity.monarchy

[38] Françoise Vergès, "Racial Capitalocene," in *Futures of Black radicalism,* ed. Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (London and New York: Verso, 2017), p73, where she asks: "What methodology is needed to write a history of the environment that includes slavery, colonialism, imperialism and racial capitalism, from the standpoint of those who were made into 'cheap' objects of commerce, their bodies as objects renewable through wars, capture, and enslavement, fabricated as disposable people, whose lives do not matter?"

[39] Andrew Fitzmaurice, "Beyond Terra Nullius," *fifteeneightyfour* (blog of Cambridge University Press), 26 November 2014. http://www.cambridgeblog.org/2014/11/beyond-terra-nullius

[40] Vergès, "Racial Capitalocene," p76.

[41] Gordon, "Haunting and Futurity," p10 where she describes how: "[s]ocial death refers to the process by which a person is socially negated or made a human non-person as the terms of their incorporation into a society: living, they nonetheless appear as if and are treated as if they were dead."

[42] Gordon, "Haunting and Futurity," p13, where she describes: "proximate populations—slaves, prisoners, undocumented migrants, the very poor, the abandoned, the enemy, the subversive…—whose degraded status is deemed

required for the rest of our well-being."

[43] Caitlin De Silvey and Tim Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," *Progress in Human Geography* 37, no. 4 (2013): 468. http://dx.doi.org.plymouth.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/0309132512462271.

[44] De Silvey and Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," p466.

[45] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter,* A Political Ecology of Things (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010), p53.

[46] De Silvey and Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," p477.

[47] Jacob Lund, "Contemporaneity, a Sublime Experience?" *in Aesthetics in Dialogue: Applying Philosophy of Art in a Global World,* ed Zoltán Zomhegyi and Max Ryynänen (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2020), p47.

[48] Bruno Latour, "Sharing Responsibility: Farewell to the Sublime," in *Reset Modernity!*, ed Bruno Latour, (Karlsruhe: ZKM and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), p169.

[49] De Silvey and Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," p477.

[50] De Silvey and Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," p472, where they describe how: "[r]esearchers writing about such encounters and exchanges often stress the importance of recognizing the agency of 'things' and material residues."

[51] Arnold-de Simine, The Ruin as Memorial, p95, where she states that: "[r]uins allow for and seem to generate competing temporalities: for Slavoj Žižek (2011: 196) they epitomize the 'end times' in which we supposedly live; for others they allow us to see the historical dimension in both culture and nature; and some claim that they suspend time altogether, allowing us to step out of history and question the neat linear temporality of historical progress."

[52] Hayden Lorimer and Simon Murray, "The Ruin in Question," *Performance Research* 20, (2015): 65. https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2015.1049037. They describe "...sites and repositories of cultural production"

[53] Paavolainen, *Theatricality and Performativity,* p255

[54] Graham Saunders, "A Theatre of Ruins' Edward Bond and Samuel Beckett: theatrical antagonists," *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 25:1, (2005), 67-77, p71.

[55] Samuel Beckett, *The Complete Short Prose* 1929–1989, ed. Stanley E, Gontarski, (New York: Grove Press/Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997)

[56] Sally Mackey, "Applied Theatre and Practice as Research: Polyphonic

Conversations, Research in Drama Education": *The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, Volume 21, Issue 4, (2016), p481, where she describes "Researchers are often the vulnerable practitioners and knowledge creators. They are the subjects of the research as well as the authors of its ideas: researcher and the researched, the insider, the practitioner-researcher, and the researcher as auteur.",

[57] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p35.

[58] James Thompson, "Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of Effect," *New Theatre Quarterly* 26 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X10000394, p145.

[59] Paavolainen, *Theatricality and Performativity,* p265.

[60] Jacob Lund, "Biopolitical Beckett: Self-desubjectification as Resistance," *Nordic Irish Studies* 8, no. 1, (2009): p75, where he states that: "[t]he failure that constitutes Beckett's artistic goal is a failure to represent altogether, a creative incompetence."

[61] Alexander Pope, *The Major Works*, ed. Pat Rodgers, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p 195-238 which includes Pope's Peri Bathous; "Bathos is a literary term created by Alexander Pope in his 1727 essay "Peri Bathous", to illustrate comically dismal attempts at sublimity."

[62] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, (Berkeley CA: University of California Press. 2001), p142. www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppkxs.

[63] Leslie Jamison, "Pain Tours (I)" in *The Empathy Exams: Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2014), p83.

[64] Julie Bénard, "The Capital of the Ruins by Samuel Beckett: Reconstruction as a Redistribution of the Sensible," *Études Britanniques Contemporaines* 54 (2018): 6. DOI: 10.4000/ebc.4282

[65] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics, trans.* Gabriel Rockhill, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), quoted by Bénard in "Capital of the Ruins," where Rancière states "[t]he 'sensible', of course, does not refer to what shows good sense or judgement but to what is aisthèton or capable of being apprehended by the senses' (Rancière 2013, 89). The sensible determines what is visible and invisible. As such, the distribution of the sensible reveals forms of visibility and invisibility. It reveals who can and cannot take part in

the community, 'based on what they do and the time and space in which this activity is performed.'"

[66] Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p8.

[67] Laura Cull, *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p6.

[68] Paavolainen, *Theatricality and Performativity,* p261.

[69] Arnold-de Simine, "The Ruin as Memorial," p101.

[70] Paavolainen, *Theatricality and Performativity*, p259.

[71] Thompson, "Performance Affects," p145.

[72] Paavolainen, *Theatricality and Performativity,* p254, where he cites "[i]n his more recent writing, Barba has indeed expressed some concern over his prior metaphor of 'weaving.' On its arguable implication that 'the analysis corresponds to the process'—that a fabric is undone the same way it was woven—he goes on to suggest that he 'should have spoken not of weaving, but of perfume.' By this he means 'an intense indivisible unity,' into which the different dramaturgies of a performance 'settle and condense' and which then 'acts on the dramaturgy of the spectator.'"

[73] Lund "Biopolitical Beckett," p68.

[74] Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p28.

[75] Timothy Morton *Hyperobjects - Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), p60, where he states: "there it is, staring me in the face, as the hyperobject global warming. And I helped cause it. I am directly responsible."

[76] De Silvey and Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," p475.

[77] Arnold-de Simine, "The Ruin as Memorial," p99.

[78] Robert Smithson, *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings,* ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996) p54-5.

[79] De Silvey and Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," p469.

[80] see note 79

[81] Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p12.

[82] Smithson, *The Collected Writings,* p18.

[83] De Silvey and Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," p471.

[84] Brian Dillon, "Fragments from a History of Ruin," *Cabinet Magazine* #20 (online), (2005-6). http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/20/dillon.php

85 De Silvey and Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," p479.

86 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble, Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2016), p1.

87 Paavolainen, *Theatricality and Performativity,* p271 where he cites how: "Beckett's non-specifity emerges from a historical trajectory of dramaturgy as outlined here: "From Plato's Cave—a theatre of emptiness reflecting the absorption of oral culture—emerges a theatre of ideas, more abstract and more rational; following its early modern revival, its staging turns overtly affective in the Baroque. In reaction, a novel flood of absorption comes with Romantic interiority, duly exteriorized with novel theatricalities of the Image: Wagner's abyss, akin to Baroque excess, and the relief and the ornament, soon again attacked (like the empty shadows of the ancient Cave) by modernist appeals to functional performativity—the theatrical Platform; the machine for living in; Beckettian mechanics; projects of urban planning."

88 Susan Sontag, "Godot Comes to Sarajevo," *The New York Review of Books*, 21 Oct, 1993, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1993/10/21/godot-comes-to-sarajevo/.

89 Lund, "Biopolitical Beckett," p67. Lund cites Terry Eagleton's essay "Political Beckett?" in *New Left Review* 40 (July/Aug 2006), p70.: "Following Theodor Adorno, Eagleton claims that Beckett's work is post-Auschwitz art, and that it 'maintains a compact with failure in the teeth of Nazi triumphalism, undoing its lethal absolutism with the weapons of ambiguity and indeterminacy. His favourite word, he commented, was 'perhaps'. Against fascism's megalomaniac totalities, he pits the fragmentary and unfinished'."

90 Thompson, "Performance Affects," p148.

91 Mackey, "Applied Theatre," p480.

92 De Silvey and Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," p478.

93 Gordon, "Haunting and Futurity," p3.

94 Arnold-de Simine, "The Ruin as Memorial," p99.

95 Thompson, "Performance Affects," p156.

96 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* trans. Werner S. Pluhar, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1987), p119, where he states: "When in aesthetic judgment, we consider nature as a might that has no dominance over us, then it is dynamically sublime. If we are to judge nature as sublime dynamically, we

must present it as arousing fear."

[97] Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p29.

[98] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful,* (1758, reprinted, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p53.

[99] Lorimer and Murray, "The Ruin in Question," p 62.

[100] Paavolainen, *Theatricality and Performativity,* p271.

[101] Geoff Cox and Jacob Lund, *The Contemporary Condition – Introductory Thoughts on Contemporaneity and Contemporary Art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), p9.

[102] De Silvey and Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," p471.

[103] Doreen Massey, *For Space,* (London: SAGE, 2005), p5.

[104] Thompson, "Performance Affects," p158.

[105] Gordon, "Haunting and Futurity," p5, where she quotes Herbert Marcuse's, *One-dimensional man: studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), pxi-xii.

[106] Timothy Morton, *Being Ecological* (London: Pelican Books, Penguin Random House, 2018), p12.

[107] Arnold-de Simine, "The Ruin as Memorial," p95.

[108] Arnold-de Simine, "The Ruin as Memorial," p101, where she cites Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver's, *The Memory of Catastrophe,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), when she states that: "[j]ust like the ruin 'the term "rupture" … implies damage but not quite disintegration, discontinuity but not quite a definite end (Gray et al. 2004: 9)"

[109] Gordon, "Haunting and Futurity," p2 where she describes how "[h]aunting was the language and the experiential modality by which I tried to reach an understanding of the meeting of organized force and meaning because haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with (such as with transatlantic slavery, for instance) or when their oppressive nature is continuously denied (such as with free labor or national security)."

[110] Christopher Siwicki, "Architectural Restoration and Heritage in Imperial Rome," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Culture and Representation*, (Oxford:

Oxford University Press, 2019).

[111] Anthony Boyle and Roger Woodward, *Ovid's Fasti* (London: Penguin Classics; New Ed edition, 2000), Book 1.

[112] Gordon, "Haunting and Futurity," p4.

[113] John Cunningham, "Boredom in the Charnel House: Theses on 'post-industrial' Ruins," *Variant 42* (online), (2011). http://www.variant.org.uk/42texts/CharnelHouse.html.

[114] Gordon, "Haunting and Futurity," p9.

[115] De Silvey and Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," p480.

[116] Paavolainen, *Theatricality and Performativity,* p269.

[117] see note 115.

[118] Gilles Deleuze and Anthony Uhlmann, "The Exhausted," *SubStance* 24 no.3 (1995): p3.

[119] Joff Bradley, "Exhausted philosophy and Islands-to-Come,", *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 51 no. 3 (2019): p267 DOI: 10.1080/00131857.2018.1452148. Bradley states that: "Nancy's argument is that the West is currently witnessing the destruction of the world and is therefore without the possibility of thinking the new (Gratton, 2012, p. 235; Nancy, 2007)."

[120] Thompson, "Performance Affects," p2.

[121] Bénard, "Capital of the Ruins," p2.

[122] Thompson, "Performance Affects," p157.

[123] Arnold-de Simine, "The Ruin as Memorial," p100.

[124] Macfarlane, *Underland*, p317.

[125] Jacques Derrida "Hostipitality," *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 5, no.3 (2000): p15. DOI: 10.1080/09697250020034706, p15

[126] Zoe Todd, "Indigenizing the Anthropocene," in *Art in the Anthropocene Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, eds., Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (City: Publisher, 2015), p244. http://openhumanitiespress.org/books/download/Davis-Turpin_2015_Art-in-the-Anthropocene.pdf. Todd calls to attention: "…where these disasters are theorized or responses to disaster formulated."

[127] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony,* p87.

[128] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony,* p2, where he states: "[w]e should first remind

ourselves that, as a general rule, the experience of the Other,or the problem of the 'I' of others and of human beings we perceive as foreign to us, has almost always posed virtually insurmountable difficulties to the Western philosophical and political tradition."

[129] Jussi Parikka, "Thousands of Tiny Futures: 0 Ruinscape," in *Machinology* (blog by Jussi Parikka), 5 July 2018, https://jussiparikka.net/2018/07/05/thousands-of-tiny-futures/

[130] Vergès, "Racial Capitalocene," p75.

[131] Lund, "*Biopolitical Beckett*," p70, where he cites the work of Benveniste: "subjectivity is the capacity of the speaker to posit himself as subject: 'Ego' is he who says 'ego'. This implies that the 'I' does not refer to a pre-existing subjective substance, some wordless experience of the ego or sense of being oneself, but rather to its own saying, whereby the 'I' itself becomes the referent it is meant to signify. It is thus literally in and through language that the individual is constituted as a subject. The personal pronoun is an 'empty' signifier; a shifter that does not refer to an exterior reality but which, being always available, is 'filled' by whoever utters it."

[132] "On the Sublime", *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, last modified July 5, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=On_the_Sublime&action=history:
"Longinus, (also called Dionysius Longinus or Pseudo-Longinus, (1st century AD), *On the Sublime* (Greek Peri Hypsous), The earliest surviving manuscript, from the 10th century, first printed in 1554, ascribes it to Dionysius Longinus."

[133] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony,* p85, where he states: "[f]inally, the corollary of the privatization of public violence, and of its deployment in aid of private enrichment, is the accelerated development of a shadow economy over which elements of the police, the army, the customs, and the revenue services attempt to ensure their grip, through drug trafficking, counterfeiting money, trade in arms and toxic waste, customs frauds etc. Should they be successful, such a grip could hasten the elimination from this sector of whole social groups, who, as a result of the austerity policies, get what they need in this economy outside of wage labor or direct patronage. What is therefore at stake is the possibility of new ways and means of subjecting and controlling people."

[134] Tsing, The Mushroom at the End of the World, p6.

Chapter 2 - Ruin
#5 of 10 books
Laura Hopes © 2020

THE THEATRE OF RUINS

Title: *The Theatre of Ruins*
Date: 11.06.19
Place: Dublin
Collaborators: Maud Hendricks and Bernie O'Reilly
Media: filmed performance workshop
Specifications:
3 x individual films including performance manual and performance
(shown on individual monitors or on large screen) 04:48:00,
04:01:11, 06:07:39
1 triptych audio 09:15:15
Curtain

Iterations: *Theorem*, Ruskin School of Art, Cambridge 2019
                   Test Spaces, University of Plymouth 2019

In a global state of precarity, we don't have choices other than looking for life in this ruin.

Anna Tsing, 2015:6

In November 2017 Maud Hendricks, Bernie O'Reilly of Outlandish Theatre Platform (OT) and I began a collaborative enquiry into the 'ruins' of Dublin 8. We considered Dublin 8 as a 'theatre of ruins' where lives unfold and are performed. During preparatory research into Maud and Bernie's sense of their home's, Dublin 8, constant 'not-quite-becoming', different iterations or chronologies of the term 'ruin' emerged: the past, present, viable and anticipatory ruin. Within this specific Irish context; the regeneration and gentrification of Dublin 8, we bear witness to the romanticisation of the run-down. This trend, lionised both within romantic literature of the past and the 'vintage' trends of today, is entangled with the potential for gentrification, an economic invitation withheld from many, and the glamorisation of ruins ignores those humans subject to the economy's vicissitudes.

Contemporary symbols of the Sublime might well be the capitalist ruins that Anna Tsing describes, rarely puncturing the distanced gaze of the individual, remaining ineffable and overwhelming, synonymous with the impossibility of representing the Anthropocene. These ruins are however not only symbolised in widespread deforestation and melting glaciers, but cities, streets and communities. If we inhabit the capitalist ruins, is everything, everywhere, in a more-than-human, hyperobjective understanding of the world, ruined - what even is a ruin, are we ruins?

The continual and cyclical potential of ruins was questioned: we examined bodies as sites of ruination; the global/colonial/imperial forces implicated in the causation and causality of ruins; and the commercial or aesthetic appropriations of ruins. These forays all seemed to suggest a certain agency bound to ruins, that they offer opportunity for unexpected and original growth, that they catalyse more-than-humans and formulate a polyvocal networked resistance. Our collective aim became to co-stage what an audience knows of ruins together with the unknown; to bear witness and become unsettled by the instability within several systems of ruination; on a global and environmental magnitude; at a state or city level and on a bodily scale. Our hope was that audience experiences of the simultaneous precarity and resistance of these ruins within the mediated environment of a theatre space could challenge the continuous reestablishment of the stereotypes and hierarchies inherent to social realist theatre depictions of the realities 'staged' daily within Dublin 8.

Using Samuel Beckett's '*The Capital of the Ruins*' (written for broadcast in 1946 in post-war France) as a conduit for enquiry into contemporary issues, afforded an exploration of his own conflicted insider/outsider status, a condition reflected in Maud and Bernie, both self-described 'blow-ins'. My outsider-colonialist perspective was informed by my own conflicted gaze; a gaze turned upon what I saw as the visceral ruins of empire, of capitalism, of the church-state structure. During the process of collaboration, I came to realise that my version of 'ruins' was reductive and out of date; that these were non-static ruins; thick continuous unfoldings of temporalities and multiplicitous live trajectories.

We used the Sublime as a tool to uncover the absurdity of everyday life in the ruins and the impossibility of this condition. By collapsing the distance between an outsider's gaze and our own vulnerability we recognised that the Anthropocene is never 'over-there' it is *here*.

Acknowledging the ethical anxiety of relying upon only my outsider's gaze or the misrepresentation of others' experiences, our performances were made explicitly in response to our *own* experiences of the ruins. The strands we gathered together emerged from our shared research, walks, and conversations between ourselves and with members of the Dublin 8 community. Abandoning the masterful individualism of the historically Sublime gaze, individual expressions were forged through an acknowledgment of the vulnerability of the practitioner. Perpetuating this historic gaze would have complied with existing state or corporation-driven extractive violence and exploited the vulnerable experimental form and participatory methodologies. Our process scaled these distances instead through Via Negativa methods where one switches between roles of maker/performer/audience — inverting assumed hierarchies. From a position of sublimation within text, experience, conversation and aesthetic engulfment, one writes, one performs and is critiqued and then re-evaluates and redesigns the performance manual. The three performances emerged from this deep personal attention to place which acknowledged the ethics of representation inherent to the social and geographical complexity of this site. A new form of the Sublime, characterised by vulnerability and collaboration, by an acknowledgment of '*knowledgeless-ness*' was the germinal space for this collective performance. The form emerged separate but shared, mediated through screens within a black-box theatre space, and generated new modes of listening and attention for audiences, audiences that became part of the materiality and agency of the theatrical space, whose affective encounters enrich and augment the *mise-en-scène*.

These were the conditions for performers and audience alike; to test the edges of the Sublime, to plunge into discomfort, into the horror of voyeurism, into a recognition of possibility. These ruins cannot be fixed, pinned, taxonomized. The uncanny experience of this creative

process is a metaphor for witnessing the ruins, in turn witnessing the anxiety and violence of the Anthropocene.

[1] About VN, website: https://www.vntheatre.com/about-us/ "The term "via negativa" is derived from negative theology, which attempts to define god by describing what god is not, or rather, what god cannot be. The concept, conceived in late fifth century AD, was based on the presumption that the divine is unattainable to the human experience and understanding and god can therefore only be contemplated through what god cannot be described as. This term was introduced to theatre practice by Polish director and theatre innovator Jerzy Grotowski. He used the term "via negativa" to describe a method in which the actor works primarily toward discovering and overcoming the obstacles that prevent him from attaining his psychophysical perfection. However, neither theological questions nor acting techniques are the focus of our interest. In our work "via negativa" means to reduce the performance to basic elements in order to sharpen our relationship with the viewer and understand what is (or is not) the essence of this relationship."

Open Theatre Practice:

Maud Hendricks and Bernie O'Reilly of Open Theatre Practice live and have worked in the community of Dublin 8 since 2010. During that time, they have created a safe yet dynamic creative space to reflect upon and make work about the local and global issues that impact upon that community. OT Platform responded to persistent requests from previous community participants to continue making work in collaboration with OT Platform, by establishing a weekly open performance making workshop held at the Rita Kelly Theatre. The workshop provides a safe space for participants to explore the art of performance making, supported by four facilitators, providing language and literacy support. Since April 2017 three seasons have passed resulting in three one off poly-vocal performances: Systems (RK Theatre, 2017), Nothing (Five Lamps Arts Festival, 2018) and Patterns (RK Theatre, 2018).

A statement from Maud and Bernie
The unpredictability of our practice has been the proud focus of our work in Dublin's urban periphery of Dublin 8, a postal code area with obscure external boundaries and heavily delineated internal boundaries with no public cultural centre.

By inviting professional and non-professional collaborators to respond to an abstract concept in our practice we investigate multiple trajectories with their own singular time-space reality and attempt to stage these trajectories collectively, not as one body, but as an assemblage or a collective of multiple bodies of different shapes and sizes on stage simultaneously. Dublin 8 means nothing, but the communally investigated trajectories that are revealed to us inform us about the multiplicity of trajectories active in this space and leaves us with the imagination of many more trajectories to be discovered; the agency of ruins; the forgotten, viable and future ruins.

The black box theatre for us as performers used to be the ultimate empty space for a performance to take place. Dare I say the black box was a neutral space. Since our practice developed at the Coombe Hospital, a performance in an established black box theatre becomes as intricately complex as a performance at Collin's Barracks or Grafton Street. The Black box space as an active trajectory needs to be included as such in our treatment of the performance as a whole. Who attends this theatre, how is it linked to the knowledge centres and institutions in the city, what companies or artists are given access to this public space and what artists are not?

This is one of the many discoveries Bernie and I made as part of the ongoing collaboration with Laura Hopes in the discovery of the Theatre of Ruins, our practice embedded in the space of Dublin 8.

Interdisciplinarity has been a very useful mechanism to avoid the simplifications of the traditional theatre arts, with often overt representation of trajectories on the main stages. In conversation with Laura the intention was to delve deeper in the potential of the performativity of space through poly-vocal explorations within the spectrum of the visual and performing arts from a humancentric perspective within the Anthropocene. The conundrum of the Anthropocene and the Sublime are already recognisably present in the work we do…but how can we prove that they are part of the work?

Art making is activism, a form of interrupting the structured and unstructured trajectories found on stage. Our art making is not purely anthropological, observational. Our research frame is not focused on historicity, the perceived histories that are relevant seep through the separate trajectories in live and desk research and in this way become part of the performance. The historicity is an embodied one, where the physical material inevitably performs the ontologies of time and space.

We are not attempting to anchor the multiple trajectories with their unique time and space developments in one performance. We allow a free flow of these trajectories on stage where they reveal themselves and to each other as a communal experience between audiences and performers.

The devil is in the detail. OT Platform's work is not about attempting to claim universality or telling the big story. It's affect comes from deep, detailed explorations and the staging of individual experiences and perceptions collectively. The specificity of precarious lives collectively, contribute to a new or becoming perspective of the collective performance (the collective 'I').

We take it that we are living with rather than gazing at the ruins.

For us as artists we use theatre conventions and spaces as conduits to gather the peculiar, the beautiful, the everyday in the becoming environment we are inherently part of. The experience of this performance is often an absurd one, even for the artists developing the performance, as the trajectories collide, run parallel and are of opposing qualities. (Bruno Latour, messy contradictions)

We are not mapping Dublin 8, but are looking at the vertical dissection of space and time with all seen and unseen trajectories there present.

We are seeing each participant, including ourselves, as an object of observation as well as observers. All being in and being with the world. By actively sharing performance ideas observing each other and feed-backing, we attempt to apply a brutal honesty about the presentation of selves, acknowledging our un-representability.

The idea of the natural and man-made materials intersecting and interconnecting on the changing planet, mineralising in times to come in new and different ways, resonated with our ways of using diverse materials in the staging of our work. Scenography for 'theatre of ruins' is a presentation of materials (including the human) in a space that are inevitable to the presentation of the new work. Without this scenography the performance is not complete. The materials used are part of the scenography and also have their own performativity.

Dublin 8 2019

Ruins for three voices: 1,2 and 3

1: So…we've been reading Doreen Massey…she talks about multiple trajectories, a multiplicity of trajectories, space and place and the construction of both.

2: Uh-huh - So, am I making it too simplistic if I position or use the body, the district, the city, the country as metaphors for the global?

3: Dublin is at the mercy of global forces – it is sold off – then agency is taken out of the hands of the local.

2: There's a sort of extractive violence when spaces are removed and occupied, settled. The literal sky is parcelled off, sun and shade commodified.

1: What is the logic to survival?

3: If the space is open and becoming – the ruins of social strata may still be attached to you, but you can transcend them

1: But nothing can happen if the space is delineated – it is less open.

3: Do we have any agency over it?

1: Will the future ever land?

2: We should mesh the many, the multiple into one body

3: Acknowledging that diversity is there gives a really good start for an open space of potential, for agency, for becoming.

2: It's not fixed in time then like a museum vitrine, it's a lived, changing, unfolding space.

1: It's about seeing ruins as trajectory – one of many – not a constant. We're acting as witnesses, agents and outsider *blow-ins* – we're coping with 'it' – learning to work with the chance value of space, the instability and precarity.

3: Every separate body alters the space a little each time

2: I'm flattened, flattening – you two are traversing the space – you're active agents working within a timeframe that is continuous

1: I really want you to consider the relationship between performer and audience.

2: I don't normally do that…do you mean to bring the sublime back to rhetoric maybe? An invitation, a rhetorical device for addressing an audience, heightening their experience?

3: The becoming process is becoming corrupted (*you have ruined me*)

1: What's to be done?

All: Telling terrible stories without losing your audience.

2: we heard about a patchy Anthropocene, not to synchronise users, about going granular and not using descriptors on a planetary scale.

1: The third space between acting and spectating

2: The double-edged gaze
3: performing these constellations, where environments intersect

only partially, there's no empty space, the air is not neutral, expanded choreography and the dramaturgy of the background.

2: do you remember that guy who spoke about…the backward glance taken from the edge of a vividly imagined abyss……living with…gazing at… The anthropocene can only be understood through the personal. Unethical images of ruins…

1: This needs to be a performance of the real – showing the inherent instability – showing one or many anthropocenes

3: Learning how to live in the ruins.

2: it's a strangely united *we* as victim of the anthropocene. Do we agree? Should we talk about the othering eye/I…

1: We're learning how to navigate this– redrawing the boundaries of understanding – beating the bounds, d'you remember? And really thinking about Performability and perform(ability)

2: If you're tired you're still selective, whereas if you're exhausted you're combinatorial

3: You end up in a permanent state of suspense – precarious and possibly not cohesive – the shock or suspense of exhaustion disrupts us from what we view as human.

1: There is no I without the non-I, eye

2: Not everything is translatable… allow space for this and integrate blended knowledge forms because as Anna Tsing said there is no pure 'knower' – we all move between multiple ontologies all the time…

1: A need for action, for activation, for activism.

2: What is exploitative or reductive? How do we share the absences, the voices not in the room?

3: How can we mediate this or manipulate this experience – how can we represent the unrepresentable?

2: Is this the imbalance, this instability that we want for an audience?

1: remember the possibility of *hope being a community resource equally shared*?

2: I thought the ruin archive could form the scenography, inert until performative activation, but this is not nearly enough; it merely perpetuates the outsider's voyeuristic gaze, fixing the space in an aspic of degradation
1: Perhaps this is also an experience we want for and from the audience – perhaps this is the tread along the line of the sublime

2: Sometimes plunging into discomfort, witnessing the anxiety or violence of the anthropocene.

3: The recognition of possibility…coupled with the horror of voyeurism

1: The lurching unsettling

3: Witnessing the ruins

1: Perform the ruins.

// Ruins Transcript

[00:00:09.360]
Beyond the physical.
Next door for the love of God, goodness on a plate. Corners, edges surfaces. The windy corner, uneven bare foot, the exposed pipework. She was glancing through a corridor, sheen crumbing, crumbling an arcade of unexpected fancy posies.

The fireplace suspended mid-air. Fluff. The literal. Grasshoppers, nearly audible. Dust, death. In ruins, stones. The foreign invasion. They're welcomed by the metal brigade. Ruined me, he ruined me. Hovering footloose. That place. Slaps, flaking, fingers picking, spinning.

[00:00:49.960]
Good grief. He has her ruined. Circles, fingertips halfmoon nail into polystyrene print. Relief. Anger almighty. She's spoilt. Soon all the graves will be on the move.

[00:01:04.230]
She's lost everything and is ruined. Walls. A caravan, the ruined, circle house, exodus, destroyed. Getting out of here. Dome red, exploded. This I-land. Flowers, ribbons, Jesus heart. This forever invaded space.

[00:01:23.470]
22. 18. Not even the dead are satisfied here, no more.
The unresolved past wrapped in a ruin. Horse. Bubble-wrap the ruin. Peeking out through the soil.
The morning is suiting you. Through the mockery. Tanned clip clop. Pay tribute to the ruin.
Cute horse, along with all the others I'd back. Hold on to the ruin. T'Others peeping in through slits. The pylon. Through slits. The stupa. The contradictions are alluring. Peeping holes.

[00:01:58.510]
That's it. The Space is unresolvable. Shhhhh. Clay. A charter charts. The stupa. From luxury chambers. You'd call them that if all that you have is to hope to get through it.

[00:02:14.350]
Why that shape? What purpose but a phallic shape? Oh good grief! Good grief

[00:02:19.930]
Three men in the park. almighty razor. Thrusting. Laying on the grass. If only I look good. Others they are dead. Shakes, wouldn't that be grand! By the memorial tree, into the sky. A tree planted to honour the dead.
Where I saw mountains.
Just throw a long grey Mac over it. Killed by heroin. Cover it in crystals. So close but high like a wall.

[00:02:44.830]
There are transactions in the ruins right by the obsolete statue. The circular meeting point. In exchange; the city's encircled. The latest trend in cosmetic distractions. Cash for drugs. But doesn't realize most of the time.
By Jesus. Calling to be seen.
The saddle. To be admired, right?
I cower at our ruined bodies. The vinyl was peeling and spongy, damp flesh. Spoilt by the ruins.
Anyone, anyone? Extrudes. I am ruined by the environment.
Corpse's dance with me, full of delight.

[00:03:23.220]
I have ruined the environment. But much more comfortable.
She keeps walking with a little bit less of herself every day. Then swooping like a BMX bandit. Oh, dust collections! The traces of unfathomable places, the traces of the past spell history versing what we know or think we know. Building new monuments, legs akimbo. Dust, without form, the wobble before the glide.
There is dust. Without entrances. And barred church... rails. Haunting. Photos. Maude said looking in, helpless all the same.

[00:04:03.970]
The dust is the dust of what is gone and what is to become. They're cheap light fittings like question marks looking for answers on the streets.
Do not open a window. Nobody gave consent.

[00:04:14.690]
Was it their choir? To be late. The giggles, arms outstretched.

[00:04:20.420]
Should she push him off the stage? To take her usual route. Like a foreign species?

The egg man's mouth and eyebrow waggle. Go back where you came from. Avoid the back wall. Air and cobble. To become. And tread hexagonal clean, sanded wood. To stop an empty wretch.

[00:04:42.690]
Hey, hey, can you please tell me how to get there?
Grain? There's a rock in the windpipe. My fingertips again. Bubbling. Take a right, expanding and contracting. Stop
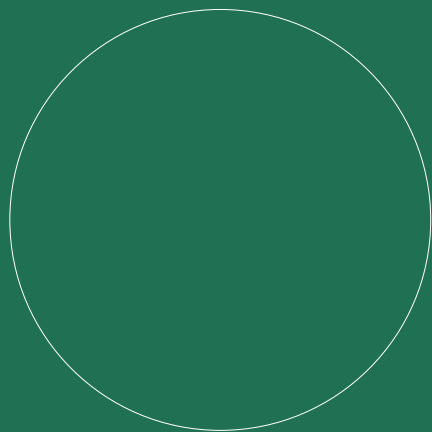
SEA

SEA

Walked the ribbed sand under the flat keels of whales,
Under the translucent belly of the snaking current,
The tiny shadows of tankers passed over him like snails

as he breathed water, a walking fish in its element
He floated in stride, his own shadow over his eyes
Like a grazing shark, through vast meadows of coral,

Over barnacled cannons whose hulks sprouted anemones
Like Philoctete's shin; he walked for three hundred years
In the silken wake like a ribbon of the galleons,

Their bubbles fading like the transparent men-o'-wars
With their lilac dangling tendrils, bursting like aeons,
Like phosphorous galaxies; he saw the huge cemeteries

Of bone and the huge crossbows of the rusted anchors,
And groves of coral with hands as massive as trees
Like calcified ferns and the greening gold ingots of bars

Whose value had outlasted that of the privateers.

Derek Walcott, *Omeros*[1]

This chapter uncovers in more depth some of the themes that have bubbled to the surface in previous chapters, that traditionally may have been subsumed by other narratives and more dominant ontologies. While arguing throughout this thesis for the importance of multiple voices and collective forms of knowledge, this has so far been steeped in particular symbols; that of land and ownership, and the ideas surrounding ruination. These investigations have unfolded in geophysical locations marked by theories of the Sublime and its relation to the epoch we now inhabit; the Anthropocene. An age that according to Delphi Carstens

> feels the Romantic unheimlich. To the recurring bloodied ghosts of human history and the spectral incursions of techno-science into the spheres of everyday life we should add the Anthropogenic ghoulishness of 'erosion, pollution, contamination, a monstrous accumulation of garbage, and of course a massive loss in biodiversity [which] tell, and will go on telling [about humans] in a far away future… measured in geological time.[2]

This chapter's geophysical cipher is the sea, and the mutability and indeterminacy that it offers. As an archive of life, death, exploration and exploitation, its ink writes the various histories of lives past and possible futures. The one ocean covering the globe connects us to our evolutionary past and contains our troubled and transitory present, where need and surplus create the ebb and flow of peoples, species, detritus and bloom. This unknown, scarcely explored realm, the apotheosis of the Sublime, perhaps offers the possibility of more blended and sustainable prospects ahead, but as a barometer of the planet's health, its increasing salinity and temperatures are as fearful to behold as the rumoured monsters beloved of maps, myth and Moby Dick.

Implicit to the commentary thus far has been the tacit understanding that ideas of the Sublime and the Anthropocene inhabit multiple interpretations and that hitherto, they and their associated structures of visuality, space-time and subject-centredness have inhabited positions of dominance, of academic surety, of Eurocentric power systems. It is these established appraisals that will be unsettled and cast adrift, to investigate whether new approaches can make these terms lively and useful, not just to those in positions of political, financial or ecological security, but to a global populace, made up of humans, animals, plants, mountains and rivers. The potential efficacy of these terms to encompass the more-than-human is used in this chapter to open and embrace manifold knowledge systems that might point to a sustainable networked response to the challenges posed by a Sublime Anthropocene, in its engulfment, its scale and its ever-unfolding temporality. This interpretation of a Sublime Anthropocene acknowledges that while humans have played a disproportionately large role in its formation, they are nonetheless part of Nature, entangled in its complex systems, and while they have a huge duty in formulating a response to the accelerating ecological emergency, much work may be accomplished through an acknowledgment of one's own precarity and quieter, more attentive *listening* to the voices that are traditionally subsumed in anthropocentric narratives.

Time

The continuing inequality of human existence, so particularly marked in asymmetric experiences of the Anthropocene, seems on the part of those insisting on a universality, to systematically exert a power dynamic akin to imperialism or colonialism. Heather Davis and Zoe Todd point out that: "without recognising that from the beginning, the Anthropocene is a universalising project, it serves to re-invisibilise the power of Eurocentric narratives, again re-placing them as the neutral and global perspective."[3] This echoes Rosi Braidotti's philosophical trajectory;[4] of wrangling with the genealogy of humanism and then evaluating a form of anti-humanism which leads to the post-humanities:[5]

> A sustainable ethics for non-unitary subjects rests on an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism on the one hand and the barriers of negativity on the other. In other words, to be post-human does not mean to be indifferent to the humans, or to be de-humanised. On the contrary, it rather implies a new way of combining ethical values with the well-being of an enlarged sense of community, which includes ones territorial or environmental inter-connections.[6]

This insight, which forms the foundations of the post-human turn, is bolstered by Braidotti's descriptions of the posthuman, nomadic, ethical or minoritarian subject imagined in ontological relationality. She goes on to describe those still "quite attached to the 'human', that creature from time immemorial who, as a species, a planetary presence and a cultural formation, spells out specific modes of belonging."[7] The unfinished business of intra-human inequality, and a lack of more than a passing acknowledgement of those still left in the temporal 'queue' of progress,[8] of those not "invited to formulate a response,"[9] still lingers. Unpicking these threads locates me about half-way through the 'post-human turn', assured that it does provide the eventual answers, but confined to scrabbling through the 'workings-out' of what it actually means to 'make kin.'[10]

As outlined in the first chapter, many pre-Enlightenment land management practices operated sustainable systems based upon actual need, unsullied by the motive of profit and surplus. It is simplistic and overly romantic to imagine pre-Enlightenment or indigenous land management practices as containing all the answers to the problem of the Anthropocene, but it is a truism that many of these societies held and continue to maintain practical ontologies that can affect and inform current and future sustainable collaborative modes for living on a damaged planet. The rational premise that

the Enlightenment propounded depended on a rejection of non-scientific, pagan practices that held the land and its more-than-human components to be agentic and alive.[11] This 'rationality' particularly held sway in the Eurocentric vision where, by 'human', "we meant that creature familiar to us from the Enlightenment and its legacy: 'The Cartesian subject of the cogito, the Kantian "community of reasonable beings", or in more sociological terms, the subject as citizen, rights-holder, property-owner and so on.'"[12] These Enlightenment-era "reasonable beings" posited themselves at an intellectual and temporal distance from the terror-inducing superstitious vagaries of the Dark Ages and replaced the unknowables of the early, pantheistic religions with an academic certitude. Organised religion, based upon speculative fabulations emerging from Crusade-era heroics of light fighting against the dark unknown, promoted an unshakeable certainty in the moral rectitude of Christianity; including its calendar, its teachings, its vengeful God. In Britain, traditional earth-based epistemological systems left behind vestigial traces in Solstices and festivals which were then assimilated into the practices of a dominant church. Tantalising sculptural vestiges of Green Men and Sheela-na-Gigs were then unwittingly incorporated into the decoration of Christian churches,[13] as with much Christian iconography whose roots often lay in older religious or cultural traditions.

> The most common and perhaps obvious interpretation of the Green Man is that of a pagan nature spirit, a symbol of man's reliance on and union with nature, a symbol of the underlying life-force, and of the renewed cycle of growth each spring. In this respect, it seems likely that he has evolved from older nature deities such as the Celtic Cernunnos and the Greek Pan and Dionysus. Some have gone so far as to make the argument that the Green Man represents a male counterpart - or son or lover or guardian - to Gaia (or the Earth Mother, or Great Goddess), a figure which has appeared throughout history in almost all cultures.[14]

The constant updating and accumulating of gods, seasons and fables into orthodox systems is reflected in Hesiod's Theogony, dating from 700 BC, where he describes the origins and genealogies of the Greek Gods, and attempts in its verse, as Donna Haraway styles it, "to stabilize a very bumptious queer family."[15] It delineates the origin story of Gaia/Earth arising out of Chaos to become the seat of the Olympian immortals above, and the depths of Tartarus (hell) below. Haraway outlines one element of the scholarship of archaeologist Marija Gimbutas, in claiming that "Gaia as Mother Earth is a later form of a pre-Indo-European, Neolithic Great Mother,"[16] and cites Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, and philosopher Déborah Danowski as exorcising "lingering notions that Gaia is confined to the Ancient Greeks and subsequent Eurocultures in their refiguring the urgencies of our times in the post-Eurocentric conference 'The Thousand Names of Gaia'."[17] The philosopher Bruno Latour, asserts that Gaia subverts any temporal stratification previously associated with classical notions of Nature, and refutes any benign suppositions we might have about this figure: "'Nature' in the classical conception, had levels, strata; it was possible to pass from one to another according to a continuous well-ordered process of 'zooming'. Gaia subverts the levels. There is nothing inert, nothing benevolent, nothing external in Gaia."[18] Gaia, of course, alongside her ancient connotations, has had her nomenclature claimed as the figurehead for British scientist and inventor James Lovelock's 'Gaia Theory', developed in the late 1960's, which suggests that the organic and inorganic constituents of the Earth have collaboratively evolved as a unique self-regulating system: "[i]t suggests that this living system has automatically controlled global temperature, atmospheric content, ocean salinity, and other factors, that maintains its own habitability."[19] The dating of the Gaia origin story may be nearly as fraught as any dating of the Anthropocene, and may in fact, go hand in hand with it, but cannot obviate the contemporary resonance and hyperobjectivity of this figure who locates their:

dark-Romantic sense of the sublime in the vast, sonorous and indeterminable aspects of Gaia; that immense, mysterious, ineffable, spectral and distributed network of information which includes but infinitely extends beyond humans, and to which our species is utterly subservient, if not insignificant.[20]

The singular narrative that obliterates these heterogeneities, also makes monstrous that which it doesn't recognise. Linebaugh and Rediker reference those "[u]navowed by God, those who had defaced natural reason and were neither nations in right nor nations in name, 'but multitudes only, and swarms of people.'"[21] In much the same way that the unknown depths of early seafarers' maps were populated by sea-monsters, Francis Bacon, in his 1622 essay *An Advertisement Touching An Holy War*,[22] referred to 'shoals' and 'routs' of people. By taking his terms from natural history – a 'swarm' of bees, a 'shoal' of seals or whales, a 'rout' of wolves – and applying them to people, Bacon drew on his theory of monstrousness. These people had degenerated from the laws of nature and taken 'in their body and frame of estate a monstrosity.'[23]

As referenced in the first chapter, the subjugation induced by the expropriations through the enclosures of the commons created a perfect storm exacted on the populace, with the "destruction of guilds and assaults on paganism…new kinds of workers were created in the form of slavery, enforced directly by terror."[24] The self-organisation of groups of workers was viewed by Bacon as monstrous and he used "the myth of the many-headed hydra to develop his theory of monstrosity, a subtle, thinly veiled policy of terror and genocide."[25] The analogy of the many-headed hydra, the mythical sea-beast and opponent of Hercules conjures not only the *Chthulu* of Haraway's Chthulucene,[26] but also the aquatic inhabitants, the *Drexciyans*, that inspired Ayesha Hameed's essay *Black Atlantis: Three Songs*,[27] (and her longer performance lecture).

The *Drexciyans*' genealogy is outlined by Afrofuturist Detroit techno group Drexciya in the 1997 notes to their album *The Quest:*

> During the greatest Holocaust the world has ever known, pregnant America-bound African slaves were thrown overboard by the thousands during labour for being sick and disruptive cargo. Is it possible that they could have given birth at sea to babies that never needed air? Are Drexciyans water-breathing aquatically mutated descendants of those unfortunate victims of human greed? Recent experiments have shown a premature human infant saved from certain death by breathing liquid oxygen through its underdeveloped lungs.[28]

This alternative reality and the freedom from a death invoked through slavery affords an overturning of the atrocities of the Middle Passage, and becomes a key feature of the speculative fabulation form, one evoked in Derek Walcott's *Omeros* and the alternative narratives provided by the Afrofuturism of the film *Black Panther*,[29] described by Achille Mbembe as

> …a futuristic fable, a techno-narrative whose power derives from its reversal of the African sign, recalling the diasporic reflection on the possibility of a new world, of a black community which would be neither debased nor stamped with the seal of defilement. The Afrofuturism of *Black Panther* is the overcoming of Western humanism from the vantage point of those who Western modernity assigned the space of the non-human. The future beyond Western humanism is prefigured by the coupling of the human body and the quasi-infinite plasticity of technology, and the concomitant transformation of the violated Earth of Africa into astral material.[30]

The potential-filled hybrid and plastic state of the living/haunting Drexciyans; the parallel-universe dynamic historicity of Wakanda's inhabitants in *Black Panther*, and the aquatic visions of Achille, the fictional hero of Walcott's *Omeros*, demonstrate powerfully autonomous figures when 'intimacy with the inhuman' are conjured.[31] These protagonists have reckoned with accepted history and have claimed the category of the inhuman. In staking an alternative claim for the inhuman, the insane brutality of the Middle Passage is rejected, the horrors of genocide and slavery are acknowledged and also averred. Death is lived with,[32] but 'home' will be made again. Kathryn Yusoff cites Sylvia Wynter's contention that

> the revaluation of black life and the resistance to dehumanisation could only be made through the "creation of a counter-culture through the transplantation of their old cultures onto a strange soil, its reinvention in new and alien conditions. It was in this transplantation, this metamorphosis of an old culture into a new, that the blacks *made themselves indigenous to their new land* (Wynter 46-7).[33]

In her assertion of the fungibility of the black body, and the reclamation of the category of the inhuman, Yusoff champions a worldview that sees the inhuman as a dynamic force within a world that is agentic and alive, that utilises indigenous modes, such as a 'singing-in' of the world, where space emerges from people moving through landscape, rather than materialising from an imperial cartography, externally imposed. The agency of Vanessa Watt's concept of Place-Thought (described in the first chapter of this commentary) outlines this as a "non-distinctive space where place and thought were never separated because they never could or can be separated. Place-Thought is based upon the premise that the land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts."[34]

In his essay, *The Uncanny*[35] Freud quotes Ernst Jentsch, who foregrounds his understanding of the uncanny amongst his Eurocentric misgivings as to "whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not in fact be animate."[36] This unease can be extrapolated to a wider contemporaneous hesitancy in adopting indigenous worldviews that are positioned in contrast to Enlightenment rationality. Indeed, as Elisabeth Povinelli sets out, this unease continues to perpetuate the "attribution of an inability of various colonized people to differentiate the kinds of things that have agency, subjectivity, and intentionality of the sort that emerges with life has been the grounds of casting them into a premodern mentality and a postrecognition difference."[37] This has echoes of the reservations described later on by Anna Grear surrounding the legal application of personhood upon non-human agents such as lakes, mountains, rocks, and trees.[38] This ontological turn is probably the greatest challenge for those previously considering themselves at the "masterful, knowing centre," struggling now to reckon with the monolithic Anthropocene. Jem Bendell's call for deep adaptation advocates a non-asymmetric accommodation with the inhuman.[39] Bendell writes that

> Personal vulnerability arises as people begin to realise the fragility of the systems they depend on for their everyday lives. Solidarity arises as people realise both that individual defensive reactions will make matters worse and that they seek mutual care with others in the face of crisis. A desire for liberation can arise as people come to see how our culture and economic system has taught us – and driven us – towards destructive competition and striving. Keeping that personal journey of 'vulnerability-solidarity-liberation' in mind as actions and messages are developed and communicated will be important.[40]

It will clearly not be sufficient to merely recognise individual vulnerabilities. The solidarity that Bendell exhorts us to develop, that Haraway names 'kinship,'[41] is dependent upon a co-existent symbiosis *among* humans and *with* more-than humans. This relies upon a methodology which works to undermine Eurocentric enlightenment fears of the monstrous, or inhuman: "The etymology of monstrosity suggests the complex roles that monsters play within society. 'Monster' probably derives from the Latin, *monstrare,* meaning 'to demonstrate', and *monere,* 'to warn'. Monsters, in essence, are *demonstrative.* They reveal, portend, show and make evident, often uncomfortably so."[42] This pertinent suggestion demonstrates that those summarily dismissed as 'Monsters' due to racial-, gender- or class-based discriminatory categorisation, are now those best placed to demonstrate to a wider global community future forms of sustainable living. Best-placed to indicate the early warning systems that have for so long formed the heart of their relationship with the earth. In the Old English literature of *Beowulf*, the monster Grendel was an *aglæca*, from *aglæc,* meaning "calamity, terror, distress, oppression."[43] Surely the calamities and associated capital-fuelled oppressions of the Anthropocene are the new monsters we face. Mbembe refutes the unknown shadowy hybrid monsters of the colonial imagination when he states that "[i]t is not true, either as a starting point or conclusion, that Africa is an incomparable monster, a silent shadow and mute place of darkness, amounting to no more than a lacuna."[44] The contemporaneously monstrous Anthropocene sublimely warns us of the horrors in our midst: rather than the symbol of the monster being used to connote the unknown; the terra incognita; the foreign other, it demonstrates how the monster is now *us*.[45]

Heather Love, in her work *Feeling Backward*, uses queer theory to encourage us to think *with* those that have been designated as the monster, rather than living in fear of the monster that has to be supplicated or soothed.[46] If we think *with* the unknown, the inhuman, the monstrous or the more-than-human; if we embrace Keat's negative

capability,[47] we can engender the reterritorialization that Deleuze and Guattari have outline as necessary for an alternative *Sublime* positioning of the Anthropocene.[48]

Harking back to Haraway's descriptions of 'natureculture', it is this transplantation of both culture into nature, through customs, traditions, epistemologies, and also the avowal of indigeneity to the land and to the wider Earth that posits a positive affirmation of the 'inhuman', existing in sympoiesis with the more-than-human. This positive figuration rejects the fear-filled Eurocentric pejoration of the uncanny, the zombie, the voodoo, and reclaims belief systems of sympoiesis that toy with Haraway's ides of cyborg composting;[49] an inhuman blend of vibrant matter; 'animal, vegetable, mineral'. The unsettling thought that this parlour game may in future be redundant is echoed in what Robert Macfarlane identifies as the uncanny "doubled unsettlement of the Anthropocene; an epoch in which Earth is revealing itself as both acutely vulnerable and restlessly lively."[50] The lively more-than human ontologies that form the make-up of what Jane Bennett identifies as 'vibrant matter',[51] are crucial in our earth-system's formation, in our biological evolution, in our very gut-systems, and yet scant attention has been divested on these alternative modes of knowledge and future survival thus far. Throughout the doom-laden utterances of sixth mass extinction events lurks the apparent knowledge that, despite the casual violence meted out on more-than human subjects, the ultimate victims in these dominant narratives would appear to be humans. While this is clearly not (simply) the case, there remains the foreboding that the calamitous uprooting of habitats and the desolation of large tracts of earth's life-support systems such as peatbogs, tundra ice, ancient forests and sea-grass beds continue to desecrate humans as well as many other species. In this way, our ultimate fear is realised: that we are the architects of the ruins our children will be forced to precariously inhabit. The tree systems that Richard Powers outlines in *The Overstory,*[52] have developed protective communication skills to work as a collaborative 'family', warning of disease, allocating

minerals and sharing a root system to function more powerfully as a network. Migratory ocean species are travelling further north in rapidly warming seas and finding ways to adapt to increased water salinity. The rare and much-prized Matsutake mushrooms that Tsing describes in *The Mushroom at the End of the World* have colonised land left despoiled after industrial logging and instantiated a workforce of human collaborators in the wake of their spores. There are stark lessons here to be learned by humans in these narratives of adaptation and collaboration. The agency developed and displayed by more-than-humans forges by far the most robust and networked response to precarious times: rocks, soils, trees and animals are already companion to and collaborator with societies whose ontologies are open to blended knowledges, whose attentiveness to the Anthropocene's early repercussions in weather events, scarcity and deluge. The peoples who are termed 'animist' for example, may be united in what the anthropologist Tim Ingold calls a "way of being that is alive and open to a world in continuous birth. For them, the world is a perpetual source of astonishment but not surprise."[53] These groups' early warning systems, their timely sensing of change, is beginning to be echoed in the sentiments of late adopters waking slowly to the reality of climate emergency. In *The Great Derangement*, Amitav Ghosh describes: "The uncanny and improbable events that are beating at our doors seem to have stirred a sense of recognition … that humans were never alone, that we have always been surrounded by beings who share elements of that which we thought most distinctively our own: the capacities of will, thought and consciousness."[54] Our uncanny more-than-human companions demonstrate that many ontologies of sustainability already exist.

Space
The phrase 'more-than-human' as a mode of enquiry, eases a passage between the states of feminist anti-humanism and post-humanism; not quite letting go of the need for an equable access to justice, shelter and sustenance as basic human rights, but also acknowledging the

equal need for these basic rights among more-than humans. Sarah Whatmore, professor of environment and social policy describes her research as "concerned with the material and ecological fabric of social life and the politics of knowledge through which this fabric is contested and re-made historically and today. Of particular interest are those situations and events in which different ecological epistemologies are brought into conflict."[55] This state of tension represents an honest appraisal of the dichotomy proffered when human rights are brought into collision with more-than human rights in many territories. The multispecies 'hybrid geographies' that Whatmore describes,[56] are subject to external and internal forces that currently and inevitably seem to prioritise certain (white/privileged) humans whilst destabilising other humans, and more-than-humans.

Much as the dominant narrative of Hesiod seems to trump earlier incarnations of Gaia and her origin story, throughout the history of Eurocentric dominance, many interwoven, relational, autochthonous belief systems that put forward the earth as alive and sentient have been rubbished as superstitious, backward or witchcraft. The dominant forces of colonisation and plantation-based slavery exerted their power through manifold violences: the despoiling of ancestral lands through coercive extractive practices; the silencing of religious expression; the importing of *lingua francae* with the simultaneous banning of native languages, and the enforcement of alien governance or legal structures. Each of these Eurocentric tools weaponised the ontologies of the 'reasonable beings' exerting them; to veer from Enlightenment norms was to provoke mistrust, fear, grotesque punishment or exile. The kneejerk extermination of any cultural or indigenous heterogeneity went hand in hand with the physical subjugation of 'others', as Yusoff describes: "Objectification is enacted to deaden subjectivity (and relationality to place). This attitude towards the enslaved contains, regulates, and subjugates bodies."[57] Any expression of spirit, any talisman of identity or personhood was quashed by those in authority, yet, much as the Sheela-na-Gig persisted, so too religious and cultural

forms of expression somehow survived the violent banishment and objectification enacted through slavery and dispossession. These glowing vestiges of ceremonies – of oral histories, song, cures, ancestral languages, birth names, calendars, crafts, hunting and pastoral knowledge, numeric systems, festivals, animal husbandry, inheritance traditions – like embers have been fanned, blown upon again and again, cradled in a cupped hand and laid among the tinder of resistance, identity and subjectivity, rejecting the dead-weight of the limited, dehumanising Enlightenment gaze. Many of these practices, deemed pagan, voodoo, or undertaken by witchdoctors have now entered the mainstream. In the ruins of the Anthropocene, while searching for a solution we among the global rich may espy that many of these indigenous ontologies of resistance, cultural life and survival are *already* formulated upon a foundation of sustainable co-existence with more-than humans. In the desperate global north's naked struggle to maintain standards of comfortable living, any sudden grabbing for alternative wisdoms for survival smacks of yet another form of commodification of the native – this time aiming for their spirit, their knowledge, their teleological systems rather than bodies as capital fuel. The danger inherent in any contemporaneous romanticising of the excluded is that the othering of these knowledges that occurred through colonial or slave suppression might be dangerously reconfigured in the trope of the sage and exotic subaltern, which further obliterates autonomy. "By consigning the native to the most perfect Otherness, this violence not only reveals the native as radically Other, it annihilates him/her."[58] This action yet again imposes an intellectual and physical distance between the we and the they. As Yusoff states:

> If the imagination of planetary peril coerces an ideal of "we", it only does so when the entrappings of late liberalism become threatened. This "we" negates all responsibility for how the wealth of that geology was built of the subtending strata of indigenous genocide and erasure, slavery and

carceral labour, and evades what that accumulation of wealth still makes possible in the present – lest "we" forget that the economies of geology still largely regulate geopolitics and modes of naturalising, formalising, and operationalising dispossession and ongoing settler colonialism.[59]

While it feels incumbent upon any serious practitioner trying to formulate an adequate response to the Anthropocene and its attendant capitalist ingredients that they should valorise and learn from indigenous epistemologies and practices, particularly when struggling, as Haraway puts it, to "live and die well together,"[60] it is of paramount importance that this goes hand in hand with a reckoning of and reparation towards the structural violences of settler colonialism that fuelled its inception.

In the same vein of conquest and destruction that formalised the strategy of *terra nullius,*[61] as described in the first chapter, the 'abstract gaze' of 'reasonable beings' promulgated many of the racial hierarchical taxonomies of dominated peoples. This categorisation marked 'the other' as somehow less than their white compatriots or colonisers, this purview then empowered through complexes of visuality. Mbembe describes this gaze, a faulty assemblage made when

> sticking together these bits of the actual, colonial discourse ends up producing a closed, solitary totality that it elevates to the rank of a generality. And so reality becomes enclosed within a pre-ordained madness. How could it be otherwise, since the actual is no longer perceived except through the mirror of a perversity that is, in truth, that of the subject uttering this discourse?[62]

The categorisation, which variously reduces humans to a blank slate, or into what Antonio Gramsci, the Marxist philosopher, categorises as the subaltern,[63] *then* denudes humanity even further, through

plantation-based slavery, to base commodity. The capitalist systems which controlled, claimed and leached profit through terraforming were also turned upon humans. Eyal Weizman, who writes about climate change in relation to Bedouin communities is quoted by Davis and Todd as stating that "[c]olonisers did not only seek to overcome unfamiliar and harsh climatic conditions, but rather to transform them. Native people, who were seen as part of the natural environment, were displaced along with the climate or killed."[64] Yusoff details the fleshly sums demanded by the colonial machine, and its apparent plasticity to the violent *terra nullius* tactics of the suppressor: "As land is made into tabula rasa for European inscription of its militant maps, so too do Indigenes and Africans become rendered as a writ or ledger of flesh inscribed in colonial grammars."[65] The all-pervasive dehumanising of others, as witnessed in the unspeakably punitive sugar-slave complex initiated in 1452, spirals grotesquely into breeding programmes licensed through systematised rape and 'stud'-lending, the massacre of human cargo offloaded from the Zong slave-ship in 1781, accompanied by a descent into the dubious scientific endeavours of phrenology and the physiological comparisons between humans and beasts of burden. At this nadir, those in authority have so lost sight of their fellow humanity, that market forces rather than morality prevail and a 'native' may well be worth less to them, monetarily, than an animal. These glaring realities of slavery so viscerally described in the contemporary fiction of Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Colson Whitehead, Yaa Gyasi, Derek Walcott, Wayétu Moore, Octavia Butler and countless others, also appear as ongoing violences that require a process of decolonisation. As Jodi Byrd and Michael Rothberg point out:

> The uncompleted dialogue between postcolonial and indigenous perspectives is in part a result of the infamous and falsely periodizing 'post' in postcolonial: the misleading suggestion that colonialism is over, which has been often and productively discussed by scholars of both indigeneity and colonialism.[66]

These uncompleted dialogues summon the ghost of casual cruelty, inadvertent inattention and naive assumption, thus belying the monolithic "geotrauma of a billion Black Anthropocenes"[67] *and* ignores the difficulties, as Mbembe puts it, that

> every age, including the postcolony, is in reality a combination of several temporalities. In the case of the postcolony, to postulate the existence of a "before" and an "after" of colonization could not exhaust the problem of the relationship between temporality and subjectivity, nor was it sufficient to raise questions about the passage from one stage (before) to the other (after), and the question of transit that such passage raises, or again to recognize that every age has contradictory significations to different actors.[68]

The system of plantation-based slavery dehumanised both perpetrators and subjects, rendering both *inhuman*, or subject to 'zombification.'[69] Any instinctual quavering that the injustices of colonisation towards humans supercede the injustices of ecocide towards plants and animals, is neatly but frustratingly summarised when Anna Grear writes; "[w]e risk only having respect for things insofar as they resemble human experience and characteristics."[70] This is the paradox at the heart of any questioning of the colonial roots of the Anthropocene, where Yusoff describes Blackness as the "energy and flesh of the Anthropocene… excluded from the wealth of its accumulation."[71] Unevenly human-driven and human-fuelled, the Anthropocene's wealth and injustices are similarly unevenly distributed with possibilities for legal rights being introduced for non-human entities: "[t]he law [instead] needs to develop a new framework in which the human is entangled and thrown in the midst of a lively materiality – rather than assumed to be the masterful, knowing centre."[72] This centre Grear describes represents the pathetic fallacy of centrism that occupies the certitude of most anthropocentric narratives. Donna Haraway asserts that the

"*Anthropocene* is a term most easily meaningful and usable by intellectuals in wealthy classes and regions; it is not an idiomatic term for climate, weather, land, care of country, or much else in great swathes of the world, especially but not only among indigenous peoples."[73] The casual violences that forged the conditions of the Anthropocene are all too often reiterated in its telling; for this issue does not need a *new* name – its conditions have been understood, accommodated and challenged in all its guises since its many-tentacled inception. Macfarlane describes feeling "a sudden, angry impatience with modern science for presenting as a revelation what indigenous societies take to be self-evident."[74]

Françoise Vergès quotes Jason Moore's description of the Anthropocene as one that makes for an easy story, "[e]asy, because it does not challenge the naturalized inequalities, alienation, and violence inscribed in modernity's strategic relations of power and production. It is an easy story to tell because it does not ask us to think about these relations at all."[75] Vergès goes on to say, "The notion (of the Anthropocene) sweeps up within it the diverse, dynamic, and even contradictory discourse of peoples throughout the globe contending with catastrophic environmental change," and maintains the nature/society division dear to Western thought, masking the fact that relations between humans are themselves produced by nature. The notion of the Anthropocene is "de-historicizing, universalizing, eternalizing, naturalizing a mode of production specific to a certain time and place," a strategy of ideological legitimation that blocks off any prospect of change."[76] The nature/society division that she outlines as inherent to the human centrism of traditional Western thought seems to have always been blurred when applied to the 'other'. Any notions of universalism among peoples seem to extend only to those who match the Eurocentric self-image. In this hierarchy of Eurocentric classification, clearly the 'native', the indigene, the subaltern, is taxonomically lumped in with animals, land, crops. Vergès goes on to state that

> Scholars have studied race as a central element of destructive environmental policies, but what connection can be made between the Western conception of nature as "cheap" and the global organization of a "cheap," racialized, disposable workforce, given the conception of nature as constant capital and the fact that "the organizers of the capitalist world system appropriated Black labor power as *constant* capital"? (Robinson, 1983)[77] What methodology is needed to write a history of the environment that includes slavery, colonialism, imperialism and racial capitalism, from the standpoint of those who were made into "cheap" objects of commerce, their bodies as objects renewable through wars, capture, and enslavement, fabricated as disposable people, whose lives do not matter?[78]

Any challenging of this sublimely distanced Eurocentric gaze of the Anthropocene necessitates telling, as Haraway describes it, of the "networks of sugar, precious metals, plantations, indigenous genocides, and slavery, with their labor innovations and relocations and recompositions of critters and things and sweeping up both human and non-human workers of all kinds. The infectious industrial revolution of England mattered hugely, but it is only one player in planet-transforming, historically situated, new enough, worlding relations."[79]

The sweeping together of humans and non-humans into commodity is a sadism perhaps best undermined and resisted through a reclamation of the category, 'inhuman'. Yusoff invokes the work of Tiffany King's 2016 analysis of 'Black Fungibility', redirecting the seemingly negative association of the porosity of the black body as a site of exchange and commodity, claiming that it at least enables "a momentary reflection upon the kinds of (often forgotten) relationships that Black bodies have to plants, objects and non-

human life forms."[80] King is further quoted as suggesting that "black fungibility can also operate as a site of deferral or escape from the current entrapments of the human,"[81] or of obviating the category of the "hollow object and negative entity."[82] My clearest understanding of this comes from reading historical accounts of Toussaint L'Ouverture's slave rebellions in Haiti, referenced indirectly in the Jamaica of Wayétu Moore's book *She Would be King*,[83] or Patrice Chamoiseau's novel *Texaco*,[84] which describes, using magical realism and historical testimony, the Maroon settlements of Martinique. In each text, the dynamic fungibility of the black body, particularly in relation to the more-than-human environment, is most powerfully realised in the Maroon states that shelter escaped slaves, freedmen or indigenous islanders. The quasi-utopian *terra incognita* that these communities occupied demanded a devoted engagement with the non-human, a perfect example of the *sympoiesis* that Haraway often describes. Subsistence, survival and resistance were fomented in these forests full of life that the overseers feared to enter, were protected by living reefs and Sublime crashing waves on the Maroon islands. Yusoff describes this in her chapter "Insurgent Geology" and I would suggest that an insurgent biology also informs her assertion in the chapter, "The Inhumanities", where she describes "this intimacy with the inhuman as an alliance with freedom in the matter and maroonage of imposed lands, to think freedom in the earth, outside and against the world of the "given" humanist subject (and their space-time)."[85] The rejection of the pejorative nature of the term 'inhuman' through a "muscular refashioning," and "destabilisation of the inhuman as a category of chattel into an atmospheric, environmental sense and geophysical 'tense' repositions the 'event' in a different idea of times, space and matter, an affective environment made through altered categories of description or aesthetics of the inhuman."[86] The slur is claimed, inverted and made powerful, rejecting "death without meaning."[87] It stands as rebuttal to any humanist demands, queers the imprimatur of temporality over space, and reinforces Doreen Massey's

arguments that the "[c]osmology of 'only one narrative' obliterates the multiplicities, the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space. It reduces simultaneous coexistence to place in the historical queue."[88]

Look

Massey's description of "only one narrative", the reality of only one perspective; these are all the tools of the traditional sublimating, subjugating trope utilized by the panoptical overseer or the military commander, figures described within Nicholas Mirzoeff's notion of the Complexes of Visuality. In *Being Ecological*, Timothy Morton describes this distancing device, the gaze, that has afforded a separation from and the sustenance of a model that has not only separated humans from nature, but also estranges and imposes hierarchies between groups of humans. To my mind, this distanced experiential yet again reiterates the Sublime mode of detachment inherent to most academic approaches to the Anthropocene. It also exposes the uncanny unease that Eurocentric thought has with unknown or unquantifiable realms, which Morton describes as the "abstract gaze of the Enlightenment."[89] An example that he gives of his gaze, is, C.F. Volney's *The Ruins of Empires*, which he notes is "staged from precisely this position outside the universe as a way to judge it."[90] This abstract gaze of the Enlightenment typifies a traditionally Sublime perspective, and when focussed upon on the Anthropocene, it represents a perpetuation of an external imperial gaze, described by Kyle Whyte, of the Citizen Potowami Nation, to be the "deliberate enactment of colonial processes that refuse to acknowledge specific and locational relations between humans, the land, and our other kin… these industrial settler processes of terraforming…erase what makes a place ecologically unique."[91] The link between this distanced gaze and its subsequent terraforming properties are hallmarked by what Davis and Todd describe as "the uneven impacts on the global poor, [are] understood not just as an unfortunate coincident or accident, but rather as a *deliberate extension of colonial logic.*"[92] The casually genocidal actions that were previously perpetuated through settler

colonialism seem now to lie hidden at the dark machine heart of the Anthropocene, as Yusoff points out:

> these territories became organised as material resources and markets for Empire, and the geologic practices established in these colonies continued to underwrite current neo-colonial extraction processes by Canada and Australia throughout the world (Canada for example is the largest national global mining corporation). The ownership of strata and the surface – subsurface bifurcation in Australia and Canada by the Crown continue to unsettle native title and reservation lands. Thus the classificatory logics of geology have implications for ongoing colonialism.[93]

That Britain still exerts a colonial violence that underpins the Anthropocene may well come as a shock to some, but any subject of the current 'hostile environment' in the post-Empire Windrush scandal in the UK will recognise the freshness of these scars that are constantly reopened, and will equally recognise that this is a sickness not confined only to the formerly pink areas of the map, denoting territories of the British empire.

Contribution
The barbarism of the racial capitalocene outlined previously by Françoise Vergès, with its continuously unfurling political, social and ecological violences could be viewed as a form of Eurocentric insanity, particularly when considered in the light of the ecocide that will actually affect a universal 'we', even if the effects are thus far experienced most directly by the global poor. The inescapable sensation that this is a political act of self-harm, and the blindness to the immanent sixth mass extinction event, certainly could be witnessed as a form of madness.

This psychosis is redolent of the disorder visited upon those subjected to colonial rule, as outlined by Frantz Fanon in his chapter "Colonial War and Mental Disorder" from his seminal 1961 work, the *Wretched of the Earth*:

> Clinical psychiatry classifies the different disturbances shown by our patients under the heading 'reactionary psychoses'. In doing this, prominence is given to the event which has given rise to the disorder, although in some cases mention is made of the previous history of the case (the psychological, affective and biological condition of the patient) and of the type of background from whence he comes. It seems to us that in the cases here chosen, the events giving rise to the disorder are chiefly the bloodthirsty and pitiless atmosphere, the generalisation of inhuman practices and the firm impression that people have of being caught up in a veritable Apocalypse.[94]

This experience of apocalypse is no new phenomenon, manifested only in recent climate emergencies like the ongoing Australian wildfires, but an inalienable experience of colonial violence. Anishinaabe scholar Lawrence Gross describes the phenomenon of post-apocalyptic stress syndrome as experienced by indigenous peoples in America:

> To put it in a word, Native Americans have seen the end of their respective worlds. Using vocabulary from the study of religion, this should be correctly termed an apocalypse. Just as importantly, though, Indians survived the apocalypse. This raises the further question, then, of what happens to a society that has gone through an apocalyptic event? The effects of the apocalypse linger on and the history of apocalypse continues to be the current-day reality for many Native Americans.[95]

The injustices meted out to those deemed less-than-human or expendable in the capitalist pursuit of profit seem to have occupied a more distanced or overlooked aspect of the Anthropocene, and if these have conveniently remained below the radar of those diagnosing an Anthropocene, the systematic violences upon the Earth's surface are beginning to show more visible scars, exemplified in the widespread burning of the Amazon Rainforest and the growing media coverage which has voiced a collective outrage. The anthropologist Gregory Bateson in 2000 eruditely described this global act of self-harm:

> There is an ecology of bad ideas, just as there is an ecology of weeds and it is characteristic of the system that the basic error propagates itself. It branches out like a rooted parasite through the tissues of life, and everything gets into a peculiar mess. When you narrow down your epistemology and act on the premise "what interests me is me, or my organisation, or my species", you chop off consideration of other loops of the loop structure. You decide that you want to get rid of the by-products of human life and that Lake Erie will be a good place to put them. You forget that the eco-mental system called Lake Erie is a part of your wider eco-mental system — and that if Lake Erie is driven insane, its insanity is incorporated into the larger system of your thought and experience.[96]

The situation in Lake Erie that he cites has formed one of many legal cases exploring the "idea of 'the human' as a rights-bearer and extend(ing) it to the complex, nonhuman systems that we wish to protect, that we know are deserving of care and concern."[97] The possibility that a natural feature could have legal rights, could attest to a form of 'personhood' and be represented in court to maintain its best interests, *seems* to offer the chimera of post-human equality between humans, and more-than humans. Macfarlane describes this movement which he refers to as the 'New Animism', and recalls that "like Grear, I find that at its best this young legal movement presses

vital questions concerning 'justice to the nonhuman' and requires us to 're-imagine our own state of being in a richer and more open way.'"[98] It is one aspect of what Grear memorably calls the radical re-storying of human-nonhuman relations that is now needed to shape "a future worth living."[99] If at first glance this appears a semi-utopian advance towards multi-species equality, it is worth acknowledging the human-centred systems which have proffered this possible solution. Grear herself offers a perspective perhaps more akin to the blended ontologies or hybridity that Yusoff's 'inhuman intimacy' describes and states the need for

> acknowledging the complexity and liveliness of the nonhuman by admitting the porousness of our own boundaries. Perhaps we should not extend outwards from ourselves, so much as question humanity's entitlement to act as a model. After all, it is a hubristic belief in our own singularity and exceptionalism that's partly responsible for destroying the planet. One thing seems certain: if the law is to respond to the multiple crises afflicting the Earth, and if rights are to be deployed, we need to get rid of the notion of a rights-bearer who is an active, wilful human subject, set against a passive, acted-upon, nonhuman object.[100]

This championing of a more-than human perspective which enfolds the complexity and possibility of more-than human knowledge offers a new perspective for a Sublime Anthropocene. This is made possible through an acceptance of vulnerability; a collapsing of perceptual distances between species, and the 'composting' of knowledge that Haraway calls for.[101] Anna Tsing reiterated this point during the *Art and the Anthropocene* conference at Trinity College, in Dublin in June 2019,[102] when she asserted that there are "no pure knowers", that all knowledge is situated, and is a blend of multiple ontologies; that it is a fallacy to presume a purity of 'indigenous' knowledge, untainted by technology or Eurocentric histories. The madness that

accompanies a belated scrambling for solutions in the Anthropocene is surely indexically linked to our apparent willingness to foreground only human knowledge systems. While understanding this, we among the global rich must recognise that we are far short of being able to claim any moral authority that our version of post-colonial futures might proffer. This shortfall is captured by the questions posed by curator Nikita Dhawan:

> Reimagining postcolonial futures requires a move beyond the belief that undoing European colonialism would be sufficient to usher in a world without injustice and oppression. This confronts us with the problem of postcolonial oppositional criticism: whom and what should this critique be directed against? What should be the grammar of this critique? How are we to overcome the acute paralysis of will and sheer lack of vision? Does the world in which we live make postcolonial utopias implausible to imagine?[103]

Perhaps the preferred grammar for this critique emerges from the more-than human archive of knowledge and channels Mirzoeff's 'Right to Look'[104] (first chapter). Rather than adopting an anthropomorphic version of more-than human epistemologies, there is a possibility of glimpsing the knowledge accrued through multispecies ethnography and anthropology.[105] The possibility of engaging with a multi-species knowledge, mindful always to decentre the human, offers a conduit into more-than human archives and a proxy for animal vision. As an oppositional power to the blinded sight as that offered by the Sublime perspective, perhaps we are beginning to approach a position from which to answer Dhawan's proposition of how to "overcome the acute paralysis of will and sheer lack of vision." This lack of vision; induced both by the mimetic engulfment of the hyperobjective Anthropocene, and its attendant 'moral apathy' that Morton posits and the immobilising trauma of 'solastalgia,'[106] can be challenged by a convocation with a more-than-human polyphony. Haraway states in

Staying with the Trouble that "these critters see too, in compound-eyed insectile and many-armed optics."[107] The multiplicitous array of animal vision, the resplendent sensorium that we 'Anthropos' have sidelined in our pursuit of Cartesian 'truth', has truly blinded us to what is around us, under us, *in* us. A slowly-dawning consciousness that we are enmeshed in a dense tracery of trajectories and their intersections, that we *are* nature, may lead us to not presume the authority and high-handed autonomy that an imperial, post-colonial inheritance has gifted the global rich, but to seek a belated and apologetic seat at a non-hetero-normative, multispecies family table, where plans for the future might be hatched.

Endnotes

[1] Derek Walcott, *Omeros* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p142.

[2] Delphi Carstens, "Cultivating a Dark Haecceity: a Pedagogy of the Uncanny and Dark Transports," *parallax* 24, No. 3 (2018): p346.

[3] Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, "On the Importance of a Date, or, Decolonizing the Anthropocene," *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 16, no. 4, (Dec. 2017): pp. 761-80, p763, https://www.acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/1539.

[4] Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), p26.

[5] Braidotti, "*The Posthuman*" p27, where she states that: "feminist anti-humanism, also known as postmodernist feminism, rejected the unitary identities indexed on that Eurocentric and normative humanist ideal of 'Man' (Braidotti, 2002). It went further, however, and argued that it is impossible to speak in one unified voice about women, natives and other marginal subjects. The emphasis falls instead on issues of diversity and differences among them and on the internal fractures of each category. In this respect, anti-humanism rejects the dialectical scheme of thought, where difference or otherness played a constitutive role, marking off the sexualised other (woman), the racialised other (native) and the naturalised other (animals, the environment or earth."

[6] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, p190.

[7] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, p186.

[8] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005), p5.

[9] Zoe Todd, "Indigenizing the Anthropocene" in *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, ed. Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), p 244, http://openhumanitiespress.org/books/download/Davis-Turpin_2015_Art-in-the-Anthropocene.pdf.

[10] Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble, Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), p103.

[11] Robert Macfarlane, *Underland, A Deep time Journey*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2019), p111-2. He notes that "[i]n Potawatomi, (by contrast), almost all words declare the animacy or inanimacy of that to which they refer. The

language is predisposed to recognise life in otherness, and also to extend the reach of that category of 'life' far beyond its familiar limits in Western thought. In Potawatomi, not only humans, animals and trees are alive, but so too are mountains, boulders, winds and fire. Stories, songs and rhythms are also animate, they *are*, they *be*."

[12] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, p1, where she references Carey Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota 2013)

[13] "The Sheela Na Gig Project: Researching Sheela Na Gig Sculptures in the UK", accessed November 14 2019:

http://www.sheelanagig.org/wordpress/kilpeck/

[14] "The Enigma of the Green Man", accessed November 14 2019:

http://www.greenmanenigma.com/theories.html

[15] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble,* p54.

[16] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p186, where she references the work of Marija Gimbutas, *The Living Goddesses*, ed. Miriam Robbins Dexter (Berkeley: University of California Press 1999)

[17] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p52.

[18] Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), p106.

[19] "Gaia Theory: Model and Metaphor for the 21st Century":

 http://www.gaiatheory.org/overview/

[20] Carstens, "A Dark Haecceity," p349.

[21] Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (London: Verso,2000), p39.

[22] Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, p39.

[23] Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, p39.

[24] Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, p40.

[25] Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, p40.

[26] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p31.

[27] S. Ayesha Hameed, "Black Atlantis: Three Songs," in *Forensis: the architecture of public truth*, ed.s, Anselm Franke and Eyal Weizman, (Berlin: Haus der Kulturen Welt, 2004) p713.

[28] Asad Haider, "Black Atlantis, "*Viewpoint Magazine,* March 5 2018.
https://www.viewpointmag.com/2018/03/05/black-atlantis/

[29] Ryan Coogler, Director *Black Panther,* Directed by Ryan Coogler, Marvel Studios, 2018

[30] Achille Mbembe "Black Panther or The Reversal of the African Sign," *AOC,* March 6 2018. https://aoc.media/critique/2018/03/05/black-panther-retournement-signe-africain/

[31] Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), p85

[32] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 2001). Retrieved February 2, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppkxs, p201.

[33] Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, p46-7, where she references the work of Sylvia Wynter, *Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World*, an unpublished 900-plus-page manuscript written by Wynter in the 1970s

[34] Vanessa Watts, "Indigenous Place-thought & Agency amongst Humans and Non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go on a European World Tour!)." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2, no. 1: (2013), p 21, referenced by Davis and Todd, "Decolonizing the Anthropocene", p769.

[35] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, translated by D. McLintock, (London, Penguin Modern Classics, 2003), p135.

[36] Freud, *The Uncanny*, p135.

[37] Elizabeth Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), p18.

[38] Anna Grear, "It is wrongheaded to protect nature with human-style rights," *Centre for Humans and Nature,* online article, 2019, https://www.humansandnature.org/it-is-wrongheaded-to-protect-nature-with-human-style-rights

[39] Jem Bendell, Deep Adaptation, online article, July 2 2020,
 https://jembendell.com/category/deep-adaptation/

[40] Bendell, Deep Adaptation.

[41] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p2.

[42] Natalie Lawrence, "*What is a Monster*", online article, September 7 2015) https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/discussion/what-is-a-monster

[43] Online etymology dictionary, monster, (n.) https://www.etymonline.com/word/Monster

[44] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p9.

[45] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p124. Mbembe warns us of the monstrous hiding in plain sight within the Postcolony: stating that "[m]onsters lurk in the shadows of official ceremony. Protected by the grand portrait of the President of the Republic that hangs on every wall, marks the junctions of the main avenues, and graces the jails and the torture chambers, an undisciplined army of dishonest police, informers, identity-card inspectors, gendarmes, men in khaki, and impoverished soldiery coerce the common people blatantly, seizing what they have no right to seize. They practice raw violence."

[46] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p23.

[47] John Keats, "To George and Tom Keats, December 21, 27, 1817," in *Romantic Poetry and Prose: The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, edited by Harold Bloom & John Trilling. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p766–8. Keats states that: "Negative Capability, that is when [we are] capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason… [when] the sense of Beauty overcomes all consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration."

[48] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2005), p10.

[49] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p4.

[50] Robert Macfarlane, "Trees Have Rights Too," (online news article), *The Guardian*, November 2 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/nov/02/trees-have-rights-too-robert-macfarlane-on-the-new-laws-of-nature

[51] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: a political ecology of things*, (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010), p2.

[52] Richard Powers, *The Overstory*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2018) p221.

[53] Tim Ingold, "Rethinking the Animate, Re-animating Thought", *Ethnos* 71, no. 1 (2006), p9.

[54] Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p 30-1.

[55] Academic Profile, Professor Sarah Whatmore, University of Oxford: https://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/staff/swhatmore.html

[56] Sarah Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies: natures, cultures, spaces* (Thousand

Oaks, CA: SAGE books, 2002).

[57] Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, p72.

[58] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p188.

[59] Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, p106.

[60] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble,* p116.

[61] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p183. "This is one reason that, in the African experience, there is a close relation between *occupation* and *appropriation*. Colonial occupation commonly claims to deal with 'uninhabited and masterless land.' The land over which it claims to enjoy exclusive domain is not regarded as having been, at a given moment, abandoned by a master previously exercising a right of domain over it. Rather, this land is deemed to belong to that category of things that have never belonged to anybody. Because, in the African case, the territory that becomes the colony has been regarded as *territorium nullius*, acquiring it—occupying it—involves, in theory, no alienation. In other words, the settler as the person taking possession does not succeed anyone. It follows that the settler inherits no real responsibility; he or she is not bound to respect any easement. Therefore, colonial occupation, in general, is not simply marked by the vice of violence; it is marked by the vice of spoliation."

[62] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p178.

[63] El Habib Louai, "Retracing the concept of the subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical developments and new applications," *African Journal of History and Culture* 4, no. 1 (2012): pp. 4-8 https://academicjournals.org/article/article1381909550_Louai.pdf. "The subaltern classes refer fundamentally in Gramsci's words to any 'low rank' person or group of people in a particular society suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation."

[64] Eyal Weizman, *The Conflict Shoreline* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2015), p36.

[65] Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, p33.

[66] Jodi A. Byrd and Michael Rothberg, "Between Subalternity and Indigeneity," *Intervention*s 13:1 no. 1-12, (2011): p4. DOI: 10.1080/1369801X.2011.545574

[67] Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, p84.

[68] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p15.

[69] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p104, who states "[i]t is only through such a shift in perspective that we can understand that the postcolonial relationship is not primarily a relationship of resistance or of collaboration but can best be charaterized as convivial, a relationship fraught by the fact of the *commandement* and its 'subjects' having to share the same living space. Precisely this logic—the necessary familiarity and domesticity in the relationship—explains why there has not been (as might be expected from those so dominated) the resistance or the accommodation, the disengagement or the 'refusal to be captured,' the contradiction between overt acts and gestures in public and covert responses 'underground' (*sous maquis*). Instead, this logic has resulted in the mutual 'zombification' of both the dominant and those apparently dominated. This zombification means that each has robbed the other of vitality and left both impotent (*impouvoir*)."

[70] Grear, "Protect Nature."

[71] Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, p82.

[72] Grear, "Protect Nature."

[73] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble,* p49.

[74] Macfarlane, *Underland*, p105

[75] Françoise Vergès, "Racial Capitalocene," in *Futures of Black radicalism*, ed. Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (London and New York: Verso, 2017), p76.

[76] Vergès, "Racial Capitalocene," p76.

[77] Cedric R. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, emphasis in the original, (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1983), p309, referenced in Vergès, "Racial Capitalocene," p73.

[78] Vergès, "Racial Capitalocene," p73.

[79] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble,* p48.

[80] Tiffany King, "The Labor of (Re)reading Plantation Landscapes Fungible(ly)," *Antipode* 48, no. 2: (2016) p123, referenced in the work of Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, p91.

[81] King, "The Labor of (Re)reading," p124

[82] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p189

[83] Wayétu Moore, *She Would Be King* (London: Pushkin Press, 2019).

[84] Patrice Chamoiseau, *Texaco*, trans. by Rose-Myriam Réjouis and Val Vinokurov (London: Granta Books, 1997).

[85] Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, p85.

[86] Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, p97.

[87] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p174. "But what does it mean to do violence to what is nothing? Or what does it mean for one who has been enwrapped, or has enwrapped himself/herself, in the pure terror of the negative, been consigned to the work of a slave, to give himself/herself a premature death, a death without apparent meaning—whether that death be suicide, or homicide, or genocide?"

[88] Massey, *For Space*, p5.

[89] Timothy Morton, *Being Ecological* (London: Pelican Books, Penguin Random House 2018), p170, "In a universe governed by the speed of light, parts are hidden, withdrawn, obscure. The dark Dantean forest of the Universe, an underwater forest of rippling weeds. You should find this idea extremely comforting. It means that you cannot be omnipresent or omniscient. It means that you cannot look down on the poor suffering beings of the universe from a position outside time, and smile sadistically at their pain, a smile we often call pity. This is what we sometimes call the abstract gaze of the Enlightenment, that period in the early history of modern Europe and America in which universal values were articulated, unfortunately at the expense of urgent particularities such as race, class and gender."?

[90] Morton, *Being Ecological*, p170-171.

[91] Davis and Todd, "Decolonizing the Anthropocene", p771.

[92] Davis and Todd, "Decolonizing the Anthropocene", p771.

[93] Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, p83.

[94] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p 201-202.

[95] Davis and Todd, "Decolonizing the Anthropocene", p773, make reference to the work of Lawrence Gross, *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p33.

[96] Gregory Bateson, "Pathologies of Epistemology" in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p.492

[97] Grear, "Protect Nature."

[98] Macfarlane, "Trees Have Rights Too.".

[99] Macfarlane, "Trees Have Rights Too."

[100] Grear, "Protect Nature."

[101] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble,* p4

[102] Anna Tsing, "Feral Atlas and the More-than-human Anthropocene", presentation, *Art in the Anthropocene*
International conference in Trinity College Dublin, 7-9 June 2019

[103] Nikita Dhawan, "Colonial Repercussions, Symposium III "Planetary Utopias – Hope, Desire, Imaginaries in a Post- Colonial World": *Art and Education,* June 24 2018, https://www.artandeducation.net/announcements/204018/colonial-repercussions

[104] Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Right to Look," *Critical Inquiry* 37, No. 3, (2011): pp473-496 and p473.

[105] Heather Swanson, "Methods for Multi-Species Anthropology: Thinking with Salmon Otoliths and Scales" *Social Analysis,* Volume 61, Issue 2, Summer 2017, 81–99 © Berghahn Books
doi:10.3167/sa.2017.610206 • ISSN 0155-977X (Print) • ISSN 1558-5727, http://search.proquest.com/docview/1906351168/abstract/A07932B85EE14D92PQ/1. Swanson encourages an anthropological investigation where the impact of humans is nearly completely removed. Through the analysis of salmon ear bones, otoliths, which act much like a black-box recorder, giving information about multi-species collaboration, adaptation, diet and migration, (contained in mineral sedimentation within the fish's otolith) all of which can be evaluated and borne witness to, without the everyday impact of human observation upon the fish's behaviour.

[106] Macfarlane, *Underland*, p317 who cites "'Solastalgia', the term coined by Glenn Albrecht in 2003 to mean a 'form of psychic or existential distress caused by environmental change'"

[107] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble,* p52.

Chapter 3 - Sea
#7 of 10 books
Laura Hopes © 2020

SPEEDWELL

Title: *Speedwell*
Date: September - end of November 2020
Place: Plymouth
Collaborators: Martin Hampton and Léonie Hampton
Media: Large-scale illuminated light structure
Dimensions:
67 m x 6m scaffolding frame
219 aluminium light discs
3723 lightbulbs
1600 metres low voltage cable
500 metres two core cable
170m long 3 phase mains cable
Iterations: *M400* Plymouth 2020

A world

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The material world

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A state of existence

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The present state

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Of temporal things as distinguished from spiritual

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A person's lifetime

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A person's world, conditions of life

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The course of human affairs

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[*O. Sax.* werold *world; men; lifetime: O. Frs.* warld, wrald: *O. H. Ger.*
weralt *mundus, orbis, terra, seculum, aevum: Icel.* veröld.]

Speedwell

In September 2020 we, the artists of the collective Still/Moving, launch our commission marking the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower. We are constructing a large-scale animated illuminated text artwork reading NO NEW WORLDS for the 2020 M400 commemorations in Plymouth. This will be placed on the Mountbatten Breakwater from September, facing the city and on the doorstep of the Atlantic – witness to thousands of arrivals and departures over the intervening centuries.
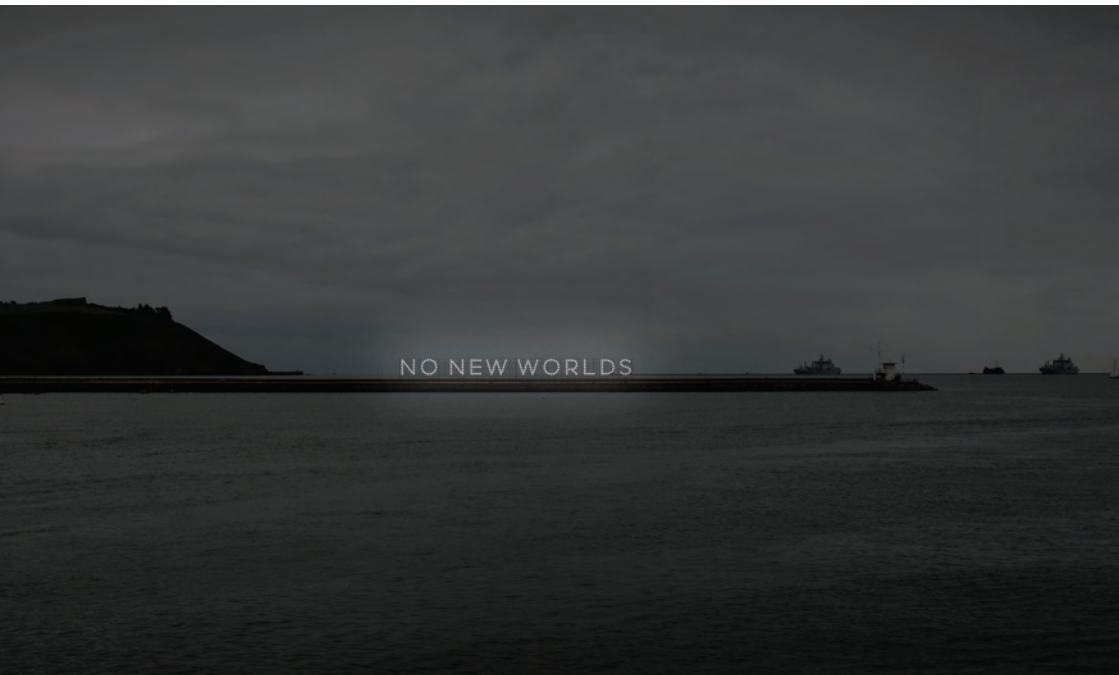
In the 21st century there are no NEW WORLDS to turn to, no avoiding environmental catastrophe by running away, and there should be no way to ignore the violent history of transatlantic journeys by settlers and colonisers.

The decimation of Wampanoag lifestyles resonates and reverberates far beyond its 1620 advent in the ongoing terraforming of extractive practices and environmental decimation. Indeed, Trump's recent landgrab of sovereign Wampanoag land makes vivid once again this scarring. The artists' collective Still/Moving aims to provide a platform for these realities, often deemed 'alternative' histories. Named after the Mayflower's sister ship, *Speedwell* explores narratives of failure, home and making kin, of living in the ruins, of living and dying well together, of exposing the fallacy that there ever was and will be, a 'new world'. The need to 'make kin' and resolve differences is paramount, for issues of migration, humankind's relationship to the environment, and unequal social relations need to be addressed if we are to make any sort of 'new world' right here, one that is shared and open and sustainable. *Speedwell's* response to this problematic commemoration of this colonising action directly reflects 21st century fears, where we are constrained to ever-more populated and polluted lands. Byron Williston, writing about the *Sublime Anthropocene* states that

> …even if we could make sense of the idea of becoming one with Being, in the Anthropocene it is false to suppose that there is some pure, untainted natural sphere with which we might dissolve in this manner. Because of the reach of our socio-technological powers, the natural world is now thoroughly infused with the human[1]

The speculative dreams of 'new worlds' of endless resource still linger uneasily in the restless capitalist imagination, and the lure of '*terra incognita'* still seems to trouble the sleep of those hoping to continue the colonisation project into the virgin territories of Mars, or the uncharted canyon depths and mountain ranges of the sea. In the context of Plymouth's 2020 400th anniversary commemorations of the voyage of the Mayflower, the need to address the origin story of the geotrauma of the Black Anthropocene would seem to be of signal importance. No simple 'founding father' mythology, within the

Mayflower narrative, the voices of indigenous Americans continue to be at risk of erasure. The naming of the 'NEW WORLD' is no simple designation of flora or fauna taxonomies, but a deliberate obviation of multiple human and more-than human histories. Donna Haraway offers us this statement: "the idea that disaster will come is not new; disaster' indeed genocide and devastated home places, has already come, decades and centuries ago, and it has not stopped."[2]

We are exploring the tension of the phrase NEW WORLDS through the media of message and signal; a scaffolding structure more than 60m long and 6m high, on the publicly accessible Mountbatten Breakwater will support 4m high illuminated letters spelling out the phrase. Visible by day and night, the text will animate through different permutations.

Installing this large-scale illuminated iterative text work NO NEW WORLDS onto the Breakwater, symbolically transforms this destination. Visitors who return to the shore, as the Speedwell did, will metaphorically explore this narrative of departure and arrival.

In the immediate experience of the Covid-19 pandemic, the themes that underpin our structure; shared vulnerability, the need to take care of each other and the world, and the requirement to face these troubles together and without obfuscation, *remain*. The 'other side' of this crisis, may well be a 'NEW WORLD', and the strategies that we continue to research, surrounding indigenous knowledge, notions of home, communal spirit and ecological awareness have, if anything become even more pertinent. As a newly-formed CIC this enormous project has been our first collaboration, and we have learnt many vital lessons along the way, particularly the need for listening to experts, equality among participants and empathy with many different modes of experience. The openness which has developed between the three of us has been echoed and highlighted again and again through our partnerships with community members, local government, technicians,

indigenous representatives, mentors, and funding organisations. From this broad base of mutual respect, experience and knowledge, we have been able to make this impossible project happen.

Amplify

Our hope, in this Mayflower 400 year, is to recognise stories of home and journeys and the parallels with indigenous historic and contemporaneous North American experiences of dispossession and flight. Modern stories of colonisation are hard to find and hard to hear within the long-lauded story of pilgrims charting new territory and 'discovering' new land.

The work will see Indigenous North Americans from the Muskogee (Creek) and Dakota communities linking with communities in Plymouth. The culmination of these conversations will be a co-authored performance on the Day of Mourning/Thanksgiving to accompany the final dimming of the Speedwell structure. Stephanie Pratt, cultural attaché of the Lakota people in the UK describes the situation:

> They are still a colonised people. They live on the Indian reservation which both is and is not USA legally. They feel least listened to during thanksgiving – the forgotten history of what really happened.

Together but apart, we are being forced to confront ideas of home, safety, mortality, family, freedom of movement, identity. The COVID 19 pandemic unveils the crisis that was already there; our societies' inequality, prevailing social injustice and a prioritisation of money over life. But times of crisis bring these imperatives; to listen to one another and imagine the possibility of change. People talk of returning to normal, but normal meant the Amazon on fire, polluted skies and spiralling multi-species extinction.

The stories that we tell ourselves make our worlds, so in looking to create shared new worlds we need to hear many stories. During these strange times, we are made more aware of our vulnerability, our need for community and how, as Jo Cox stated, "we have far more in common than that which divides us". What began as a small conversation within Still/Moving has grown to include more voices, more stories, leading to an online form of council or circle of speakers. During this time of isolation, we are building the frame for stories to emerge from; establishing the communication channels between these two symbolic transatlantic communities.

Still/Moving background
Still/Moving are a group of artists comprised of Martin Hampton, Laura Hopes and Léonie Hampton. Léonie Hampton is a practicing artist and teacher of MA photography at London College of Communication (LCC) London. Martin Hampton is an architect-trained filmmaker. Laura Hopes is an artist and PhD candidate at Plymouth University, funded by AHRC. Still/Moving CIC began as a creative network providing international photographic workshops, screenings and residencies. Still/Moving constituted in 2019 as a CIC with the express purpose of making artwork through social practice, of which Speedwell will be the first.

What is loss of this world if we travel anew?

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Filling a bag, choosing which book, visiting those for embrace; the little moments of death in departure. These deaths are privileged with time, softened and rounded by choice, for they are the choice of the tired, not the exhausted. Although these choices mark loss, they are not yet the actions of the lost. They exist in a limbic no-man's land of temporality; anticipatory and preparatory losses that foreshadow the immanent engulfment of the lost. They that traverse between worlds seem winnowed by this loss, worn smooth by the wave-actions or made angular through impact. Belongings and memories become cracked, tannic with handling. But what of the locus of departure - what is lost each time, beyond the Archimedes volume of humanity? Is the material fabric of the left world marked by absence or additionally silted with grief? Beyond the obvious absence of bodies, memories and relationships, the entangled threads of conversations, networks, families are left hewn, knots adrift, catching on the meshwork of buildings, trees, routes through cities and forests. The true casualty of the world left behind is a future wistfully imagined or carefully preordained.

What are the characteristics of the dystopia, the set of circumstances that propels one from an old world into a new? Tremors have rumbled, forcing bodies across this threshold from one world to the next. These tremors might be the bellows of Tartarus, the abyssal chiasmic terrain of death; voiced by the machinations of the factories at Elmina, the purging of those deemed unwanted from Rohingya, or the dispossession from land and civic life of those persecuted in

Indigenous American territories. These forced exodus snatch at the threads of the original world in the rupture of departure, and take form in memory, song, food, language and skill, and the proximity, where available, of shared experience or heritage. What is stolen from the old world then, in this cleaving, is the knowledge, the companionship, the husbandry, the custodial ontologies which shaped it each day as it reciprocally shaped those tending to it. The soon-to-be faltering new steps in the new world lack this surety, this indigeneity to soil, to climate, to language, to food, but the possibility of the fungibility of the body and mind may offer the scope to acclimatise and become indigenous again.

If we do, when we leave, we take of that world in us, with us, in the treads of our shoes, the lint of our pockets.

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Those travellers who made their voyage on the Mayflower and Speedwell for America in 1620 were not the first pioneers to transgress this threshold between worlds. Nor, in 1609, were the sailors on the Sea Venture, who along with eight other vessels voyaged from Plymouth for Virginia, England's first New World Colony. They too were pre-figured by western European forays into what were termed the East Indies in the early 15th century and also by Hernán Cortés, who arrived in Hispaniola in 1504 to establish the colony that followed the conquest of Cuba and

Hispaniola in 1506. This breathless querying of dates echoes the colonial impulse for imprimatur itself – who was first, which flag endured? Imagine now those sailors aboard the Mayflower's sister ship, the Speedwell, who never made the transatlantic voyage, but were pressed instead, to make home where they were; forced to contain and stifle their dreams of a New World. The fantasy act of making a New World remained untroubled by reality. This thwarted journey, this ghost of a new life, must have travelled with them for the rest of their days, colouring their interactions, their relationships and memory. Imagining the lint in the pockets of the sailors on the Mayflower, however, the earth in the treads of *their* boots which then commingled with the soils on the shores of the New World, these more troubling vestigial threads which linked their past lives to the new, were rent asunder in the rupture of this new life. Consider too, in this commingling of soils, the unimaginable violence enacted upon those for whom this world was never new but had existed "since time immemorial."[3] It is hard to conceive of the conceptual disjunct between those for whom the 'New World' appeared as a talisman of their 'Promised Land' and those indigenous to the land for whom the sailors' arrival heralded an ongoing era of dispossession, disease and decimation. In the sailors' quest for indigeneity to this new soil, their systems of survival ushered in wholly alien structures of rule, land use and religion. In a construction of Indigenous sovereignty that Michael Lerma calls 'Peoplehood', he outlines the relationship between people and land:

> Today, Indigenous nations can confidently state that colonial actors cannot eliminate something they never recognized: the inherent responsibility many Indigenous peoples have to serve their traditional homelands.[4]

This duty is one of the many casualties of settler incursion onto sovereign land. After a brief period of commonality and mutual support, violent skirmishes signalled the oppressive regime of

dispossession of the 'native' and their responsibilities to a living agentic land. This rupture, in the name of 'progress', prefigured a mode of subjugation of land and bodies that paved the way for more colonisation and the unswerving advance of capitalism.

I wonder if our ghosts haunt the old.

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Severing the native from their sovereign land folds into settlers' efforts to establish new lives on new soil, a reflexive violence of assimilation and dispossession:

> One may think such a process was as arbitrary as it was one-dimensional, but that would be to forget that neither the colonist nor the colonized people emerge from this circle unharmed. To this extent, the act of colonizing was as much an act of conviviality as an act of venality.[5]

The narrative paradigm of successful colonisation is the apparent power of the coloniser against the apparent muteness of the colonised. The hidden cost to both parties within the circle of harm that Mbembe outlines is distinctive of the reciprocal self-harm embedded with the active violation of others. The suppressing of perceived difference, and the inability to recognise commonality in the quest for 'progress' deadens any flourishing of new commingled life processes or forms of symbiotic sustainable living practices.

These atrocities surely emerge from a place of fear, of the other, of the strange New World that the settlers find themselves operating in. The savagery that they fear in the native is paradoxically the role they themselves grow to inhabit, and the realities and metaphors of

survival and resistance afford them permission to act in ways perhaps previously considered sinful. Do these behaviours make them ghosts to their old worlds, their previous ways of life or do they consider themselves becoming indigenous to these new worlds through the adoption of a cloak of savagery? These narratives of appropriation and dispossession echo throughout global strategies of settler-colonialism, but the violences and realities of colonisation remain hidden from a sensitive old world purview, the blood that is shed in the production of sugar and tobacco never staining the capital, the product on polite society dining tables or in well-dressed men's tobacco pouches. The ease with which this carapace is apparently shed, cast into the sea on the return journey to the old world belies the ease with which Eurocentric societies still fail to address the horrors of colonialism, the ongoing dispossession, environmental precarity, the need for reparations. As a visual illustration of this schism, Amazon have recently launched a video game, '*New World*', where settlers in European garb have to fight against the exoticized natives, diseased zombies and the land itself in order to make their claim. That this should be deemed appropriate in the year of the 400th anniversary of the sailing and landing of the Mayflower seems extraordinary considering the ongoing dispossession and dispersal of indigenous Americans from their ancestral sovereign lands, specifically, the current annexing of sovereign Mashpee Wampanoag territory.[6] These peoples, although not ghosts, certainly should haunt the imagination of the old world, and should haunt the retellings of this story, this foundational myth of modern America. Reclamations too, are undertaken by those, such as the Wampanoag people with whom contact was first made by the Mayflower settlers. The extent to which their culture was obliterated by colonisation can perhaps fractionally be comprehended when one learns that contemporary efforts to relearn the Wampanoag language could only be supported by the use of the 'Eliot Bible'- a translation of the Bible into Wampanoag by missionary John Eliot in 1663.[7] This ghost of early missionary tactics in the use of Christianity to subdue, eerily lingers and is transformed and inverted through this process of

claiming back the tongue with which to speak, not in the language of the oppressor, but by repurposing the oppressor's tool.

All the while our new skins glow in this strange young atmosphere.

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This tool casts shadows into the imagined future too. As a strange paradigm of how humans operate in 'New Worlds', Michel Faber in his book 'The Book of Strange New Things' describes a missionary, Peter and his experiences on a planet 'Oasis'.[8] Peter sets himself the task of translating the bible into 'Oasan', yet the utopia he attempts to build is sharply contrasted with events on Earth where his wife, Bea remains, a world splintering through climate emergency, societal unrest and crashing economies. He is successful for a while in this new environment, yet the asymmetry of power between the settlers and the Oasans, encroaching disease and unrest offer distinct parallels between the 'new' and 'old world' scenarios of the Mayflower and Wampanoag 'contact' and seem so poignant in light of mass contemporary migration and its manifold underlying causes. In this, the arbitrary, western 'everyman'[9] characters who voyaged on the Mayflower can be reconfigured into the less-discussed 'everyman' of the colony, the Postcolony, the refugee camp, the international space station.

Do you leave one world to enter new one, or are they porous?

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Consider the power within the phrase "Since Time Immemorial" as you enter any 'New World', but consider too the potential stasis of your gaze, which Mbembe warns against in any consideration of 'indigenous societies':

> In addition to being moved by the blind force of custom, these societies are seen as living under the burden of charms, spells, and prodigies, and resistant to change. Time — "it was always there," "since time immemorial," "we came to meet it"— is supposedly stationary.[10]

What bias, what pejoration do we confer when we consider 'old' and 'new worlds'; can any world be defined as either new or old when each is indexically marked by the scratches, tunnelling and accretions of more-than-humans and time itself? No ontology can be fixed to either old or new, it is a blended cumulative and porous 'carrier bag'[11]. In any new 'worlding', it is worth considering the porosity between worlds, the accumulation of multiple trajectories, its thick temporality.

Endnotes

[1] Byron Williston, "The Sublime Anthropocene." *Environmental Philosophy*, 13 (2):155-174 (2016): DOI: 10.5840/envirophil201610338

[2] Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble, Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016) *p86*.

[3] Franke Wilmer, *The Indigenous Voice in World Politics: Since Time Immemorial*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1993)

[4] Michael Lerma, *Indigenous Sovereignty in the 21st Century: Knowledge for the Indigenous Spring*, (Miami: Florida Academic Press, 2014) Introduction, p1.

[5] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, (BERKELEY CA: University of California Press. 2001). Retrieved February 2, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppkxs, p237, where he describes the condition of "venality, because such is the essence of the relationship between human being and animal. Just as the ruminant, for example, feels an attraction to the salt in man's urine, one could say that the colonized individual feels attracted to the colonizer's excrements, and vice versa. Conviviality, because there is hardly any form of domination as intimate as colonial domination. But, as we have seen, in many cases the colonized individual—the object and subject of venality—introduced himself into the colonial relationship by a specific art, that of doubling and the simulacrum. Now, to simulate is to cease to inhabit one's body, one's gestures, one's words, one's consciousness, at the very moment one offers them to another. It works to preserve, in each time and circumstance, the possibility of telling oneself stories, of saying one thing and doing the opposite—in short, of constantly blurring the distinction between truth and falsehood. This means that, as an object and subject of venality, the native offers herself/himself to the colonist as if not himself or herself. The native opens to the colonist as if no more than an instrument whose author or owner was, in truth, separate: a shadow, a spectre, or, so to speak, a double."

[6] Nick Martin, "This is Crisis Colonization", *The New Republic,* Online news article, March 30, 2020, https://newrepublic.com/article/157091/crisis-colonization

[7] "Our Mother Tongues" Discover America's First Languages, accessed July 7 2020. http://ourmothertongues.org/language/Wampanoag/12

[8] M John Harrison, "The Book of Strange New Things by Michel Faber review – astonishing and deeply affecting" *The Guardian*, Online news article, October 23, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/oct/23/the-book-of-strange-new-things-michel-faber-review, where he describes how the main character's mission " is financed by and carried out under the auspices of a shadowy corporate called Usic. They need him but won't say why. The base personnel describe themselves as "a community", "in partnership" with the indigenous population – "we do not use the word 'colony.'" Yet many of them specialise in oil and mining technology, and Usic is already building infrastructure to support a larger population. Trade has begun, although it has taken a weirdly localised form: the Oasans produce food for the human settlement; in return, they seem to want only Earth analgesics and the Bible, the eponymous 'book of strange new things'"

[9] Donna Ferguson, *The Guardian,* Online news article, February 15, 2020. "Richard More: the Shropshire outcast who sailed to riches on the Mayflower", https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/feb/15/richard-more-shropshire-outcast-who-sailed-to-riches-mayflower
"We do need to correct the history myth that this ship was full of 'decent Puritan people' who had suffered religious persecution and wanted to make a new life. They represented less than half the passenger list. The other half were traders and merchantmen – people hoping to make a fortune."

[10] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p4

[11] Ursula K. Le Guin, "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction," in *Dancing at the Edge of the World* (New York: Grove Atlantic Press, 1989) p151-2. Where she states "If science fiction is the mythology of modern technology, then its myth is tragic. "Technology," or "modern science" (using the words as they are usually used, in an unexamined shorthand standing for the "hard" sciences and high technology founded upon continuous economic growth), is a heroic undertaking, Herculean, Promethean, conceived as triumph, hence ultimately as tragedy. The fiction embodying this

myth will be, and has been, triumphant (Man conquers earth, space, aliens, death, the future, etc.) and tragic(apocalypse, holocaust, then or now). If, however, one avoids the linear, progressive, Time's-(killing)-arrow mode of the Techno-Heroic, and redefines technology and science as primarily cultural carrier bag rather than weapon of domination, one pleasant side effect is that science fiction can be seen as a far less rigid, narrow field, not necessarily Promethean or apocalyptic at all, and in fact less a mythological genre than a realistic one."

Speedwell - Catalogue
#8 of 10 books
Image: Martin Hampton
Laura Hopes © 2020
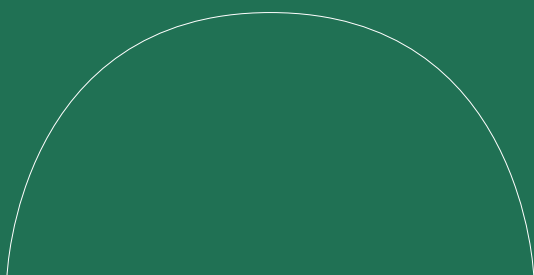
ISLANDS

ISLANDS

Like a pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to the light, but to pry loose the rich and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depths, and to carry them to the surface, this thinking delves into the depths of the past – but not in order to resuscitate it the way it was and to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages. What guides this thinking is the conviction that although the living is subject to the ruin of the time, the process of decay is at the same point a process of crystallisation, that in the depth of the sea, into which sinks and is dissolved what once was alive, some things "suffer a sea-change" and survive in new crystallised forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living – as "thought fragments," as something "rich and strange,"…[1]

Hannah Arendt, *The Pearl Diver*

This coda to the artistic research projects occurs in the chronological position of a conclusion, however, it manifests itself as anything but. As witnessed in the anachronistic slippage that occurs throughout the artistic research's chronological and cartographic surveys of mountain, field, ruin, and sea; these times and spaces of the Sublime Anthropocene are hard to contain, to label, to pin. What began in *Mountain* as a survey of existing modes of knowledge around these terms has transmuted into a discourse upon the value of vulnerability, acknowledging that its positive reclamation, its acceptance of uncertainty and unknowing challenges what Vergès describes as 'asymmetries' of power.[2] What understanding has been accrued throughout the artistic research, in written, performed or installed forms is drawn from a highly distributed range of sources, drawn from a multiplicity of trajectories.

Here then, the main threads and arguments that make up this commentary are reviewed and revisited. The case for a methodology of resistance; for openness; for vulnerability; for a dissolving of distances from, and for a reclamation of the term Sublime to newly describe experiences of the Anthropocene and potentially productive ways forward. In this terrain, the usefulness of the Sublime can be a vessel for accessing the aforementioned 'small self',[3] the formula for which is expressed in this note from *After Nature* by Jedediah Purdy:

> People are best able to change their ways when they find two things at once in nature: something to fear, a threat they must avoid, and also something to love, a quality… which they can do their best to honour. Either impulse can stay the human hand, but the first stops it just short of being burnt or broken. The second keeps the hand poised, extended in greeting or in an offer of peace. This gesture is the beginning of collaboration, among people, but beyond us, in building our next home.[4]

The artistic research has roved through terrains homely and unhomely, literal and imaginary, cultural and natural, through a litany of temporalities and perspectives. By adopting or inhabiting the guise of the trickster, as alluded to in the "Note to the Reader" and moving beyond inherited or embedded hierarchical ontologies towards a model of 'knowledge diasporas,'[5] pearls have been brought from the depths to the surface for analysis. In the course of this artistic research, the methodology of being a 'vulnerable practitioner,'[6] and the multiple layers of meaning that this encompasses has been elevated and evaluated. Vulnerability can be applied to the exposed methodology of the practitioner, certainly, but as a term it can also be applied to the uncertainties encountered in the course of the artistic research. The fragility of overlooked indigenous knowledge, or alternatives to dominant epistemologies fall into this exploration of vulnerability too; open to exploitation or erasure within the capitalist marches of progress, whilst simultaneously remaining porous to patronising valorisation.

Reckoning with these forces and creating a platform for multiple voices to be heard, the methodology of this artistic research inverts the traditional powerlessness of vulnerability and makes a claim for the authority of shared vulnerability of the autochthonous, the overlooked, the monstrous, the inhuman. What is important to remember is that in the process of working "across the nature/culture divide" we are "mindful of not 'reworlding everything into one lens,' as Paige West puts it."[7] Whilst remaining observant of our own privileged 'right to look', we must be active in maintaining the potential of pluriversality, which embraces "a horizontal strategy of openness to dialogue among different epistemic traditions,"[8] a "plurality of consciousness;"[9] a practice that this commentary endeavours too to convey in its rejection of universalism. Franke Wilmer cites Octavio Paz, who reiterates the reflexive death-wish hidden within this action:

What sets worlds in motion is the interplay of differences, their attractions and repulsions. Life is plurality, death is uniformity. By suppressing differences and peculiarities, by eliminating different civilizations and cultures, progress weakens life and favours death. The idea of a single civilization for everyone, implicit in the cult of progress and technique, impoverishes and mutilates us. Every view of the world that becomes extinct, every culture that disappears diminishes a possibility of life.[10]

Difference and distance have been key factors in the methodology of this artistic research. As a scalable experiential unit of measure, one's proximity to events usually indicates the degree to which one empathises or relates to the circumstances. As demonstrated in the first chapter "Field," a personal understanding of epochal time with regards to the Anthropocene was crystallised through gaining knowledge of my locale, Dartmoor. Closeness or indigeneity to particular terrains or events however are not the only domain of experience. Memory, translation, story, representation or reproduction of place and space are not merely the preserve of the inheritors, purchasers or colonisers of land, rather, they shift and elide, are agentic and alive, belonging to many and *none*. The insertion of geographical distance does not guarantee insulation from horror of the Sublime Anthropocene, as the example of the PTSD-suffering drone pilots cited in the introduction, "Mountain," attest. Shifting between the god's-eye to the tactile or microscopic view; then negotiating these distances and assessing their thickness means that distance and its affects operate not only spatially but temporally. *This* articulation of a Sublime Anthropocene demands the consideration of the situated position of any witness, specifically in their relation to vulnerability and distance to appreciable precarity, unacknowledged safety, unwitting proximity to apocalypse, and acknowledgment and awareness of privilege. As such, the artistic research reviews and accepts singular testimonies

of knowledge, but also turns towards an inclusion of these within more distributed assemblages of knowing, and even of unknowing. As Delphi Carstens states, "knowledge, in such a pedagogy of ontological slippage, is never static, always dynamic, modulated via transversal affects and forms of becoming."[11] Much as Odysseus, the 'no-body' and everyman trickster of classical mythology, is lured off his course home towards Penelope by the sirens and by the enchantments of Circe, at times the artistic research has veered towards islands that seemed only to offer delay or introspection. These have led to the formation of space for alternative narratives to be added to the panoply of voices which make up the Sublime Anthropocene; both in its historical formation, and in its continually reverberating contemporary violences.

Ayesha Hameed in her essay "Black Atlantis: Three Songs,"[12] offers the analogy of Ariel's song in *The Tempest*,[13] where he lures Ferdinand towards the magical island's shore, 'rich and strange' as a methodology for viewing and engaging with the temporal slippages of the Anthropocene. Hameed uses Hannah Arendt's analysis of Walter Benjamin's historical method, outlined at the start of this section, likening it to that of a pearl diver who dives to the seabed and finds Ferdinand's father there, "transmuted into bones of coral and the eyes of pearl," much like the body of Achille's father in *Omeros*, as described in the chapter "Sea". The 'thought fragments' Arendt describes;[14] these mutable relics, seem to offer apt representation of the irrepresentability of the Sublime Anthropocene, and to embody the promise proffered, at the end of the last chapter, in the figure of the 'inhuman.'[15] These pearls and corals seem to guide us in navigating what representational theorist Nigel Thrift describes as the "archipelagos of rationality,"[16] helping us to plot a course in the spaces *between* traditional modes of academic thought; to offer a broader, more nuanced, and demonstrably less anthropocentric critique of dominant modes of discourse constituting the Anthropocene. Indeed, Gretel Ehrlich

in *The Future of Ice* describes how odd enlightenment or scientific thinking is in its delegitimising of alternative, valuable forms of engagement with the world: "[t]o separate thoughts out into islands is the peculiar way we humans have of knowing something, of locating ourselves on the planet and in society. We string events into temporal sequences like pearls or archipelagos."[17]

The narrative arc throughout the different elements of this artistic research (in each chapter, each artistic project, each medium) has been to move away from an individual's 'outsider' gaze, towards a delimited and embodied collaborative engagement with the granularity and specificity of times and spaces redolent of the Sublime Anthropocene and the more-than-human entanglements peculiar (but not exclusive) to those locations. Each element of the artistic research has underscored, through the invocation of look, space, and time; the power of poly-vocality and collaborative making, and has foregrounded the agency of vulnerability as an affective activist tool.[18] Throughout this, the notion of time has often operated in a slippery way, pinning the commentary at times to incredibly specific historical moments, yet also working through and within a chaotic whirlpool of temporality. Despite the specificity of the original genesis of these moments, the effects and affects reverberate long after the event, and often appear to have foreshadowed the event's temporality too.[19] This spiralling Charybdis makes plain the limitation, once again, of representing the Sublime Anthropocene visually or imaginatively, and also temporally. It rebuts too, any simplistic notions of time where, "social theory has failed also to account for *time as lived,* not synchronically or diachronically, but in its multiplicity and simultaneities, its presences and absences, beyond the lazy categories of permanence and change."[20] Therefore, the thematic undercurrent of the entire work, the 'right' to look,[21] to space, and to time, have been evidenced most clearly in the structuring of the chapters but also within the artistic projects themselves, potentially

offering a transversal take on issues such as climate, land and oppression. These themes are densely interwoven within discourses around land-use, dispossession and ecology, and are likely already familiar to the reader, but raises the possibility of thinking beyond the familiar. The commentary's post-dualist approach asks uncomfortable questions of canonical knowledge, and endeavours not to rely upon the well-worn trope of magical indigenous 'answers' to assuage the frailties of the global rich. It also thinks *with* time, as Heather Love exhorts us to do in *Feeling Backward*,[22] a view which suggests that "we need to look at history and social politics less like Lot's wife, who's destroyed by looking back, and more like Odysseus, who listens to the past but isn't destroyed by it. The past haunts us whether we acknowledge it or not; we may be 'looking forward,' as we like to assure ourselves, even as we're 'feeling backward'."[23] This strategy informs the initial chronological anchoring of the artistic projects into the commentary's sediment but also their telescoping forward into the contemporary, much as the commentary 'feels backwards' in order to recognise ongoing conditions, but also 'looks forward.'

The methodology of the artistic research has required vulnerability on the part of the practitioner and an acceptance of precarity and contingency of knowledge systems, in 'looking forward' and 'feeling backward.' Both the chapter "Ruin" and the chapter "Sea" encroach on realms of the uncanny, through interpretations of homeliness and exclusion as well as invocations of the monstrous or inhuman. The uncanny as a theory has clear thematic synonymity with traditional notions of a Sublime Anthropocene, as outlined in the introduction, particularly when framed through the colonial perspective, which enforces narratives of subjection, and the abjection of the dispossessed. The 'indigene' or subaltern in this mode, is defined as 'less-than-human,' as chattel, as '*being-a-thing* of value,'[24] or as part of nature, from which the observer, naturally, distinguishes themselves, as Rob Nixon points out:

In the context of a romantic primordialism, the colonized, especially women, have been repeatedly naturalized as objects of heritage to be owned, preserved, or patronized rather than as the subjects of their own land and legacies. Once cultures have been discursively assimilated to nature (not least through the settler tradition of viewing the United States as "nature's nation"), they have been left more vulnerable to dispossession—whether in the name of virgin wilderness preservation or the creation of nuclear test zones.[25]

The land-dispossessed subject, naturalised as an object of heritage, to be "owned, preserved or patronised", is denied agency and autonomy afforded by a 'right to look,'[26] and the associated rights – to time and space - described in each chapter. The process of this deterritorialization dehumanises and thus reduces the figure of 'the native' to a badly drawn cipher, adrift from context and home, portrayed as an oddity to be marvelled at. The novelty of otherness is shown early on in literary history, in *The Tempest*, when Trinculo's first impulse upon meeting Caliban, is to wonder how he can get him back to England. This is through no extension of human kindness, but an urge to make money by putting him on display: "When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian."[27] Sadly this inclination, of profiting from exoticism, was not merely confined to literary history, as the 'human zoo' or 'ethnographic exposition' became a grotesquely familiar feature of international fairs, zoos, and colonial exhibitions.[28] The practice of owning, patronising or preserving the talismanic figures within the 'human zoos' reveals the inadequacies and anxieties of the colonialist, desperate to control and to demonstrate mastery through sublimation, yet fearful of the potency of those they enslave and parade. These exhibitions, which were visited by fascinated millions, persevered right up to the early 1930s, and this practice diligently maintained a distanced

assemblage of the 'other'.[29] Any striving for 'authenticity', through costume, religious observance, diet or homestead paradoxically fixes the uncanny anachronisms of both viewer and viewed into historical aspic. The inhabitants, simultaneously exoticized and de-territorialized, exert an uncanny power for their audiences, whilst at the same time occupy a similarly grey, liminal conceptual no-man's land to the thresholds of the Sublime.

Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*, oft cited in this commentary, utilises the "romantic primordialism" described by Nixon. Conrad summons the uncanny inhumanity of the darkness on the banks of the river; describing the fearful unknown in terms of part-animal, part-jungle hybridity: "No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar."[30] The de-humanising consequence of the narrative's ever-building terror allows the Eurocentric reader's sympathies to lie with the embattled narrator, adrift in the fearful swirls and eddies of the animate river/madness/jungle/native composite. Freud describes in his 1919 essay on "*The Uncanny*," how like Arendt's pearl-diver, the uncanny is linked to the dredging up and subsequent illumination of what was buried and secret, cleaving the definition of the uncanny from the merely fearful by defining it as "that class of terrifying which leads us back to something long known to us, once very familiar."[31] Just as the true depths of 'the horror' are revealed to Marlow,[32] in the insanity and delusions of the apparently more familiar figure of Mr Kurtz,[33] the river in the book, leads us through temporalities and primordial terrains where the familiar collide with the exoticized 'rich and strange.' In the book, Marlow too is led back to apparitions of the sprawling figure of Kurtz:

> I thought his memory was like the other memories of the dead that accumulate in every man's life – a vague impress on the brain of shadows that had fallen on it in their swift and final passage… but… I had a vision of him on the stretcher, opening his mouth voraciously, as if to devour all the earth with all its mankind. He lived then before me; he lived as much as he had ever lived – a shadow insatiable of splendid appearances, of frightful realities; a shadow darker than the shadow of the night…[34]

The sheer appetites of this man are the perfect analogy for the ever unfolding and voracious hunger of capitalism; for fuel, for bodies. The sprawling shadow that these appetites cast across times and spaces perfectly reflects the tentacular reach of the Anthropocene. This passage perfectly summons too, the ghostly haunting that accompanies both the Anthropocene and the uncanny, as set out by Avery Gordon in her essay "Some thoughts on Haunting and Modernity." Here she sets out a possible understanding of haunting that chimes so utterly with the force of carceral/colonial capitalism that Kurtz appears to be the embodiment of: "haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with (such as with transatlantic slavery, for instance) or when their oppressive nature is continuously denied (such as with free labor or national security)."[35]

The force of this carceral violence is also echoed within Achille Mbembe's depiction of the transition from the colonial era to the extractive violences of the 'Postcolony':

> After the bloodletting of the slave trade, Africa bounced back into the international economic system, in a way that involved the extraction of its resources in raw form.

This regime of violence and brutality was prolonged toward the end of the century through the concessionary regimes. These large companies equipped with commercial and mining privileges, and with sovereign rights allowing them to raise taxes and maintain an armed force, accentuated the prevailing predation and the atomization of lineages and clans, and institutionalized a regime based on murder. Under the protection of the colonial bureaucratic apparatus, the market began to function in gangster mode.[36]

The repetitive nature of the uncanny that Freud makes such a case for in his essay is over and again mirrored in the ongoing, unfinished, and unaddressed climatic and social violences of the Anthropocene. This is doubly realised when the philosopher Elisabeth Grosz describes the world of matter, of bodies, as "the materialization or actualization of incorporeals, virtuals, forces which precede and surpass them: matter itself can be construed as the uncanny double, the ordered phantasm or simulacra of these intangibles."[37] It has been especially important, in this artistic research, to plot a course that cleaves away from the uncanny register of the historical Sublime towards its aspects of awe and ineffability, and its irrepresentability. The uncanny always underlines what is separate, different and other, what is 'wrong'. The artificial distance imposed between peoples, species, and systems, are modes that both the uncanny and traditional modes of the Sublime insist upon. These intangibles that are so hard to apprehend, so hyperobjective in their ongoing-ness, so multiplicitous and inconsistent in their slippage, are, in the denseness of their entanglement with varied temporalities, systems, bodies and forces, *the very ingredients of the age of the Sublime Anthropocene.* This new understanding of the Sublime is echoed in Mbembe's descriptions of the entanglements at the heart of the age of the 'Postcolony':

> The aim was not to denounce power as such, but rather to rehabilitate the two notions of *age* and *durée*. By age is meant not a simple category of time but a number of relationships and a configuration of events - often visible and perceptible, sometimes diffuse, "hydra-headed," but to which contemporaries could testify since very aware of them. As an age, the postcolony encloses multiple *durées* made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and envelope one another: an entanglement.[38]

The figures populating 'ethnographic expositions' are externally naturalised as part of nature, prefigure the trespassing of the divisions between categories of the inhuman, and demonstrate the fungibility of the black body, as positively reclaimed by Sylvia Wynter in the previous chapter, "Sea" What is vital to acknowledge is that this is no uncanny coupling of human with nature, or non-human with non-human, as seen in the unease of the Eurocentric viewer typified in the clichéd "vertigo brought on by a whirl of flora",[39] and the engulfing whirl of fauna. *This* is an affirmative and deliberate indigeneity to land, to nature; not considering oneself as separate from or superior to it but as an integral part of the system, taking up that responsibility of making worlds better. Throughout colonial classifications of the 'native', the belittling classification of the 'non-human' naturalises this figure and taxonomizes it as flora and fauna would be. The puffed-up importance of the colonial figure, so assured of his dominance and superiority over nature, including over the marginalised and naturalised 'native,' is delineated appositely in Donald Pease's scathing formulation, quoted by Nixon, whereby plundering domination of the land is 'rightfully' bestowed upon the settler:

> those images interconnect an exceptional national subject (American Adam) with a representative national scene

(Virgin Land) and an exemplary national motive (errand into the wilderness). The composite result of the interaction of these images was the mythological entity—Nature's Nation—whose citizens believe, by way of the supreme fiction called natural law, that the ruling assumptions of their national compact (Liberty, Equality, Social Justice) could be understood as indistinguishable from the sovereign power creative of nature.[40, 41]

The incredible fallacy of this position is echoed again and again throughout the global expansionist narratives of the colonio-/capito- hunger; in the claiming of 'The New World', in the continued extractive violences enacted upon indigenous or dominated peoples. What we need to do with this *uncanny* unease, all these hyperobjective labels for any-thing, -body or -time other to the Eurocentric norm, is to recognise how embedded the thirst for rationality, illumination and knowledge is within Enlightenment orthodoxy. Mbembe references this in his description of scholarly narratives around Africa: "Whether in everyday discourse or in ostensibly scholarly narratives, the continent is the very figure of 'the strange.' It is similar to that inaccessible 'Other with a capital O' evoked by Jacques Lacan. In this extremity of the Earth, reason is supposedly permanently at bay, and the unknown has supposedly attained its highest point."[42]

This distance between the 'unknown' and one's own subjective knowledge or experience, can be described in the pejorative tones of the uncanny (as outlined above), but equally, it can become a space of potential. Distance can offer a temporal and spatial perceptual affordance which operates on an entirely different level to the distance of the spectacle, as discussed in the chapter "Ruin" Here the exploration of the roles of the spectator and the actor are activated, with the aim of the distance between them being dissolved. This moves towards what Rancière describes in *The*

Emancipated Spectator as the "third thing that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and affect."[43] This artistic research has continually sought to explore the simultaneously occurring illusion of distance and the rupture of immediacy which signal the Sublime Anthropocene. It seeks also to illuminate the degree of discomfort the 'Global Rich' have with the distance of *not knowing*, of not being able to see, of not being able to control; so wedded are this group to the idea of exceptionalism, which surely can geo-engineer or buy its way out of a Sublime Anthropocene. This epistemological mode; of exceptionalism, distance, difference, even the 'différance,'[44] which upholds binary oppositions and hierarchies, is one of the manifold methods perpetuating the 'violence of a blind polemic,'[45] the myopia which clouds any true perception of the Anthropocene, or the "hidden costs which have remained invisible to the 'inner eyes'."[46]

The old adage, "Physician, heal thyself", has never seemed truer than in an assessment of individual agency within the Anthropocene, but also in an accommodation with and vulnerability to the unknown, the dark, the vague, the 'irrational', the other.[47] In rejecting the distance of these established binaries,[48] we work towards an acceptance of the unknown, positive powerlessness and a move away from any positions of 'mastery'; something that Rosi Braidotti poignantly describes:

> Posthuman ethics urges us to endure the principle of not-One at the in-depth structures of our subjectivity by acknowledging the ties that bind us to the multiple 'others' in a vital web of complex interrelations. This ethical principle breaks up the fantasy of unity, totality and one-ness, but also the master narratives of primordial loss, incommensurable lack and irreparable separation. What I want to emphasise instead, in a more affirmative vein, is the priority of

242

the relation and the awareness that one is the effect of irrepressible flows of encounters, interactions, affectivity and desire, which one is not in charge of.[49]

Braidotti's formulation of *zoe*,[50] which follows on from Gaia, as a "new transversal alliance across species and among posthuman subjects" is described by Carstens as "attentive to the sciences in the manner of the dark-Romantics" yet the "ontology of *zoe* veers off (as the Romantics did) towards the ineffable, the indeterminable and the sublime."[51] The agency of this indeterminate realm conjures precisely a *new* Sublime Anthropocene, an era demarcated by its lack of demarcation, by its porous boundaries, its uncertainties and problems with dates, causes, *blame*. Accommodating and surrendering to the multiplicitous phenomena of distributed unknowns, the Sublime Anthropocene hovers between the not-yet and the not-over, tactics for dealing with which are suggested by the philosopher Joff Bradley when he states that:

> While we agree with Deleuze, who suggests we need reasons to believe in the world, we also suggest that we need reasons to believe in another world (Guattari & Goffey, 2016). To think the concept of utopia then in and with the present milieu is to do philosophy in the name of those yet to come, in the not-yet and non-places of the world. Faced with the aporias of the present, the task of philosophy in its utopian mode is to find itself in the unworld of the world as it is and to account for the collective trauma vis-à-vis the aporia of the Anthropocene…[52]

The possibility of finding a utopia within the 'unworld' of the inhuman, or the more-than-human seems to offer a way towards a maintenance of care,[53] one that does not rely on the 'solutionism' of much anthropocentric thinking. We are far from solutions to the unfolding violences of the *Capito-, Plantation-o-, Anthrobs-, 'cene',*

but there may be a possibility, through the de-centring of the masterful (western) human, and a recovering of actual meaningful shared vulnerability of moving towards symbiosis and mutualism: a more communal way of living and dying well as kin. Describing what this shared precarity might look like is our task, then, in the contemporary contemporary of the Sublime Anthropocene,[54] of asking ourselves whether we are being 'good ancestors,'[55] of remembering Agamben's proposition for transcending this engulfed state:

> Those who are truly contemporary, who truly belong to their time, are those who neither perfectly coincide with it nor adjust themselves to its demands…. But precisely because of this condition, precisely through this disconnection and this anachronism, they are more capable than others of perceiving and grasping their own time.[56]

In the remembering our future descendants, we among the global rich are reminded that if we do not alter our behaviour now, we may need to imagine them in the position of colonised peoples "politically disenfranchised, with no say in the decisions being made that will directly affect them or stop them from existing,"[57] *finally* subject to the Anthropocene of their design.

The disobedient, feral temporalities of the Anthropocene demand a gaze that is not fixed upon the present, past or future, but roves through these important moments, these causes, these injustices, these spaces; paying deep attention, mindful that "forgetting is the ruin of memory, its collapse, decay, shattering and eventual fading away into nothingness."[58] In learning these lessons, the vivid 'wake-work' of Christina Sharpe is vital, describing the ongoing 'wake' of slave ships, whose "seismic shockwave of colonial earth-rending is an ongoing epistemic present, and we envision the seismic shockwave as a reckoning, one laying bare the human

and environmental injustice of the orders upon which late-stage capitalism and white supremacy are built."[59]

This reckoning and describing of what is hidden, these transmuted pearls and dead corals of the deep, are the crystals and minerals that make up our more-than-human bodies, they are the geology of the *now*, the *hic et nunc* that Mbembe describes. He asks "how is it possible to live while going to death, while being somehow already dead?"[60] Rather than living with the waking death of the Anthropocene, so synonymous with the structural violences of Colonisation and the 'Postcolony', perhaps we need to return to Braidotti's example of *zoe*-egalitarianism, the new transversal alliance of which:

> opens up unexpected possibilities for the recomposition of communities, for the very idea of humanity and for ethical forms of belonging. These are not confined to negative bonding in terms of sharing the same planetary threats: climate change, environmental crisis or even extinction. What I propose is a more affirmative approach to the redefinition of posthuman subjectivity, as in the counter models of transversal, relational nomadic assemblages… or the extended nature-cultural self as an alternative to classical Humanist subjectivity.[61]

The Sublime Anthropocene offers, in a sense of what it is *not*, a vulnerable approach where "philosophy is posited as a deserted island of hope."[62] These 'islands-to-come,' the future homes for the multiple perspectives of Braidotti's 'recomposted' communities, might offer a glimmer of resistance to Mbembe's 'not-yet,'[63] and these atemporal islands of indeterminate distances will be constituted of unknowns, the inhuman, the companion,[64] the agentic, the overlooked, the vulnerable, the inanimate, the dead, and those yet-to-come. The Sublime Anthropocene is now, was

then, and will soon be a present composed of pasts and futures. It is distinguished by its multiplicity, and invisibly present in everything. It is engulfing in its distance and isolating in its proximity, everywhere, here, far and close. It threatens and overwhelms but it is humble and vulnerable, it encourages; it is generous but poor. This artistic research, in resisting the illusion of resolution,[65] and avoiding the certainty of conclusions, recognises that the Sublime Anthropocene is unknowable, and it is us. It is them, and those and you, and I.

Endnotes

[1] Hannah Arendt, "Introduction," in *Walter Benjamin Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, by Walter Benjamin, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp1-58. See esp. part III. "The Pearl Diver." At p50-51.

[2] Françoise Vergès, "Racial Capitalocene" in *Futures of Black Radicalism*, ed. Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (London and New York: Verso, 2017), p75.

[3] Paul. K. Piff et al., "Awe, the Small Self, and Prosocial Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 108, no. 6 (2015): p884, https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/psp-pspi0000018.pdf.

[4] Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), p288.

[5] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony.* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 2001), p23, www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppkxs.

[6] Sally Mackey, "Applied Theatre and Practice as Research: Polyphonic Conversations," *The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 21, no. 4 (2016): p481. Mackey comments that "[r]esearchers are often the vulnerable practitioners and knowledge creators. They are the subjects of the research as well as the authors of its ideas: researcher and the researched, the insider, the practitioner-researcher, and the researcher as auteur."

[7] A remark made as a discussant in the Panel on Contemporary Theory in Environmental Anthropology, at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Washington , DC, `December 2014 and noted in Arturo Escobar's *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds* (Durham, MA and London: Duke University Press, 2018), p64 and 239.

[8] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p19.

[9] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p190-191, where he states: "The other chief predicate to be found in colonial reason is the radical opposition between the I and the non-I. As Merleau-Ponty notes, the existence of other people is a difficulty and an outrage, for what he describes as 'objective thought.' The explanation is straightforward. In this mental universe, "There are two

modes of being, and two only:being in itself, that of objects arrayed in space, and being for itself, that of consciousness." In such an epistemology, what then is the status of the 'other'? On the one hand, another person stands before me as an in-itself —that is, an object arrayed in space. And yet, this person also exists for himself/herself, if only because he/she is, in his/her own eyes, a self-consciousness. This other's dual status of being in-himself (or inherself) before me and being for-himself (for herself) to himself/herself requires of me an operation that, in the categories of so-called objective thought, is of a difficulty apparently insurmountable. On the one hand, I have to distinguish this other from myself, and thus 'place him in the world of objects arrayed in space.' But, on the other, I ought to think of him or her as a consciousness—that is, 'the sort of being with no outside and no parts, to which I have access merely because that being is myself, and because the thinker and the thought-about are amalgamated in him.' So-called objective thought is incapable of conceiving, of articulating, these two moments in a single frame and of integrating them into a single economy, which is what causes Merleau-Ponty to say there is no place for other persons or a plurality of consciousnesses in objective thought."

[10] Octavio Paz, (1967; quoted in *Highwater* 1981) is cited by Frank Wilmer in *The Indigenous Voice in World Politics: Since Time Immemorial* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications,1993), p1.

[11] Delphi Carstens, "Cultivating a Dark Haecceity: A Pedagogy of the Uncanny and Dark Transports," *parallax* 24, No. 3 (2018): p34-7

[12] S. Ayesha Hameed, "Black Atlantis: Three Songs," in *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, ed. Anselm Franke and Eyal Weizman (Berlin: Haus der Kulturen Welt, 2014), p714.

[13] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Virginia M, Vaughan and Alden T, Vaughan, (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2011) Act 1, scene 1 lines 397-402, which includes Ariel's song:
"Full fathom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes,
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change

Into something rich and strange."

[14] Arendt, "Introduction," p40.

[15] Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), p85.

[16] Nigel Thrift, *Non-representational theory – Space-Politics-Affect* (Abindon: Routledge, 2008).

[17] Gretel Ehrlich, *The Future of Ice: A Journey into Cold*, (New York: Vintage Press, 2005) is referenced by Timothy Clarke in The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p113

[18] Carstens, "A Dark Haecceity," p346, where he states that: "[a]ffect, in this vitalistic sense, is uncanny and relational, haunted by the things and non-human powers of this world, deeply imbricated in and inquisitive toward transversal assemblages that span the personal, the social, the ecological, the geological and the cosmic."

[19] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p108, where he states that "[t]he problem is not that they do not obey or pretend to obey. Conflict arises from the fact that the postcolony is chaotically pluralistic, and that it is in practice impossible to create a single, permanently stable system out of all the signs, images, and markers current in the postcolony; this is why they are constantly being shaped and reshaped, as much by the rulers as by the ruled, in attempts to rewrite the mythologies of power."

[20] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony,* p8.

[21] Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Right to Look," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 3, (2011): p473.

[22] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p23.

[23] Martha Miller, "Tory Rebels in an Age of Prudery", review of Feeling Backward: Loss and Politics of Queer History, by Heather Love, *Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide*, (2008), July-August Issue. https://glreview.org/article/article-641/

[24] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p187.

[25] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), p237.

[26] Mirzoeff, "*The Right to Look*," p473.

[27] Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, p2.

[28] As shared by the artist Voluspa Jarpa for the Chilean Pavilion during the 2019 Venice Biennale

[29] T]he inverse of this 'assemblage' is described by Mbembe, where he outlines strategies which, while using the tools of the oppressor to re-empower, conversely, because of their dominant structures, perpetuate the disempowerment of the colonised: Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p111, where he states: "People whose identities have been partly confiscated have been able, precisely because there was this simulacrum, to glue back together their fragmented identities. By taking over the signs and language of officialdom, they have been able to remythologize their conceptual universe while, in the process, turning the commandement into a sort of zombie. Strictly speaking, this process does not increase either the depth of subordination or the level of resistance; it simply produces a situation of disempowerment (impouvoir) for both ruled and rulers."

[30] Joseph Conrad, *The Heart of Darkness*, (1899; repr., London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1983), p70.

[31] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, translated by David McLintock (London, Penguin Modern Classics, 2003), p124.

[32] Conrad, *The Heart of Darkness*, p117.

[33] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p185, where he states: "[b]ut what would the colony be, if not a place where the European, freed not only of inhibitions but of any need to keep watch on his or her imagination, reveals his or her 'other' self? What would the colony be, if no longer the site of sudden shouts, abrupt gestures, a place where time is abolished yet flows inexorably by, while the White man, besieged by a mob of Negroes, drowned in alcohol and stricken with fever, wonders, 'Have I gone mad?' What would the colony be, if not a place where all sorts of mythical fabrications could be unleashed, the place of unbridled and crazy delirium?"

[34] Conrad, *The Heart of Darkness*, p116.

[35] Avery Gordon, "Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity," *Borderlands* 10, no. 2 (2011): p2.

[36] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p72.

37 Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Crows Nest NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2005) p241.

38 Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p14.

39 Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p184.

40 Donald E, Pease, "National Identities, Postmodern Artifacts, and Postnational Narratives," in *National Identities and Post-Americanist Narratives*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), p4.

41 Nixon, *Slow Violence*, p237.

42 Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p3.

43 Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2009), p15.

44 Jacques Derrida, "Cogito and the History of Madness." in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London & New York: Routledge, 1978), p75.

45 Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p180.

46 Sylvia Wynter, "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to my Colleagues," *On the Blackness of Blacknuss*, ed. Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts, (Hudson NY: Moor's Head Press, Publication Studio Hudson), p21.

47 Mbembe, *On the Postcolony,* p144, where he states: "[i]n these conditions, the great epistemological—and therefore social—break was not between what was seen and what was read, but between what was seen (the visible) and what was not seen (the occult), between what was heard, spoken, and memorized and what was concealed (the secret)."

48 Carstens, "A Dark Haecceity,"p346, where he states "[t]hese troubling times, as Timothy Vermeulen argues, call upon us to cultivate a new affective language; one that is 'oxymoronic both-neither affirmative and…nor cynical, deconstructive and-nor reconstructive, global and-nor local, political and-nor personal'. Such an affective turning about the Romantic gyre requires paying attention to affect."

49 Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, (2013), p100.

50 Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, p103.

51 Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, p103.

52 Joff P. N. Bradley, "Exhausted Philosophy and Islands-to-Come," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 51, no. 3, (2019): p272.

53 Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, "Matters of care in technoscience: Assembling

neglected things," *Social Studies of Science* 41, no. 85 (2011): p93, http://sss.sagepub.com/content/41/1/85. In this article originally published online on 7 December 2010 she states:

"[s]o what is understood as care? Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher proposed a generic notion: 'everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair "our world" so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all that we seek to interweave in a complex, life sustaining web' (Tronto, 1993: 103; see also Fisher and Tronto, 1990). In the world as we know it, this involves tasks that make living better in interdependence, but which are often considered petty and unimportant, however vital they are for liveable relations. The doings of care are not restricted to what it is more obviously visible to STS, such as in topics like healthcare or the responsible maintenance of technology. Potentially, matters of care can be found in every context; exhibiting them is valuable especially when caring seems to be out of place, superfluous or simply absent."

[54] Anna Tsing, "More-than-human sociality: a call for critical description." Hastrup, Kirsten (ed.). *Anthropology and Nature*. New York: Routledge. 2013, 27-42., p28, where she states: "Legal theorist Anne Orford has recently championed description, citing Michel Foucault's claim that the role of philosophy is not ''to reveal what is hidden, but rather to make us see what is seen." On the same page she goes on to advocate what she calls "critical description'' - ''critical, because it asks urgent questions; and description, because it extends and disciplines curiosity about life.'"

[55] Jonas Salk, "Are We Being Good Ancestors?", *World Affairs* 1:2 (1992), p16-18.

[56] Giorgio Agamben, "What Is the Contemporary?" in *What Is an Apparatus and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 40.

[57] Andrew Anthony, "What if Covid-19 isn't our biggest threat?", The Guardian, April 26, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/science/2020/apr/26/what-if-covid-19-isnt-our-biggest-threat

[58] Rebecca Solnit, "The Ruins of Memory," in *Ruins* ed. Brian Dillon (London: Whitechapel Gallery and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).

[59] Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. (Durham, NC:

Duke University Press, 2016 is cited by Heather Davis and Zoe Todd in "On the Importance of a Date, or, Decolonizing the Anthropocene," *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 16, no. 4 (Dec. 2017): p773, https://www.acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/1539.

60   Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p201. Mbembe states: "[t]o think about the end of being and existence (the real referent of these questions) is to be interested in what lies this side of the lifeless material thing—not necessarily to establish the status of the dead person or even the survivor, but to see how, (in Africa) after colonization, it is possible to delegate one's death while simultaneously and already experiencing death at the very heart of one's own existence. In other words, how is it possible to live while going to death, while being somehow already dead? And how can one live in death, be already dead, while being-there—while having not necessarily left the world or being part of the spectre—and when the shadow that overhangs existence has not disappeared, but on the contrary weighs ever more heavily? Heidegger raised similar questions in speaking of the Dasein, which can 'end without dying, strictly speaking' and, it may be added, without being, strictly speaking, finished"

61   Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, p103.

62   Frank Berardi, *And: Phenomenology of the end*, (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotexte, 2015) is cited in the work of Bradley, "Exhausted Philosophy," p266,

63   Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p206 where he describes how "[h]istory itself becomes 'hope of history.' Henceforth, each death or defeat leads to a new appearance, is perceived as confirmation, gage, and relaunch of an ongoing promise, a 'not yet,' a 'what is coming,' which—always—separates hope from utopia."

64   Donna Haraway, Simians, *Cyborgs, and Women – the Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991) and Donna Haraway, The Companion Species Manifesto (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

65   Emma Cocker, Unfixity, in *The Yes of the No* (Sheffield: Site Gallery, 2016), p108.

Inconclusion - Islands
#9 of 10 books
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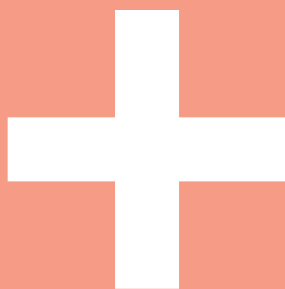
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29

Bibliography
#10 of 10 books
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