

# **SPECTRES OF THE ANTHROPOCENE**

Matt Congdon

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## ABSTRACT

The aporia of the Anthropocene asks: how can we begin to conceptualise that which remains beyond all human conception, and in addition, how can we as individual agents act in mind of this inconceivable other? The network of events given the blanket designation of the environmental crisis marks a point at which ungrounded, complex systems impinge on all terrestrial lifeforms. Like a ghost, the by-products of past actions return as the alterity of the more-than-human erupts into our very human ethical frameworks. To the subject, as enclosed in the scope of an individual perspective, these disjointed systems of cause and effect manifest as a spectre - the trace of non-presence that, although essentially immeasurable, has a deciding influence over all present reality. Therefore, I approach the aporia of the Anthropocene through Derrida's hauntology as an ethical system that opens closed ontologies to their constitutive outside, deconstructing a metaphysics of presence through rejecting the primacy of here-now existences, resisting unfolding the other as a being in terms of the self. The value of such an ethics to ecology is evident in that a hauntological understanding remains marginal to the modes of knowledge through which notions of non-relational being, anthropocentrism or exploiter-exploited dynamics are maintained. To think an entangled living-together is not to come to terms with the existence of the other, but to, in thinking it, take responsibility for the other as other, ultimately recognising its formative non-presence in the structures of embodied, present, here-now realities.

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## A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING ...

*A spectre is haunting the world - the spectre of the Anthropocene.* An analogy with as many ironies as invocations, but what happens if these are taken seriously? If we do in fact “follow the ghost”? There are many variations on this general statement: a spectre is haunting humanity, art, academia; the spectre of climate change, extinction, reality itself - events or figures overshadowing contemporary landscapes: dispersed through the virtual landscapes of media in the symbols comprising the contemporary cultural imaginary, and of course looming in a very literal sense over the landscapes of the planet itself.<sup>1</sup>

Describing the situation around the turn of the millennium Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock writes: ‘Our contemporary moment is a haunted one’.<sup>2</sup> Along with various other depictions of phantasmal entities in contemporary media, literature and theatre, it was around this time, following the 1993 publication of Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, that the so-called “spectral turn” in academia, and specifically in poststructuralist literary and cultural theory, was gaining momentum. The ghost provided critics with a new conceptual metaphor by which to reveal narratives that had been repressed, excluded or otherwise obscured in the dominant discourse, acting as a sort of recapitulation as well as development of Derrida’s wider

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<sup>1</sup> ‘A spectre is haunting the entire world: but it is not that of communism.... Climate change – no more, no less than nature’s payback for what we are doing to our precious planet – is day by day now revealing itself’: Mark Levene, ‘Rescue! History – A Manifesto for the Humanities in the Age of Climate Change – An Appeal for Collaborators’ on <http://www.rescue-history.org.uk> (2005)

‘The spectre of the Anthropocene is haunting the world’: Josef Barla, ‘Anthropocene’ on <https://newmaterialism.eu>

‘A specter is haunting academia—the specter of the Anthropocene’: JR McNeill, ‘Introductory Remarks: The Anthropocene and the Eighteenth Century’ in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016) p.117

‘A spectre is haunting humanity: That spectre is reality itself, a reality that supersedes, trumps, and outwits all our ideas about it’: Adrian Ivakhiv, *Shadowing the Anthropocene: Eco-realism for Turbulent Times* (punctum books, 2018)

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, ‘from Introduction: The Spectral Turn’ in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, ed. María del Pilar Blanco, Esther Peeren (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) p.61

deconstructive project. Now, nearly two decades on, we find that although the popularity of the ghost may have plateaued somewhat, the historical conditions for its resurgence - the changing nature of international relations, conflict and security, the virulent spread of neoliberalism, the increasingly non-present, immaterial nature of the media: the 'disruptions and dislocations in the human world' described by Derrida as the 'happening' of deconstruction; 'crises, wars, phenomena of so-called national and international terrorism, massacres that are declared or not, the transformation of the global market and of international law' - have only intensified.<sup>3</sup> While the spectre may not be such a ubiquitous figure in contemporary theory, its presence has hardly been exorcised. However, the 'emergent unreadability' of the ecological situation signified by the Anthropocene opens spectral frequencies by way of an ethical injunction whose urgency remains unparalleled in recent history.<sup>4</sup> A spectral liminality, existing somewhere between presence and absence, being and non-being - a *non-present presence* - characterises our perception of the environmental crisis, as increasingly incomprehensible systems impinge directly on the existence of all forms of terrestrial life. The severity of this situation forces us to reconcile with this other in ways that dismantle the metaphysical conditions from which we are able to do so, a reconception of our terrestrial existence as an entangled living-together. The ethics of this encounter - for any encounter with an other it is, at its core, an ethical one - carries a weight immediate to all human actors, yet simultaneously, paradoxically, the inconceivability of the environmental crisis strips the individual of any sense of agency, responsibility or accountability. Therefore we must accommodate multiple, contradictory modes of thought, holding that which remains utterly inaccessible as integral to our ethical frameworks as that which constitutes our embodied experience.

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy Clark, 'Some Climate Change Ironies: Deconstruction, Environmental Politics and the Closure of Ecocriticism' in *The Oxford Literary Review* 32.1 (Edinburgh University Press, 2010) pp.134-135

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015)

First, what is haunting? In Ken McMullen's 1983 film *Ghost Dance*, Pascale Ogier asks Jacques Derrida, arguably the most prominent late 20th century philosopher of the spectral, '[d]o you believe in ghosts?'.<sup>5</sup> One could infer from his response, aware of the manner and medium in which he is to be portrayed - or being portrayed, to us, from the perspective of our own present moment - that it is in fact the kinds of existence opened through this medium - cinema or telecommunication devices in general, that reveal spectral existences, as something necessarily fluid, inaccessible and essentially paradoxical, in the most tangible ways. At a time in which Derrida himself is absent, the body of the man, even in death, as is the case today, he speaks to us from somewhere else, from beyond the grave, through this simulacrum. In appearing as himself he is letting a ghost 'ventriloquise' his words, since the improvisational nature of the scene means they exist entirely in a state of displacement.<sup>6</sup> They are removed from the embodied moment in which they are first spoken and preserved in the moving image, only to return at another time and in an alternative material state to that in which they were first conceived. If these words were formulated beforehand he would not be letting a ghost speak for him in such an absolute way, since he would in a sense be speaking on behalf of a ghost already. In the moment of their being spoken the words would remain always partially ahead or behind of their instance, channeled through various points in time from elsewhere, with each coordinate forming its own ghosts, containing its own hauntings. This is in fact the case with the closing statement of his improvisation, the only line that was dictated to him by the filmmaker: 'and what about you ... Do you believe in ghosts?'.<sup>7</sup> Derrida ventriloquises the words of the director, the non-present presence haunting the statement from the past, while Derrida the ventriloquist is haunted by the promise of his own non-presence from the future; coordinates

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<sup>5</sup> *Ghost Dance* [DVD] dir. Ken McMullen (London: Channel Four Films, 1983)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

which are then ventriloquised once more to us, displaced from this lived moment, returning through the televisual simulacrum. Conceived and spoken simultaneously the words manifest as an entirely physical gesture, meaning that when we watch *Ghost Dance* we are presented only with the displacement of this physicality: an impression of bodily presence that returns 'but slightly with-held', giving us a glimpse not only of that which is brought back, the idea of presence preserved in this partial form, but also that which is lost.<sup>8</sup> As Avery Gordon writes, the ghost is therefore 'one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us'.<sup>9</sup> The *revenant* is not the return of the thing of which it acts as a simulacrum, the lost or departed, but the return of the very displacement of this thing, of that which grounded the thing as itself in a particular order, whether in a sense of physical materiality or something more ephemeral.

Spectrality therefore describes a state of anachrony: 'The disjointure in the very presence of the present, this sort of non-contemporaneity of present time with itself', meaning the spectre is that which remains always 'outside itself', 'out of sync' with conventional temporal and spatial orders; a quasi-material, quasi-ontological, quasi-transcendental non-presence that, through an interruption of linear time, dislocates the idea of presence - as necessarily spatial and temporal, the spatiotemporal here-now - as we know it.<sup>1011</sup> Spectral existences unground the measured, quantifiable point of the spatialised or temporalised to the immeasurable, unspecified flow of spacing and temporisation in which the lived present is disjointed - a space-time beyond all immediate quantifiability.

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<sup>8</sup> Nick Mansfield, 'There is a Spectre Haunting...': Ghosts, Their Bodies, Some Philosophers, a Novel and the Cultural Politics of Climate Change' in *Borderlands*, 7, 1, (2008) ([http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol7no1\\_2008/mansfield\\_climate.htm](http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol7no1_2008/mansfield_climate.htm))

<sup>9</sup> Avery Gordon, quoted in Weinstock, 'from Introduction: The Spectral Turn' in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, p.64

<sup>10</sup> Jacques Derrida, Bernard Stiegler, 'Spectrographies' in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, p.40

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (London: Routledge, 2006) p.29

This means that in the anachrony of haunting physical space as something bounded by defined temporal coordinates becomes disrupted, lost, left behind, manifesting, materialising immaterially, somewhere outside or beyond any metaphysical system that gives precedence to the here-now. Bernard Stiegler, in another interview with Derrida, refers to a passage in Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, a consideration of photography that illuminates this non-presence of the *revenant* brought back through the televisual image: *'in photography, I can never deny that the thing was there. Past and reality are superimposed .... The photo is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body which was there proceed radiations that come to touch me, I who am here. [...] A kind of umbilical cord ties the body of the photographic thing to my gaze'*.<sup>12</sup> In an image evoking the life cycle itself, the passage from cradle to grave, the umbilical cord that connects the body of the present viewer of the photograph to the non-body of the photograph's non-present referent drags past and future virtualities into the here-now. There is a kind of presence here, but it remains inaccessible, withdrawn into the unspecified beyond. Stiegler continues, noting that in response to this Derrida had written: 'the modern possibility of the photograph joins, in a single system, death and the referent'.<sup>13</sup> Death is that which is beyond us present beings in the most absolute sense, meaning the photograph, as a means of communication in the same vein as the moving image or the written word, opens up a timescale that is always somewhere ahead of us. This brings me to one of the central points from Derrida's dialogue in *Ghost Dance*: that 'the future belongs to ghosts'.<sup>14</sup> In that it is 'reproducible in our absence', the photograph introduces the possibility of our very own disappearance.<sup>15</sup> As soon as some trace essence of that which we consider "us" is preserved in different material-temporal conditions from our own linear birth-death trajectory, we are haunted by the

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<sup>12</sup> Roland Barthes, quoted in Derrida, Stiegler, 'Spectrographies' p. 37

<sup>13</sup> Derrida, Stiegler, *Ibid.* p.38

<sup>14</sup> *Ghost Dance*

<sup>15</sup> Derrida, Stiegler, 'Spectrographies' p.38



non-presence promised by this timescale beyond our own. From outside any embodied chronology or dimension, this thing speaks to us. Not as us, since the interior notion of “us”, the subject of self-reference, is always defined by way of an embodied spatiotemporality. Rather, this thing speaks *without* us, it ventriloquises us, appearing from an outside that remains incomprehensible from the immanent conditions of the present moment; an existence defined along a scale limited by the coordinates of life and death.

We can therefore say that haunting describes a situation of spatiotemporal indeterminacy. Not the invasion or imposition of the here-now by that which lies outside so much as a realisation of its formative openness to this outside; its irrevocable entanglements with that which has been and that which is to come. This conflation entails the disintegration of the here-now as a generalised position in the synchronic order of ‘present-past, ‘present-present’, ‘present-future’, rejecting the notion of the bounded present as a fixed point in a chain of linear succession.<sup>16</sup> The instance of the present is always relayed through past and future dimensions, but this structure cannot be properly integrated in the embodied boundaries of the subject. Something is always lost, excluded, repressed - spectralised, you could say - by these lived timescales, yet the trace of this displaced other always remains, returning once again. Haunting is therefore characteristic of phenomenal time:

‘If there is something like spectrality, there are reasons to doubt this reassuring order of presents and, especially, the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it: absence, non-presence, non-effectivity, inactuality, virtuality, or even the simulacrum in general’.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p.48

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Like the linguistic sign, the incompleteness of any context, determined by the trace of that which it is not, the present moment is formed within a network of relations that can be easily obscured by the presupposition of a singular, linear model of temporality. This means, if we accept the openness of the here-now to that which lies outside, we see that it is actually constituted through its relations with extraneous there-then virtualities. To exclude these relations based on notions of inherent virtue, self-identical unity or conceptions of being or time that can only be accessed by way of limit and reduction, is to risk falling into the empty presuppositions of totalitarian thinking, conceding to the draw of microfascism by segmenting, constricting, obscuring or repressing reality through the modes of thought we mobilise to access it. Presence can no longer have primacy as the determining factor in our experience of reality for example, since it is only through the traces of that which is absolutely other to this experience, an inconceivable network of excluded non-presences, that this experience can be structured as such.

The limits of spatiotemporal frameworks such as the myth of progress or the anthropocentric time of modernity, along with the kinds of non-relational, atomistic approaches to being limited by their particular reductionisms, are revealed as such - as limits - through the inaccessible excess of these ghostly recurrences. Presence as an ontological condition (in some cases the condition *for* ontology - the “metaphysics of presence” that Derrida seeks to disrupt) is ungrounded or displaced as the determining factor of our experience through the interruption of the linear temporality along which it is defined. Ghosts are not, at least in theory, an entirely inexorable phenomenon in the conditions of reality per se. Rather, they are produced through a particular scope of experience. For example, in the classic sense, ghosts appear to us because we uphold the linear space-time that moves from birth to death, along which all “present” ontological existences are then defined. Therefore, any beings that do not fall within

these coordinates - beings that are *'not, no longer or not yet'* present - cannot be considered to properly "exist" at all, since existence is only defined in terms of that which can be perceived in relation to the space-time of embodied subjectivity.<sup>18</sup> We can immediately see the hierarchical nature of such a model: these conditions are defined in terms of the subject, meaning all that is external (inaccessible or imperceptible) to the subject is subordinated, repressed or erased through the establishment of a dichotomy of self and other, interior and exterior, thereby allowing for the domination and exploitation of this externalised other as a vacant and passive entity.

As Colin Davis writes, ghosts represent 'a wholly irrecuperable intrusion in our world, which is not comprehensible within our available intellectual frameworks, but whose otherness we are responsible for preserving'.<sup>19</sup> To claim that these frameworks are inherently totalitarian is not necessarily to implicate the individual through which they operate, but simply to emphasise that any such framework, being, as it is, operative through limitation, works through a kind of ontological hierarchisation, filtration or exclusion. If we again take the example of the ontological categories of presence and non-presence, the figure of the ghost as a critical tool is used to highlight and problematise the default placing of one over the other when conceived within a particular intellectual framework. However, the inherently limited nature of our embodied perception relative to all possible ontological conditions means that such orders are essentially unavoidable - 'the clear demarcation of self and other - is, as Kant suggests elsewhere, not simply a mistake, but a misunderstanding about the *scope* of a distinction that, up to a point, under certain conditions, we cannot avoid making'.<sup>20</sup> The acknowledgement of these excluded

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<sup>18</sup> Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p.121

<sup>19</sup> Colin Davis, 'État Présent: Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms' in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, p.53

<sup>20</sup> David Wood, 'Specters of Derrida: On the Way to Econstruction' in *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth* ed. Laurel Kearns, Catherine Keller (NY: Fordham University Press, 2007) p.268

others is therefore an ethical imperative, since the foundation of ethics as based on the Derridean notion of a justice-to-come is realised in this out of jointedness of time; the futural dimension that determines the lived instance of the temporal event, but that remains always beyond it, ahead of it, founded through an encounter with a radical, disembodied alterity. If our ethical imperative as acknowledgment is to resist exclusionary tendencies: 'to learn to live *with* ghosts, in the upkeep, the conversation, the company, or the companionship, in the commerce without commerce of ghosts. To live otherwise, and better. No, not better, but more justly. But *with* them', we must find ways of thinking that can operate without resorting to generalisation, counterposition, limitation, synthesis or hierarchy, remaining always open to the non-present, the not here and not now.<sup>21</sup> We can find this hierarchical thought in, for example, the risky enterprise of the practice of philosophy as a search for truth, and Derrida's deconstruction - along with other poststructuralist projects in a similar vein (Deleuze and Guattari's, for example) - is based around an exit from these modes of thought; in this case through the 'destabilisation or deconstruction of established institutions', so as to open up 'the passage toward the other', to do justice to the other as radical alterity, to resist reducing the other to an object of knowledge in terms of the self through its refiguration within an established framework.<sup>22</sup> This encounter with the non-present and non-quantifiable as formative to any present, cohesive understanding of reality is founded on the ethical injunction towards or in maintenance of the other that is key to Derrida's notion of haunting. That if we are to open our modes of thought in such a way, to do justice to the other as other, we must accept the impossibility of comprehending the other: to comprehend it, but incomprehensibly.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, pp. xvii-xviii

<sup>22</sup> Paul Patton, 'Future Politics' in *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, ed. Paul Patton, John Protevi (London: Continuum, 2003) p.16

<sup>23</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.10

When we raise environmental questions the need for an ethics of alterity becomes clear. As soon as something is excluded from our frame of reference it is subordinated, cast out as something 'dispensable for our existence'.<sup>24</sup> However, in the face of crisis this is also not necessarily a call to act in mind of individual entities, but to consider complex, encompassing systems of relations that remain to us by their very nature entirely abstract. Timothy Clark writes: 'Climate change seems a happening whose trauma is to enact or entail the deconstruction of multiple frames of reference in multiple fields and modes of thought at the same time'.<sup>25</sup> Clark identifies environmental questions as 'a perplexing and seemingly expanding absence or even evasion in Derrida's thinking', and indeed, it would seem that these questions manifest as a pervasive, haunting non-presence throughout his project.<sup>26</sup> I want to intensify these ecological tendencies - think with the ghost, if you will - in accounting for the inherent aporia of the Anthropocene as a concept and moment that not only haunts, but is itself haunted, existing in an interstitial and multifactorial state of displacement from itself, from its intellectual and terrestrial grounds.

One of the central tenets of the Anthropocene is the troubling of distinctions between interior and exterior: of man/nature, here/there, now/then. If we accept the logic of the ghost, we see that boundaries between these distinctions are already agitated. The excluded returns once again. As soon as we accept a singular, linear model of temporality, for example - the life-death trajectory of the individual, the progressive time of modernity, even the generalised chain of presents that structures synchronic temporal succession - the ghosts begin to appear, returning from the radically elsewhere. Spectres open the lived present to diachronic relations with the past, generating a future to come by way of an endless differance, the rupture of the present as

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<sup>24</sup> Wood, 'Specters of Derrida: On the Way to Econstruction' p.277

<sup>25</sup> Clark, 'Some Climate Change Ironies: Deconstruction, Environmental Politics and the Closure of Ecocriticism', p.132

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.132

a closed interiority, where we are able to think with, rather than despite, otherness. The “closure” of metaphysics is interrupted, decentering the human as the ‘unthematized point of departure for all reflection’, countering the myopia of privileging individual, embodied anthropocentric spatiotemporal modalities over others; existing as they do in a complex, entangled web, in which linear causal relations are delocalised and interdependence is revealed as un-immediate and oceanic.<sup>27</sup>

The radical alterity of the ghost is not a component or coordinate of the present, part of the visible or sensible structures that allow us to perceive reality as a set of lucid experiences, but the non-present, incomprehensible other that gives form to these experiences as such. Haunting does not simply describe the relational model of time for example, but the inaccessible, immaterial and wholly other manifestation of these relations to us, as, fundamentally, beings of the here-now. This means haunting is not only a function of spacing and temporisation, the unspecified flows upon which defined spatial and temporal coordinates are marked, but also woven into the inference of meaning and the processes of thought itself. As in Derrida’s formulation of signification in general, one we could typify as entirely based on this act of haunting, of being haunted, the haunting of being; meaning is not inherent to the sign but always deferred, always determined by the trace of the other within. As Derrida says, in response to Ogier’s question: ‘So ghosts do exist... And it’s the ghosts who will answer you. Perhaps they already have’.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Wood, ‘Specters of Derrida: On the Way to Econstruction’, p.274

<sup>28</sup> *Ghost Dance*

## WAITING FOR THE ANTHROPOCENE

*A spectre is haunting.* The statement summons the spirit of Marx that waited for Derrida, the phantasmal presence that opens *The Communist Manifesto*. In *Hamlet* it is the apparition of the ghost that sets in motion the events of the play, but the ghost itself does not participate beyond its initial appearance, and this absence, or more accurately, this *absent presence*, this *non-presence*, is of vital importance: 'As in *Hamlet*, the Prince of a rotten state, everything begins by the apparition of a spectre'.<sup>29</sup> Only here, perhaps, the rotten state has become the rotten planet - the ruined landscapes of the Anthropocene, animated by the zombified flows of capital, revealing the unremitting emergence of an unlife within death; the otherworldly motion of the no-longer or not-yet, the opening of embodied human spatiotemporalities to an outside beyond the horizons of any human perspective. In all forms it appears, the ghost is a catalysing force. Not so much the a priori producer or architect of a connection between otherwise separate spatiotemporal positions (past/present, here/there), but an opening through which we realise the mutual constitution of these positions by way of their concurrence, existing outside any notions of self-identical, interior being, yet upon which all of this existence depends. It does not manifest at any one point, a single place or a single time, but in the relational coming into being of spatiotemporal positions classically thought to be separated. This means, since manifestation in terms of the here-now can only occur within the defined material properties of a singular physical or temporal position, the ghost does not properly manifest at all. It exists as a superposition: in the concurrence of multiple states or previously irreconcilable points on linear (dimensional, chronological) scales, or in the entwining (or re-entwining) of the scales themselves (past-present, here-there). In other words, the spectre marks a discontinuity, a

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<sup>29</sup> Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p.2

rupture in linear time that reveals in its place a 'polytemporal assemblage'.<sup>30</sup> For Bruno Latour, this temporal confusion can be read as a symptom of modernity: 'modern temporality is the result of a retraining imposed on entities which would pertain to all sorts of times and possess all sorts of ontological statuses without this harsh disciplining'.<sup>31</sup> As I have said, the ghost or spectre is what emerges when constraints such as the singular, linear, and thoroughly anthropocentric temporality of modernity are established, reducing being to binary categories and neglecting our deep entanglements with extraneous timescales and the ways of being they describe. Modern times pass 'while eliminating everything in their path', but in one way or another, these excluded modes always return.<sup>32</sup>

That which is to come. Everything begins by the apparition of a spectre, and '[m]ore precisely by the *waiting* for this apparition'.<sup>33</sup> A spectre is haunting Europe, humanity, the world. If the spectre is the trace of the non-present in the present, the trace of presence in non-presence, it therefore operates through the deferral of presence as a state of self-identical wholeness. This deferral, as well as describing the withdrawal of the term Anthropocene from its numerous practical applications (being considered unsuitable, inaccurate, reductionist, depoliticising, over-politicising, etc.), agitates our conception of straightforward topography or temporality with regards to the genealogy of ideas, interrupting disciplinary boundaries as the concept proliferates across various field-specific chronologies. Of course, this is not to say that the Anthropocene fails in signifying a set of specific concerns. First proposed by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stroemer, the Anthropocene thesis as understood in geological or biological terms is essentially arguing for the status of mankind as a geophysical agency, the impact of which

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<sup>30</sup> Bruno Latour, quoted in Roger Luckhurst, 'from The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the 'Spectral Turn'' in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, p.81

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*. (MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) p.76

<sup>33</sup> Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p.2



can be traced in rock strata or through the accelerated reconfiguration and artificialisation the biosphere through anthropocentric systems of urban development and economic growth. The effect that human activity has had on the environment is undeniably unprecedented among Earth species, and the growing evidence supporting deep and extensive alterations to the landscape and climate in favour of industrialisation or petro-capital means that its status as a 'charismatic mega-concept' has extended far beyond its roots in stratigraphy and Earth system science.<sup>34</sup> The term is applied liberally across various fields to address the dynamic of the current ecological situation, as anthropogenic changes destabilise the planet's bio-geo-chemical systems. It is this general condition, an assessment of the human response-ability (to use Donna Haraway's term) to participate in terrestrial assemblages, that is signified by the Anthropocene. Not simply the qualification of the Earth scale influence of anthropogenic systems, but the parallel emergence of these non-human assemblages as sympoietically formative to all anthropogenic existences. In the historical moment marked by the Anthropocene, we come to realise that to exist without influence, from both within and without, is unavoidable, and that a more-than-human thought is not only made necessary, but actually made possible. We find in the Anthropocene not just potential realisation of the agency of humanity as a species-being, but also a kind of planetary agency, the agency of the Earth as a system in itself. The "age of man", wherein Anthropos, the Vitruvian He, achieves mastery over his environment, is at once the realisation of man's irrevocable dependencies and entanglements with this environment. As Claire Colebrook writes, the Anthropocene has in a sense always been with us: 'If the Anthropocene - today - is possible, this is because its potentiality haunted the very constitution of the human as a political animal [...] To be *political* is

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<sup>34</sup> Heather Davies, Etienne Turpin, 'Art & Death: Lives Between the Fifth Assessment & the Sixth Extinction' in *Art in the Anthropocene* ed. Heather Davies, Etienne Turpin, (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015) p.6

not just to be, but to be *in-relation*'.<sup>35</sup> The Anthropocene marks humanity's understanding of itself as not simply a species but a species that exists among others - relations (both past and future) that are indispensable to its existence. This means the Anthropocene can only arrive too late, since this realisation takes place only in light of these relations' imminent destruction. We become aware of the conditions of our terrestrial existence only through the possibility of mourning them. So, we see that if the Anthropocene does then in a sense signal the age of mankind, it also signals the potential for the destruction of mankind as we know it. Once we realise man is powerful enough to alter planetary systems, we realise that these altered systems are powerful enough to render man's environment uninhabitable. The conditions under which we achieve planetary agency are marked by growing evidence of the increasing hostility of the environments we supposedly, if the narrative is to be accepted, have the ability to control.

It is precisely this necessitation of more-than-human thought that calls the Anthropocene into question as an appropriate designation for our current ecological and geo-historical moment. Despite its widespread use, and for some of the reasons I have already briefly noted, the term is criticised across virtually all of the disciplines in which it can be applied. In the humanities, various counter narratives, most of which direct focus from the generalised figure of Anthropos onto a particular history (that of capitalism, patriarchy or slavery, for example), have been proposed in hope of not only better contextualising our current situation but also in holding to account a "guilty" sub-section of humanity with a view to overcome the systems it perpetuates. This sense of the Anthropocene's detachment from any sense of localised reality - in this case, its social-historical context - can here be attributable to the encompassing, univocal whole placed over what is in actual fact a network of divergent political, economic, cultural and ethical factors acting to independent and self-determined ends. Clark writes:

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<sup>35</sup> Claire Colebrook, 'What is the Anthro-political?' in *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2016) p.82

'The cliché of humanity having become a geological force has implications beyond the fact of human violence against the Earth and other species. A geological force is also an impersonal one, one that, like plate tectonics or earthquakes, does not heed entreaties, respect individual rights or admit of being altered by human decisions. In this case, however, the geological force at issue is, paradoxically, a total effect of innumerable human decisions'.<sup>36</sup>

We are faced with a situation in which humanity as composed of individual actors is removed from humanity as a geophysical agency, wherein to conceptualise humanity as such is to erase the human itself. Humanity as *Anthropos* is spectralised, operative at a higher level of complexity than any individual human is capable of perceiving. The effects of geophysical man can therefore be conceived as a kind of sublimation of a spectral frequency, meaning, as is the case when confronting the spectre, we are faced with a paradox. "Man" as a single unit, a term to be understood along with all of its hierarchical baggage, remains devoid of any actual humanity. If the paradox of the environmental crisis as a diverse proliferation of more-than-human effects and processes implies the dislocation of the embodied human actor from the ecological assemblage of which it is a constitutive part - yet which, if we are to accept *Anthropos* as a geological force, it has a determining power over - what can be achieved by designating the geohistorical moment that brackets this ecological situation as the Anthropocene? Through the propagation of this narrative we risk upholding the modernist distinctions between mankind and nature, one that ultimately rests on the dynamic of exploiter and exploited, of man as active and dominant and nature as passive and submissive. The

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<sup>36</sup> Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015) p.16

environment and its crisis remains always “over there”, meaning the individual cannot be implicated, since any individual action does not constitute an environmental issue. Therefore, if we follow this line of thought to its conclusion and we find species-man guilty, implicating Anthropos as a geological force, this affirms the modernistic hubris that gives veracity to the claim that if mankind now possesses the capacity to alter the cycles of Earth, then surely it also has the capacity to mitigate any incoming environmental catastrophes. We must therefore attend to an intellectual methodology that is not based on the synthesis of aporia, since we find that, in this inherently aporetic scenario, any sense of synthesis or finality only entails a kind of despotism, upholding rather than dismantling the supremacy of the anthropocentric perspective we are confined to.

However, as I said, discrepancies are not just confined to the humanities. There are disputes within the “hard” sciences also, and perhaps the best example of the Anthropocene’s displacement from itself is to be found here: that, in an explicitly geochronological sense as per Crutzen and Stoermer’s original formulation, the term is in fact still informal, with the formalisation process, primarily led by recommendation of the Anthropocene Working Group, still in its initial stages.<sup>37</sup> In this case most of the contention comes from the multifaceted existence of the Anthropocene as a political imperative or cultural symbol, a generally accepted and propagated description of our dire environmental prognosis, and the Anthropocene as a formally accepted geological time unit. We therefore find ourselves in the peculiar position of, as Carlos Santana puts it, ‘waiting for the Anthropocene’.<sup>38</sup> The Anthropocene is upheld as an articulation of an essentially geochronological notion that is in many ways dislocated from previously accepted definitions of geochronological units. Zalasiewicz et al. write:

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<sup>37</sup> Valentí Rull, ‘What If the ‘Anthropocene’ Is Not Formalized as a New Geological Series/Epoch?’ in *Quaternary* 1(3), 24 (2018)

<sup>38</sup> Carlos Santana, ‘Waiting for the Anthropocene’ in *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* (2018)

'More or less effective recognition of such a unit today (with annual/decadal resolution) is facies dependent and variably compromised by the disturbance of stratigraphic superposition that commonly occurs at geologically brief temporal scales, and that particularly affects soils, deep marine deposits and the pre-1950 parts of current urban areas. The Anthropocene, thus, more than any other geological time unit, is locally affected by such blurring of its chronostratigraphic boundary with Holocene strata. Nevertheless, clearly separable representatives of an Anthropocene Series may be found in lakes, land ice, certain river/delta systems, in the widespread dredged parts of shallow marine systems on continental shelves and slopes and in those parts of deepwater systems where human-rafted debris is common. From a far future perspective, the boundary is likely to appear geologically instantaneous and stratigraphically significant'.<sup>39</sup>

Man waits for his own epoch, a point in time that has from one perspective already arrived, and that, from another, will perhaps not arrive at all: 'signs of humanity's status as a geological force are everywhere', yet the Anthropocene, as a way of describing this situation, remains withdrawn from the kind of localised reality necessary to complete its manifestation; from the defined stratigraphic boundary needed to recognise it formally, and from the figure of the unified Anthropos implicated in its creation.<sup>40</sup>

There is therefore a noticeable interplay between problems with the Anthropocene as articulated in the humanities and as articulated in the hard sciences found in this promissory

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<sup>39</sup> Jan Zalasiewicz, Mark Williams, Colin N. Waters, 'Can an Anthropocene Series be defined and recognized?' in *Geological Society, London, Special Publications* (2014) p.39

<sup>40</sup> 'Waiting for the Anthropocene', p.1

temporality of that which is to come - that to think the Anthropocene and its ecological implications, we must open our current intellectual frameworks to a series of divergent spatiotemporal scales that remain always beyond any human conception. Such a thought does not require reconciliation of the not-yet-present with the present, but an understanding of the non-present as constitutive of the present, as immanent to the present as a perceived interiority. The geochronological superposition mentioned above is essentially describing the impinging of non-presence into presence. The Holocene, a formally recognised unit as per conventional geological measures, is interrupted by a thing that is so far not wholly quantifiable by the same means. If presence is simply an articulation of being according to a particular methodology or tradition of thought, the Anthropocene as a geochronological unit exists in a state of quasi-presence, at the same time here and not-here, with future virtualities rushing in to occupy the space in the methodologies or traditions the concept interrupts. Therefore, thinking the Anthropocene from a geological perspective requires a similar kind of deconstructive temporal motion as thinking it from the perspective of the humanities. They both have to deal with a kind of detachment of the concept from itself, a dislocation of the term from its described realities, the contamination of the here-now by the there-then. We can therefore see that the concept is interstitial, hovering between various contexts and definitions, existing in a multifactorial state, essentially irreplaceable, yet also, by conventional measures of consistency and irrefutability, inherently aporetic. Even if the Anthropocene is formalised as a geological epoch this sense of anachronistic groundlessness remains, since the situation it describes threatens the existence of the Anthropos that defines the epoch as such, describing timescales that, again, extend far beyond the limits of the human: 'man's effect on the planet will supposedly be discernible as a geological strata readable well after man ceases to be, even if there are no geologists who will

be present to undertake this imagined future reading'; or, as Tom Cohen puts it, 'a "possible future hermeneutic" which one must go extinct to test'.<sup>4142</sup>

We can therefore propose that the Anthropocene does not operate in the discourse in spite of its counterintuitiveness, but because of it. Like the ghost of Hamlet's father that catalyses the events of the play, the non-present presence that determines all activity undertaken in the delimitations of materialised reality, the term's liminality imbues it with a certain generative potential. We wait for the Anthropocene because we can only wait for the Anthropocene, and in its place - that of a more grounded, practical concept formulated to particular ethical, hospitable ends - we find a proliferation of sub and counter narratives; capitalocene, plantationocene, gynocene, nucleocene, and so on. This is not simply a case of overeager scholarship, creating concepts around an idea that is itself only partially (and will remain so, by its nature) formed. Instead, to attempt to theorise the Anthropocene is to at once construct something other than the Anthropocene, a narrative that comprehends and properly articulates a particular history only partially manifested in the Anthropocene concept itself.

Donna Haraway writes:

'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'.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Claire Colebrook, *Death of the Posthuman: Essays on Extinction vol I* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2014) p.10

<sup>42</sup> Tom Cohen, 'Trolling "Anthropos" - Or, Requiem for a Failed Prosopopeia' in *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols*, p.53

<sup>43</sup> Donna Haraway, *Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (London: Duke University Press, 2016) p.100

Discontinuities harbour creative potential, an openness to both past and future, that which is no longer and that which is to be, instantiating a motion of becoming-other that catalyses change. Everything begins by the apparition of the spectre, and, specifically, the waiting for this apparition. There is in this anticipation of change, in the change that anticipation promises, the same energy Derrida associates with the ghost - 'at once impatient, anxious and fascinated: this, the thing ("this thing") will end up coming. The *revenant* is going to come. It won't be long'.<sup>44</sup> This begs the question: how then, if we are put in a situation where we must act in mind of that which we fundamentally cannot understand, can we approach the problems raised by the Anthropocene and the ecological situation it defines? Of course, these two issues are always intertwined; the aporia of the Anthropocene concept signifies an aporia in our approaches to ecological thought. To reconcile with or understand that which remains outside of our very capacities for reconciliation or understanding requires a shift in the metaphysical frameworks through which we access reality. However, this implies that any reconciliation or understanding we achieve by way of such a methodology will not necessarily be discernible as "reconciliation" or "understanding" at all.

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<sup>44</sup> Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p.2



## ALWAYS MORE THAN ONE

It serves to mention here that Derrida's conception of spectrality does not stand alone. As well as a term signifying a state between being and non-being, presence and absence, the spectre is itself shared between a range of historical contexts, and in a markedly Derridean manner, the traces of these excluded modes cannot be completely expunged. In reference to the interstitial nature of the spectre as a critical tool, Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren note that 'this aspect of *both ... and* - which is equally one of *neither ... nor*', is based on a series of binary oppositions (presence/absence, living/dead, human/non-human) generated from a set of essentially Western ideals.<sup>45</sup> To use the figure of the ghost as a method of critical inquiry therefore implies in some respects a similar univocality to the figure of Anthropos conjured by the Anthropocene. This is not in reference to the negative internal hierarchisation of the Anthropos, that humanity as a whole is responsible for the climate crisis rather than any specific hegemonic group or political or economic system, but that the term itself has the potential to silence the diverse alternative and nuanced articulations of the ecological situation that may be indispensable to the discourse. As Haraway writes: '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'.<sup>46</sup>

While this potential for obfuscation and univocalisation can be revealed through deconstruction as a symptom of all signifiatory acts, in a twofold motion of description and enactment, when used as a critical term the diachronic hauntings of the ghost actually serve to

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<sup>45</sup> Pilar Blanco, Peeren, 'Spectropoetics: Ghosts of the Global Contemporary / Introduction' in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, p.91

<sup>46</sup> Donna Haraway, 'Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene' in *e-flux Journal #75* (<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67125/tentacular-thinking-anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene/>)

illustrate an example of deconstructive spectralisation: the displacement, marginalisation or exclusion of certain beings, entities or concepts outside of an established, dominant order. As I have already said, almost all arguments against the use of the term Anthropocene are framed at least partly in this way; that the figure of a unified Anthropos subsumes and therefore equally implicates all of the various divergent arrangements of human populations in a crisis instigated by a relative minority, or, as in Haraway's point above, that the Anthropocene concept itself absorbs and nullifies all of its sub or counter narratives - 'drown[ing] out other scales and figures with its blinding light'.<sup>47</sup> Our present use of the figure of the ghost is therefore potentially subject to, although in somewhat different ways, similar problematics of genealogy. Pilar Blanco and Peeren see the ghost as exemplary of Mieke Bal's notion of the 'travelling concept': that, as tools for intersubjective understanding, concepts are not fixed but often 'overlap', existing between various contexts and definitions.<sup>48</sup> This can be read as a development of Edward Said's 'travelling theory', based on the observation that 'ideas and theories travel - from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another', however '[s]uch movement into a new environment is never unimpeded'.<sup>49</sup> Said's approach, focussing on the movement of entire theories rather than concepts, is somewhat less specific than Bal's, but both works can be read as part of the same general project. Said emphasises historical context, observing the limits and possibilities theories reveal once they are uprooted from these contexts and applied elsewhere, that the boundaries and reach of a theory emerge in motion, where it is also most subject to forces of representation and institutionalisation. Bal instead examines the semiology of concepts, with the interstitial nature of terms and the pathways of intersubjective communication they open being a central component of interdisciplinary methodologies. The

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<sup>47</sup> Tom Cohen, Claire Colebrook, *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols* p.8

<sup>48</sup> Pilar Blanco, Peeren, *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture* (London: Continuum, 2010)

<sup>49</sup> Edward Said, *The Text, The World, The Critic* (MA: Harvard University Press, 1983) p.226

instability of concepts generates inventive potentialities, and lines of flight between interdisciplinary modes are revealed through liminal terms '[n]ot because they mean the same thing for everyone, but because they don't'.<sup>50</sup> For Bal, these disjunctions provide novel discursive opportunities so long as they are 'worked through' in order to prevent misunderstanding or partisanship regarding a specific application or interpretation.<sup>51</sup> For Said theories are in a sense never complete. In their travels through space and time, through various conceptual "turns" (ontological, spatial, linguistic, spectral), something is always left behind. It is therefore the duty of the critic 'to provide resistances to theory, to open it up toward historical reality, toward society, toward human needs and interests', to operate beyond the theory's circumscribed interpretive area and in accordance with the everyday realities in which they are applied.<sup>52</sup>

We see this potential for both invention and erasure in the diverse sociolinguistic genealogies of the ghost, where its multiple uses as both ordinary word and theoretical tool can reveal various creative pathways while simultaneously being capable of neutralising them. Since travels reveal histories, we find that the concept of spectrality is itself haunted: 'Instead of demanding a distancing, the twists and turns of haunting manifest as a layering, a palimpsestic thinking together, simultaneously, rather than a thinking against or after'.<sup>53</sup> To speak of a ghost is to speak of multiple ghosts, and this act of invocation, in accordance with Derrida, defines the process of signification. All texts are haunted by their interpretations, all concepts are haunted by their applications in exogenous orders. Derrida writes: 'To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of

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<sup>50</sup> Pilar Blanco, Peeren, *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, p.xi

<sup>51</sup> Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002) p.26

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p.242

<sup>53</sup> Pilar Blanco, Peeren, 'The Spectral Turn' in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, p.32

every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time'.<sup>54</sup> Concepts are, as resigned to the realm of signification, always in a state of displacement, and articulated in a deconstructive sense the spectre does indeed depart from its previous historical uses and definitions. However this departure and subsequent displacement from its prior contexts and readings in fact exemplifies the very action that the term in the deconstructive sense describes, hence its value as a conceptual metaphor. As Peter Buse and Andrew Stott write:

'Deconstruction's ghosts, then, are considerably different from those found in the majority of fictional haunting narratives with which we have been familiar [...] For deconstruction, a removal of all forms of haunting in the face of such awesome referential categories represents an artificial and unworkable imposition placed upon such concepts. Like the appearance of the ghost, the origin and its repetition are coterminous with one another. Thus, no signification can be unproblematically sutured to the originary context of its production, as the sign is haunted by a chain of overdetermined readings, mis-readings, slips and accretions that will always go beyond the event itself'.<sup>55</sup>

An unspoken, unintelligible, arche-originary condition, the non-presence of the mark that is displaced from the instance of the material sign, describes the spectral action of differance and the chain of hauntings through which signification emerges. By utilising the ghost as a conceptual metaphor, we are at once provided with a description and enactment of the differance of signification. All of the ghost's diachronic, extra-contextual meanings are repeated

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<sup>54</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.202

<sup>55</sup> Peter Buse, Andrew Stott, 'Introduction: a Future for Haunting' in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (London: Macmillan, 1999) p.12

with it, meaning the sign is never all there; never fully present in the event of its use, always determined by a trace network of deferred non-presences. When we use the figure of the ghost in the context of deconstruction, we invoke all of its prior non-contemporaneous definitions and contextualisations, thereby allowing us to glimpse (inaccessibly; comprehended incomprehensibly, since the process cannot be measured or determined in itself, occurring as it does outside of our frameworks of knowledge and meaning as determined by the signifiatory process it instantiates) the nature of the sign as irreducible from its extraneous contexts. We can therefore bring the notion of the travelling concept into the framework of the spectral, where to move between contexts is to be haunted by all prior instances of the sign that are not present in its current manifestation. A proliferation of ghosts.

Now, I have already spoken of the interstitial nature of the Anthropocene in a terrestrial sense so there is no need to reiterate it here, but we can see from the language introduced above that it remains in practice also strung somewhat awkwardly between “theory” and “concept”. Its generative potential comes not from its shared meanings but from its inability to be deployed in any one discourse without necessary reference to another. All others, in fact - all discourses in which the term has any purchase or relevance at all are mobilised simultaneously in the instance of its use, yet are always subordinated through the necessary dominance of the framework that informs our current perspective. Its difference is therefore intrinsically tied with its conceptual, theoretical function, meaning the concept is not inter-disciplinary but inherently trans-disciplinary, in that it cuts across disciplines while remaining in essence unchanged. In thinking the Anthropocene the disciplinary boundaries themselves are agitated - the study being undertaken cannot be said to fall exclusively within one field or another, but is conducted in the unspecified space of their overlapping, always being haunted by its extraneous contexts, where, despite their imperceptibility from any given perspective, these parts still have influence over the

modes from which they are excluded. We can even go as far as to say that this is in fact the condition of thinking the Anthropocene in any sense, that the Anthropocene necessitates a productive hauntology beyond its own metaphysics of presence, summoning a transdisciplinary network that in its heterogeneity naturally entails a kind of change on the conceptual level. While in the case of the ghost or spectre its usefulness as a deconstructive trope is derived from the sign's openness to trouble, performing the process of deconstruction through its invocation of otherwise repressed narratives, if our goal is to achieve a kind of creative escape from prior intellectual frameworks, the Anthropocene (if we are arguing for its usefulness) is productive in its ability to trouble any framework in which it is deployed. By the same token, it is difficult to describe the Anthropocene as a theory that "travels" in the sense described by Said. Granted, it is dispersed across various disciplinary plateaus and studied from the perspectives of many different field-specific methodologies, but again, its transdisciplinary nature means it is not altered in any way by this multifactorial analysis since a degree of flexibility to alteration is already woven into the concept itself. Therefore, to trace a history of the Anthropocene as it relates to any localised sense of historical materiality is simply to create an entirely new theory, a new concept: a capitalocene, plantationocene, nucleocene, etc. It demands multiplicity, while at the same time, paradoxically, constricting the narrative divergences it produces.

We can again trace this back to the Anthropocene's displacement from the historical-material reality it describes. That, on the one hand, the diverse social, economic, cultural and political formations that constitute our current ecological situation cannot, as Haraway would have it, be thought through the figure of species-man; and that, on the other, from the stratigraphic perspective - the superimposed, spectralised terrestrial grounding that haunts the Anthropocene when it is applied in any non-stratigraphic context - the Anthropocene is, and can never be, fully realised. As Colebrook says, to think the Anthropocene in such a way

requires the conjuring of a future geologist, a future observational apparatus and a future system of knowledge through which to read the stratigraphic scar it describes, long after geologists, observational apparatuses and even systems of knowledge as they are currently conceived have ceased to exist. It marks the point at which the decidedly human temporality of such perceptual frameworks is torn asunder by the deep time of the earthly conditions that give rise to the concept. In this remaining substrate we see the return of the human as a 'retro-hologram' in an entirely non-human space-time.<sup>56</sup> We are forced to reconcile with a temporality that remains entirely inaccessible, and this distant future is brought into the present as an encounter with non-presence, in the same impossibility of a completely "present" time that gives rise to the method of ecological thought in general. Our conception of a here-now, present-present position relies on *Dasien*, a certain Being-there within time that constitutes it as such, but in this scenario, there is no *Dasien*. No presence through which to conceive of the present as present. These markers are opened to an entirely inhuman time, an inhuman mode of being within which the human remains inscribed in its stratigraphic scar. Therefore, one could argue that the Anthropocene, despite being deeply interwoven with the Earth itself - the very "ground" upon which all terrestrial beings exist - remains in a state of groundlessness. Its ethical injunction lies in this earthly context, yet the unimaginable timescales of geochronology and the bewildering, incomprehensible systems of climate change mean that the concept itself, as something inseparable from the anthropogenic conditions from which it necessarily emerges, describes phenomena that remain inaccessible from inside these perceptual boundaries.

Its groundlessness is founded in the difference of humanity, as a species capable of "reading" its own inscription, from the stratigraphic scar in which it is inscribed. This inscription occupies the place of the originary mark that contextualises all language, all signification and

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<sup>56</sup> Cohen, 'Trolling "Anthropos" - Or, Requiem for a Failed Prosopopeia', p.53

therefore all meaning, yet remains always outside or beyond any instance of language itself. It is the radical alterity immanent to the sign, the extraneous context that structures understanding. In this case, if we can only conceive of “man” as a species through its capacity to inscribe itself on the planet, the existence of the Anthropocene as a set of material-discursive conditions is always partially lost in the originary affirmation of this inscription, meaning species-man remains dislocated from its terrestrial contextualisation:

‘One gags on the ironies: the term “Anthropocene” can only arrive in (or after) the twilight of what it names, so it can only anticipate or legitimize itself from a future recognition of it, after a disappearance it implies is accomplished. It projects a proleptic anterior “inscription”. It would have inscribed a proper name into crashed life-systems, “earth”, mutated materialities, defaced surfaces, exploited genetic codes - an inscription that would have to be read (that is, given recognition) by another eye entirely’.<sup>57</sup>

This means that as soon as the Anthropocene is conceived as inscription it tacitly necessitates its own duplication:

‘to talk of inscription is not just to talk about language or even visual composition in its narrow sense; it is not only to concur with Latour that any scientific account is composed from technical readings, adjustments, concerns, interests and affect. Rather, it is to see the world, the earth, the climate - all these unities that we are witnessing as being changed utterly - as effects of complex systems of relations that are irreducibly multiple’.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p.23

<sup>58</sup> Cohen, Colebrook, *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols*, p.13



The transdisciplinary multiplication of the Anthropocene operates through the same mechanism; that it remains, in its interstitiality, withdrawn in part from any framework of interpretation. The duplication of Anthropocene as inscription opens the concept to a future, and by extension, an other. This other is that through which the concept can be thought at all, yet which at the same time interrupts, displaces and deconstructs it, revealing but partially the complex assemblages that give form not only to the concept, all concepts, but terrestrial existence itself.

## HAUNTOLOGY: AN ETHICS OF THE UN-IMMEDIATE

Although numerous approaches to the Anthropocene both as a critical field and ethico-political injunction have been proposed from various perspectives, a deconstruction serves to counterbalance both the semiotic, narrative discrepancies toward the Anthropocene as a term with the ethical imperatives of the environmental crisis occurring alongside it. Indeed, it is the dual thinking of these two factors - the signifiatory and the ethical - that is at the core of deconstruction as a philosophical method. While it may seem in some ways an overly introspective or theoretical approach for dealing with such an immanent and potentially catastrophic situation, the radically disruptive effects of climate change - not just on the physical systems of the planet but also the boundaries between the disciplines and methodologies through which it is studied: 'a peculiarly monstrous cultural/political/economic/philosophical/ethical and scientific hybrid in Bruno Latour's sense [...] a condensed cipher for the destabilisation of such previously decisive dyads as nature/culture, science/politics, fact/value' - calls for an approach that is not simply conscious of such disruption, but that in fact works *through* it:

'With the thought of climate change, topics that have been the focus of kinds of deconstructive reading or debate over the decades - the closure of Western metaphysics, the ethical claims of nonhuman life, the auto-immunity of democratic institutions, the limits of classical economic accounting, definitions of the human, the conflict of the faculties, the concepts of borders and boundaries, the nature of responsibility etc. - all now seem put into play at the same time'.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Clark, 'Some Climate Change Ironies: Deconstruction, Environmental Politics and the Closure of Ecocriticism', pp.137-138

It seems to raise the question: how can the apparent incoherency of such a thing be studied at all, without risking any potential oversimplification, reduction or obfuscation? A deconstruction involves thinking *with* these relations with the un-immediate, the imperceptible and incoherent, acting from the present for the sake of the non-present in both the spatial and temporal senses of the word. The resounding cry opening Matthias Fritsch et al.'s collection of eco-deconstructive criticism: 'We cannot go on like this!' marks an interruption of the boundaries of preexisting structures of thought that a deconstruction seeks to reveal.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, we cannot go on like this, and this injunction is above all an ethical one - concerning as it does the question of human agency in relation to our terrestrial kin. Fritsch et al. write, with regards to the field of various eco-philosophical methodologies adjacent to eco-deconstruction (eco-phenomenology, eco-hermeneutics, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, etc.):

'Each of these approaches, perhaps following the contextualist logic of the *eco-*, is driven to expansion of its scope [...] on the basis of a shared condition of domination and exploitation. [...] If the prefix *eco-* points to the significance of natural/environmental context, it might be said that the distinctive thrust of eco-deconstruction is to affirm the significance of context, both "on the ground" as it were, and methodologically'.<sup>61</sup>

Eco-deconstruction, as Fritsch et al. point out, 'vigorously maintains a tension between contextual expansion and caution toward any impatient totalizing consolidation of a new frame of reference', in line with the general deconstructive tenet that 'there is no "final analysis" no

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<sup>60</sup> Matthias Fritsch, Phillipe Lynes, David Wood, 'Introduction' in *Eco-Deconstruction: Derrida and Environmental Philosophy* (NY: Fordham University Press, 2018) p.1

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* p.5

ultimate frame'.<sup>6263</sup> If, as I have said, the aporia of the Anthropocene and the environmental crisis in general requires an approach that does not demand synthesis but an ongoing process of becoming-together, we can immediately see how the deconstructive method can be useful in thinking through such problems. I say "through" here not in the sense of using the Anthropocene as an interpretive lens, but that in the disruption of its boundaries we can take into account both the interior and exterior factors that give rise to the Anthropocene as a material-discursive phenomenon; understanding that which is immanent to any given aesthetic, perceptual, or intellectual framework, while performing an analytic step "through" this framework to comprehend (albeit incomprehensibly) its constitutive externalities, its impenetrably complex terrestrial contexts. Pursuing an environmental justice in the Anthropocene does not simply involve implicating a guilty Anthropos, but a constant moving beyond any instance of law by which the finality of such an implication would arise. This therefore suggests a kind of quasi-normative ethics emerging alongside the futural dimension that is opened through the quasi-ontological relationality of the spectre, one that is not based on a closed universality but open to the promissory future of a justice-to-come.

Derrida explains this deconstructive, ethical opening that disrupts the bounds of ontology through the figure of the ghost, and in so doing introduces the concept of hauntology, an analytic within the deconstructive tradition that does not require its objects of study to materialise, exist or disperse in the classical sense. As one of the main proponents and popularisers of hauntology in the mid 00's, where the concept 'gained its second (un)life' online, Mark Fisher writes: hauntology 'is in part a restatement of the key deconstructive claim that "being" is not equivalent to *presence*. Since there is no point of pure origin, only the time of the

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p.6

'always-already', then haunting is the state proper to being as such'.<sup>64</sup> In its native French the neologism *hauntologie* sounds identical to *ontologie*, a play that emphasises Derrida's critique of phonocentrism as well as illustrating the alternative materialisations and existences foregrounded in the hauntological approach, introducing a discourse that centers on kinds of non-present beings previously marginalised and excluded by that which is understood to be "present" according to more conventional understandings of space and time, text and discourse. These conventional understandings are rooted in the language of atomism, the metaphysical system of predetermined relata that underpins classical Newtonian and Cartesian mechanics - 'the traditional "ontology" that thinks being in terms of self-identical presence'.<sup>65</sup> A hauntology works to deconstruct this approach, suggesting that being as a category of existence is inseparable from its hauntings, its absent presences; a relational structure that does not give precedence to materialities defined along linear timescales or a here-now approach to existence based on an atomist metaphysics. As David Wood notes:

'Derrida writes of the need for a double strategy: immanent critique and the step beyond, working within the closure of metaphysics, and attempting a creative leap outside its borders [...] as soon as we realise that inside/outside operate within a signifying space, the clarity of the distinction starts to break down, and so, too, do the moves that presuppose the stable operation of this signification'.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Mark Fisher, 'The Metaphysics of Crackle: Afrofuturism and Hauntology' in *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 5(2), p.44

<sup>65</sup> Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Hants: Zero Books, 2014) p.18

<sup>66</sup> Wood, 'Specters of Derrida: On the Way to Ecoconstruction' p.268

Again, we can see the value that such an approach has in considering environmental issues. Clark quotes Charles S. Brown in a point that sums this problem up very effectively: 'by defining our problems as either economic or biological, political or philosophical, we reproduce the structure of the academy, but fail to appreciate the kind of essential interconnections that ecological thinking in particular has emphasised'.<sup>67</sup> Again, we see that our situation calls for a thinking with and responsibility for the un-immediate, the non-present, where "presence" designates all existences in the here-now of any given intellectual framework.

We can in many ways therefore think of hauntology as the culmination of Derrida's deconstructive project: 'namely, the deconstruction of the metaphysics of the "proper", of logocentrism, linguisticism, phonologism, the demystification or the desedimentation of the autonomic hegemony of language'.<sup>68</sup> Hauntology, although the deconstructive operation it performs essentially already existed in other concepts, slightly modifies this notion of the metaphysics of the proper as its target of disruption, with a view to directly question the metaphysics of *presence*, problematising the automatic hegemony of being dictated in terms of self-identical existence by interrupting the metaphysical frameworks through which it is determined. It is along these marginal lines of disruption that hauntology, in accordance with the rest of the deconstructive method, operates. In advocating its status as an 'irreducible discourse', it is in a sense a precursor to an ontology of presence; the state of an ontological system as, by its very nature, already haunted by the non-presences it excludes:

'This logic of haunting would not be merely larger and more powerful than an ontology or a thinking of Being [...] It would harbor within itself, but like circumscribed places or

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<sup>67</sup> Clark, 'Some Climate Change Ironies: Deconstruction, Environmental Politics and the Closure of Ecocriticism', p.138

<sup>68</sup> Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p. 115

particular effects, eschatology and teleology themselves. It would *comprehend* them, but incomprehensibly. How to comprehend in fact the discourse of the end or the discourse about the end? Can the extremity of the extreme ever be comprehended?.

As Simon Critchley writes: '*ontologie* is an apocalyptic discourse on or of the end, whereas *hauntologie* is a discourse on the end of the end'.<sup>69</sup> It opens the closed metaphysics of ontology: 'Ontology opposes it [hauntology] only in a movement of exorcism. Ontology is a conjuration'.<sup>70</sup> Such foundational metaphysical systems in fact rely on closure to cohere at all, since their status as foundational necessarily implies a limit, therefore exorcising the specters within through their conjuration, repositioning the spectral entities of the incomprehensible inside the limits of its own modes of comprehension. Once again this limit is founded on a notion of presence, and hauntology works to "tympanise" an ontology of presence, to agitate the limits of presence, identifying its enclosure in philosophemes in order to break down the categories of interior/exterior, known/unknown and presence/absence as purely signficatory, establishing an ethics based on an openness and hospitality to the wholly other that is repressed by conventional, dominant, anthropocentric modes of knowledge and discourse.

I have already mentioned a few times that this other - the spectralised, non-human, non-present that is excluded from the dominant order - exists in a state of symbiosis with this order; that, for example, human entanglements with the non-human manifest in a sympoietic becoming-together. This is a fundamental tenet of deconstruction, and while from an ecological perspective the notion of entanglement with inaccessible others does not require a great deal of explication, since there is nothing unusual about potentially exclusionary systems and cycles being reconceived as complex multi-species assemblages, we find that a hauntological

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<sup>69</sup> Simon Critchley, 'On Derrida's Specters of Marx' in *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 21, 3 (1995) p.4

<sup>70</sup> Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p.202

understanding is in fact based on the same kind of relational structure. However, hauntology as a deconstructive analytic is not used to “uncover” assemblages lost or buried within or outside a particular conception of reality, to drag networks of relations into the light and therefore risk constriction or overcoding by an observational apparatus or system of analysis. Rather, to describe hauntology in practice it serves again to emphasise the absolute otherness of the other; our ability to relate, converse and do justice to the other as other. As Derrida says above, the logic of haunting is to comprehend incomprehensibly; to realise our formative relations with this other through preserving it as such, to resist assimilating it into our own conceptions of what it means to exist, be present, or to be understood or known at all. Derrida’s ‘ethical injunction’ concerning the other therefore consists in ‘not reducing it prematurely to an object of knowledge’; ‘One does not know: not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. At least no longer to that which one thinks one knows by the name of knowledge’.<sup>71</sup>

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We can therefore describe the hauntological object of study as suspended, a thing that can only be apprehended in its suspension: that which cannot be integrated in thought or language, warranting a method of examination that does not involve rearticulation in embodied or material terms. For Derrida it is this suspension, a dislocation from that which is immediately present or accessible, that creates the conditions for justice - a point that is reiterated throughout his work:

‘No justice without aporia, without suspension. ‘[J]ustice’, Derrida writes, ‘would be the experience of what we are unable to experience’ - an experience accessible only

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<sup>71</sup> Davis, ‘État Présent: Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms’ p.58

<sup>72</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.5



through the mental movement of willing suspension. He opposes this justice to a concept of law, the 'element of calculation'; the suspensive power of justice is what takes us beyond calculation, into the critical space able to open to the future. [...] The call to justice - and here we could also add terms like gift, forgiveness, the ethical - is a call never to have done, to a perpetual suspension that cuts across even seemingly successful instances, those times when justice is served and all sides seem to understand each other within an apparently shared idiom'.<sup>73</sup>

Justice, democracy, responsibility and ethics in general operate by way of a futural dimension, always working ahead or beyond themselves, reaching, like the linguistic sign, to an outside of any event of its instantiation: the differance of the concept from the singularity of the event it describes. They concern the agency of that which is to come, the non-present of the temporal virtualities that must necessarily exceed their own conditions, meaning to enact justice is to enact its continuous deferral, to ensure a movement beyond any actual "application" of justice in the moment. Justice is therefore never "done" so to speak, since it is always already deferred from any single occurrence of justice in the lived present; it is always 'not yet, not yet *there*': 'justice, like the text, is never *closed*'.<sup>7475</sup> As Colebrook notes, this differance or excess is again characteristic of the temporality of concepts in general: 'justice, forgiveness, democracy and friendship have a power - as repeatable concepts - to extend, infinitely, into the future' - 'justice could not be reduced to any of its actual instances; if one uses a concept then one relies upon it being recognized because it exceeds any single context'.<sup>76</sup> If the pursuit of justice is necessarily

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<sup>73</sup> Anne C McCarthy, 'Suspension' in *Jacques Derrida: Key Concepts* ed. Claire Colebrook (London: Routledge, 2015) p.28

<sup>74</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.xviii

<sup>75</sup> Claire Colebrook, 'Extinguishing Ability: How We Became Postextinction Persons' in *Eco-Deconstruction: Derrida and Environmental Philosophy*, p.263

<sup>76</sup> Colebrook, 'What is the Anthro-po-political?' p.100

suspended from any instance of its application, we are therefore responsible for preserving a framework in which the other can manifest as such (in suspension). For Derrida justice is always justice toward the other, a dimension of alterity. Since it is opposed to the closed structure of the law, justice itself is in essence always inaccessible, always dislocated from itself; haunted, since, as Derrida has said, we must introduce haunting into the construction of every concept. In other words, it is relational, entangled with the network of differentiated others that comprise extraneous temporal virtualities. It is the mode through which we are to relate to the other - the ghost, spectre, the non-present object of justice itself - in a way that preserves it. Therefore an eco-deconstruction, as Fritsch et al. write, demands a justice beyond law:

'for law is constituted in the modern West as thoroughly humanist, taking as its aim the proper of the human beyond mere mortal life. By contrast, Derrida's work insists that normativity, including human responsibility for suffering beings, emerges precisely as a response to original differentiation and the mortality and unmasterable alterity it installs in living beings'.<sup>77</sup>

Here, as Fritsch points out, the deconstructivist critique of a metaphysics of presence potentially implicates the viewpoint of 'subjectivist projectionism' from which claims of normative values are often made, where value is determined in relation to the embodied subject whose judgment assumes an objective status.<sup>78</sup> However, 'the question of how normativity comes about [...] does not disappear with this question'.<sup>79</sup> If the purpose of eco-deconstruction is to trouble the boundaries between "human" and "nature", "individual" and "environment", then it naturally

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<sup>77</sup> Fritsch et al. *Eco-Deconstruction: Derrida and Environmental Philosophy*, p.16

<sup>78</sup> Matthias Fritsch, 'An Eco-Deconstructive Account of the Emergence of Normativity in "Nature" in *ibid.* p.284

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

entails a deconstructive reinterpretation of normative ethics. If we take the ethical injunction of hauntology as a kind of reconciliation with radical alterity, then normativity emerges as something '(quasi)ontological', something inherent in the emergence of the subject as being in-relation to others.<sup>80</sup> Fritsch provides three systems of individualisation from which 'value', as the deciding factor of normative environmental ethics, is produced: an individual's self-value, its capacity for suffering, or its interdependence on a wider ecological whole alongside which it emerges as a constituent part. He then uses Derrida's concept of the double affirmation to think these divergent formulations alongside one another, that 'a living being must affirm both itself and its others as a result of each living entity being constitutively and differentially related to other entities in its life context [...] affirmation must affirm, along with the self, the other-than-self'.<sup>81,82</sup>

From this, we can see that realisation of an individual's self-value naturally implies the value of other beings or entities taken as part of an interdependent ecological whole: 'self-affirmation thus inevitably slips away or drifts into the context, in fact in an ultimately erratic, indefinite, open-ended way' since, for Derrida, the outside context as something that remains fluid and mobile is also co-constitutive of any given identity; the integration of the outside in any interior, the trace of non-presence and so on.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, its capacity for suffering is realised through a confrontation with the absolute alterity of death that it shares with all living organisms, the necessary mortality that conditions all life as such. Therefore, once the individual affirms its own self-value in the context of its own mortality, it also affirms the value of all mortal life. Now, I will not recall Fritsch's complete explanation of the relations between these value systems, but it is important to mention that his point is not to tie them together in a harmonious structure that

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p.285

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p.287

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p.289

would disregard or smooth out their differences, but to realise, by way of a deconstruction, how these differentiations are mutually constitutive even in their tensions: 'Given the intrinsically unstable and conflictual nature of double affirmation, [...] the goal in rethinking is not to eliminate tensions in the links [...] in environmental ethics above all we must be aware of harmonious value axiologies, the environment living off its tensions and, in fact, its own dying and rebirth'.<sup>84</sup>

It is in this double affirmation that we can begin to grasp the temporality of justice as always to-come. Affirmation, since it is repeated, duplicated, also opens up a promissory future. Any affirmation is the promise of an affirmation to come. It is not itself the root of any normative morality or responsibility, but provides the foundation for an ethics or responsibility to emerge. The "yes" that exists "prior" to signification, the inscription that provides the affirmative conditions for signification to occur, is the arche-originary condition for value, an opening towards the other by way of a futural dimension that allows for the function of the sign. Again, this is the same deconstructive operation that Colebrook identifies in relation to the concept of justice as in excess to any given instance of itself, of justice "being done". To experience justice in itself is impossible; again, since it can only be understood in suspension, it can never "be done" per se. It is always deferred from its embodied enaction, working by way of the to-come, conditioning the event of its occurrence as a promissory future. Justice, like the arche-originary "yes", is itself without content, but the grounds upon which an affirmative value is produced - whereby "justice" as an embodied enaction can occur. Here we see this ecological function of dying and rebirth in the very process of signification, of the relationship between sign and context, where the originary affirmation is dissolved by the secondary affirmation, the emergence of meaning from its promissory conditions. It is this quasi-transcendental future-to-come that, through hauntology - what we could perhaps call here the quasi-ontological

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 288

determination of being as necessarily relational - reveals a normative ethics not as produced by way of subjectivistic projectionism, but as a fundamental condition of our always-already being in relation to others.

We therefore see that a justice determined by law is unsatisfactory in enacting an eco-deconstructive ethics. Indeed, for Derrida the construction of the law is in fact an act of violence, since 'its inscription [...] must emerge in a manner that is groundless and without precedent'.<sup>85</sup> Law does not equate to normativity since we can say that a sense of normativity, a quasi-normativity, arises from hauntological relationality. Meaning, if an idea of justice is not answerable to any kind of radical alterity, we risk constricting or erasing the relations that allow for ecological thought as thinking-with otherness. If justice is founded on this alterity, then to *be* just; to act justly not simply toward but *with* others as a fundamental condition of existence, is central to a hauntological understanding of time, of the anachrony of the spectral: 'No justice [...] seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some responsibility, beyond all living present, within that which disjoins the living present':

*'Without this non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present, without that which secretly unhinges it, without this responsibility and this respect for justice concerning those who are not there, of those who are no longer or who are not yet present and living, what sense would there be to ask the question "where?" "where tomorrow?" "whither?"'*<sup>86</sup>

Responsibility, justice and by extension ethics in general concern what is, in essence, the response-ability towards that which we cannot immediately access. Haraway writes:

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<sup>85</sup> Colebrook, 'What is the Anthro-po-political?', p.101

<sup>86</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.xviii

‘Response-ability is about both absence and presence, killing and nurturing, living and dying - and remembering who lives and who dies and how in the string figures of naturalcultural history’.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, this non-contemporaneity of presence is in fact a condition of ecological existence. Ecology describes a network of entanglements and relations that must necessarily include those that are not present within the moment, the non-presences of beings either no longer or not yet part of the living present. The deconstructive interruption of the living present is therefore revealed in the very structure of living-together. We find that ecological existence in the Anthropocene as a time that rests on a tipping point wherein the here-now and there-then become, by way of an ethical injunction, inseparable, manifests a temporal structure that is necessarily hauntological; that, in its spatiotemporal indeterminacy, marks its coordinates through the immeasurable axes of spacing and temporisation. Both do not only require a movement beyond established intellectual frameworks, but reveal the latent alterities and aporias within the frameworks themselves. As a system of hierarchisation and segmentation law functions through an implicit anthropocentrism, meaning questions of living-together in terrestrial assemblages unthinkable from an anthropocentric perspective do not cease with the establishment of a law functioning solely in and as control and limitation, determining the articulation, organisation and segmentation of organisms. They require a moving beyond the law to reveal an ethics attuned to the constitutive outside, to allow for the ongoing alteration of the law so as to avoid the establishment of another set of hierarchies, a new arrangement of exploited and exploiting entities; that - if deconstruction of these hierarchies is achieved, the kinds of interruption and re-contextualisation that the various eco-methodologies work towards -

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<sup>87</sup> Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, p.28

functions through the very resistance of the projectivist urge to establish a new one: 'the ever-receding horizon of "the democracy to come"'.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> J. Hillis Miller, 'Reading Paul de Man While Falling into Cyberspace' in *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols*, p.186

## *INTERIOR EXTERNALITIES*

As I have already mentioned, the language of haunting evokes a specific spatiotemporality based on the same coaction of presence and absence that underpins Derrida's formulation of signification in general. That 'the structurality of structure - although it has always been involved, has always been neutralised or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin'.<sup>89</sup> This centre of origin is the result of the same reductionist philosophical analytic as the aforementioned ontology of self-identical presence to which hauntology has been defined in contrast, a limit or constraint bounded by the immediate and knowable - a metaphysics of presence, in other words. Locating it within Derrida's wider project, Fisher names hauntology simply 'another moment in deconstruction - where "hauntology" would resume the work formerly done by concepts such as the trace or *differance*'.<sup>90</sup> These terms, as is usual with Derrida's concepts, share meanings, and therefore in part formulate and describe the operations of the spectre. If hauntology works to deconstruct an ontology of self-identical presence, it does so by emphasising the immanence of alterity - that a factor in any binary opposition is not determined by any inherent virtue but by the trace of that which it is not, the excluded other to which it is opposed. Just as in the act of haunting itself, whereby the present is revealed as a contingency, formed through the ingrained virtualities of past and future, that which is thought of as an exteriority is revealed as immanent to that which constitutes the interior. If this here-now interior is all we understand in relation to "us", be it the conjoined securities of knowledge, meaning, locality or bodily presence, then the ghost exceeds this notion, exceeds "us" and the material notions of presence and knowledge we define in relation

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<sup>89</sup> Derrida, 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' in *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 2001) p.352

<sup>90</sup> Mark Fisher, 'What is Hauntology?' in *Film Quarterly* (2012) p.19



to ourselves; always beyond embodied horizons of existence and meaning, yet never entirely separate from them.

In line with deconstruction in general it is this sense of distant closeness that provides the ghost's uncanny dimension, for this unsettling of concrete spatial coordinates does not only displace the figure of the ghost itself, the apparition of the spectre, but the orders within which the *revenant* appears: a reshaping of historical time, memory, and the narratives that comprise the future, as well as the life-defining phenomenon of death in the face of the thing 'which has crossed over to the other unknowable side, and then come back'.<sup>91</sup> This means, to the interior notion of "us", it presents as paradoxical, occupying an outside: alien, yet not immaterial - composed of an alternative, inaccessible materiality, always somewhere beyond any kind of located, bodied space-time. As I have already said, the ghost is often conceptualised as the return of the repressed. The idea of the ghost as that which cannot fully transcend this worldly dimension due the trauma of its original exclusion, an interpretation based on the notion of trauma as that which 'can never be assimilated or that can be assimilated only as radically inassimilable', can be traced back to the work of the psychoanalytic unconscious, the operations of 'censorship and repression, condensation and displacement' that 'keep what they cause to disappear'.<sup>92</sup> Since it returns only once, and then once again, the *revenant* is the return of the point of death itself, the inevitable return of a traumatic spectacle, the point of suffering, confusion and extinction. This is the uncanny alterity of the ghost's negation of bodiliness, that to occupy any interior is to be defined in relation to an exterior with which we are always in communication.

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<sup>91</sup> Mansfield, 'There is a Spectre Haunting ... ': Ghosts, Their Bodies, Some Philosophers, a Novel and the Cultural Politics of Climate Change'

<sup>92</sup> Derrida, quoted in Michael Naas, 'E-Phemera: Of Deconstruction, Biodegradability, and Nuclear War' in *Eco-Deconstruction: Derrida and Environmental Philosophy*, pp.202-203

The terms ghost, *revenant*, spectre and phantom are all roughly equivalent in that they describe a condition of haunting, of being haunted, but Derrida outlines a distinction between the ghost (the *revenant* or *arrivant*) and the spectre or phantom:

'The specter is first and foremost something visible. It is of the visible, but of the invisible visible, it is the visibility of a body which is not present in flesh and blood. It resists the intuition to which it presents itself, it is not tangible [...] And what happens with spectrality, with phantomality - and not necessarily with coming-back [revenge] - is that something becomes almost visible which is visible only insofar as it is not visible in flesh and blood'.<sup>93</sup>

This distinction is not exhaustive in the sense of tying down or closing off. In keeping with Derrida's open approach to concepts and their signifiers, the terms overlap and are therefore still in essence interchangeable. However, this is not to say that the distinction is arbitrary. It finds its roots in the spectral turn; the refiguration of the ghost from its prior, more general use in common parlance to a 'conceptual metaphor [...] evoking, through a dynamic comparative interaction, not just another thing, word or idea and its associations, but a discourse, a system of producing knowledge'.<sup>94</sup>

The ghost is not a pre-existing form in itself but the return of that which no longer is, the arrival of which then opens the lived moment of its partial appearance to a promissory future by way of the outside from whence it came. It is that which arrives (as *arrivant*, being beyond any sense of contemporaneity, a being to come) from outside. This is the absolute alterity of the body, the uncanny refusal of mortality. It is the figure most at home in the realms of the

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<sup>93</sup> Derrida, Stiegler, 'Spectrographies' p.38

<sup>94</sup> Bal, cited in Pilar Blanco and Peeren, 'Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities' p.1

supernatural, the thing that troubles the boundaries of life and death and presence and absence in the most complete sense; the return of the dead, the return of that which is no longer living, no longer present, no longer extant in the here-now. The spectre, however, as a conceptual metaphor, a term itself brought back from relative disuse into the critical discourse, introduces a way of looking at things (as something visible, of the visible), reconceiving spectrality as an analytical framework, a methodology in itself: 'The specter, as its name indicates, is the *frequency* of a certain visibility. But the visibility of the invisible. And visibility, by its essence, is not seen, which is why it remains *epekina tes ousias*, beyond the phenomenon or beyond being'.<sup>95</sup> Ghosts are therefore a manifestation of this spectral frequency, the return of that which remains beyond the level of normal perception, the primordial conditions of the knowable or comprehensible. We find this effect in Barthes' description of the absent presence of the photograph: '*The photo of the departed being comes to touch me like the delayed rays of a star. [...] [L]ight, though impalpable, is really a carnal medium here, a skin that I share with the one who was photographed.. The bygone thing has really touched, with its immediate radiations (its luminances), the surface that is in turn touched by my gaze*'.<sup>96</sup> Derrida responds to this:

'When Barthes grants such importance to touch in the photographic experience, it is insofar as the very thing one is deprived of, as much in spectrality as in the gaze which looks at images or watches film and television, is indeed tactile sensitivity. The desire to touch, the tactile effect or affect, is violently summoned by its very frustration, summoned to come back [*appelé à-revenir*], like a ghost [*un revenant*], in the places haunted by its absence'.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx* p.125

<sup>96</sup> Barthes, quoted in Derrida, Stiegler, 'Spectrographies', p.37

<sup>97</sup> Derrida, Stiegler, *ibid.* p.38

We get a sense here that the abyss between presence and absence opened by the spectre, one that is without defined coordinates or perimeter - the spectral frequency itself, the boundless, oceanic, pre-originary context that escapes all material being, that flows without direction beyond it; the conditions for affirmative existence as dependent on a prior affirmation from a state of inaccessible alterity - is in fact a dimension (to use spatial language in futility, describing something essentially prelinguistic) to which we relate in a kind of desire, as well as in uneasiness or trepidation. The spectre, in both an intellectual sense (what we might call properly deconstructive), and in a more physical, practical sense (as in when we look at the photograph or the televisual image), resists all tangibility, all 'intuition to present itself'.<sup>98</sup>

Therefore the prelinguistic, prefigurative zone of the spectral abyss manifests as the desire for tangibility, the desire for closure in the face of a resounding openness, even a kind of seduction. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes in her preface to *Of Grammatology*:

'Deconstruction seems to offer a way out of the closure of knowledge. By inaugurating the open-ended indefiniteness of textuality - by thus "placing in the abyss" (*mettre en abîme*), as the French expression would literally have it, it shows us the lure of the abyss as freedom. The fall into the abyss of deconstruction inspires us with as much pleasure as fear. We are intoxicated with the prospect of never hitting bottom'.<sup>99</sup>

Rather than demonstrating an irreconcilable inability to disclose the reality of the incommunicable (what we could perhaps here call the real), through the endlessness of

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) p.lxxvii

differance we find that language in fact retains a promise of communicating that which lies outside its own organisation; that language demonstrates, at least partially, the ability to explain the impossible, to comprehend incomprehensibly, contains within it the possibility of a discourse of the end of the end: 'what motivates deconstruction in its aporetic analysis of concepts is the relation which emerges in each case to something beyond. [...] it invents, in a variety of specific vocabularies tailored to fit the needs of a particular occasion, a series of descriptions of this 'beyond'.<sup>100</sup> In a hauntological manner, any instance of language functions through the immanent retention of that which remains outside of it through the originary affirmation of the primordial abyss of this spectral frequency. The resistance of language to its own stratification as described by the process of differance, that the material sign, the symbol of exchange, retains a virtual potentiality opening to a beyond itself in the event of its instantiation, means that comprehending the extremity of the extreme manifests as a process of mourning. Here we can uncover the nature of Barthes' desire for tactility: 'It consists always in attempting to ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by identifying the bodily remains and by localizing the dead (all ontologization, all semanticization - philosophical, hermeneutical, or psychoanalytical - finds itself caught up in this work of mourning but, as such, it does not yet think it...'.<sup>101</sup> When we are confronted with the ghost and the spectral frequency of differance it reveals, in many ways all that one can do is ontologise. To conjure them away is to accept the material groundings between birth and death, to concede to the limits of knowledge as the limits of all possible existences. Therefore, to think mourning itself is to conceive a discourse of the end of the end; to recognise the anachronic contingency of the present and maintain, in an intellectual sense, an openness towards the no-longer or not-yet. It is this anarchic openness that is then reformulated in Derrida's later work as the conditions for justice-to-come: 'this

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<sup>100</sup> Patton, 'Future Politics', p.25

<sup>101</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.9

capacity for writing in general to disinter, solicit, disturb, or disable becomes increasingly tied to an ethical vocabulary of futurity. Rather than the incalculable being presented as anarchy or chaos, it is now characterized as opening to a future'.<sup>102</sup>

In speaking of a promissory justice as that which must remain suspended, always withheld from any given instance, it is useful to distinguish between the specific dynamics of the future through which this process occurs: 'Derrida writes "*l'â-venir*", which spaces out the ordinary word for the future, *avenir*, into the components of the infinitive: to come [...] in general one should remember that even in the ordinary translation as simply "future", *avenir* has the sense of a coming, an advent'.<sup>103</sup> The future is therefore not conceived as a distance, as "across the abyss" so to speak, something that remains always "over there" - an essentially passive notion - but something immanent, active; an excess that galvanises the present, projecting it forward through the living condition of experience. As Jean-Paul Martinon writes, in French there are in fact two words for "future": *l'avenir* and *le futur*. The latter 'relates to something distant'; it 'implies the being of the future. [...] *L'avenir*, by contrast is something much closer - imminent, in fact - and is usually translated by futurity or what is "yet-to-come". It is that which arrives...'.<sup>104</sup> However, Derrida uses a very specific term to describe the arrival, the coming-back, of the spectre: "*â-venir*". Martinon goes on: 'By contrast, *â-venir*, "to-come" - here, futurity - represents - if it can represent anything at all - that which *provokes, unhinges, or disjoins* an event, and as such disturbs the very possibility of the event itself'.<sup>105</sup> *Â-venir* does not imply a yet-to-come but rather something that disturbs the event of arrival itself, of arrival as event, as a localised spatiotemporal phenomenon. It is unrelated to *l'avenir* as arrival - it cannot be translated to 'advent', a to-come, or 'event', as 'characteri[sing] that which emerges or surges

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<sup>102</sup> Colebrook, 'Extinguishing Ability', p.271

<sup>103</sup> Peggy Kamuf in Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.224

<sup>104</sup> Jean-Paul Martinon, *On Futurity: Malabou Nancy & Derrida* (London: Macmillan, 2007) p.3

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. p.5

out of that which comes'.<sup>106</sup> Therefore *à-venir* symbolises a spacing and temporisation outside of any specific dimensional or chronological coordinates. It is founded on a cartography of the abyss, the space-time of the spectral frequency itself as dislocated from any defined sense of space or time as such: 'with *à-venir*, nothing is measured, measurable, durational, spatial, or temporal'.<sup>107</sup> If through the hauntological method we are attempting to comprehend incomprehensibly, the kind of framework that such a thought would require can be said to reside here, but without being confined to a specific point or position or taking on a discernible formation; residing without residing per se. It is the operative space-without-space of the spectral frequency, the continuous interruption and opening of established law to the promise of a future justice or democracy to-come; the revolutionary movement, that which allows for a transformative ethics of the other.

Derrida explains this spectral frequency as it reaches into the world of lived reality through the '*visor effect*', taken from the image of Hamlet's father's helmet; the notion that 'his [the ghost's] gaze can see without being seen'.<sup>108109</sup> To take the metaphor at surface level, we still perceive something in this situation: a Scooby-Doo esque suit of armour that obscures the carnal form of the body inside (if there is a body inside at all, that is). Yet the suit of armour is not the thing that is capable of looking at us. The key aspect of this state is that the gaze, a notion we generally associate with embodied perception, is decoupled from its spatial-temporal material grounding. In the context of Derrida's proposition we find that embodiment in general - not simply an individual body, but the very notion of embodiment, the lived condition of the interior - cannot be considered a self-contained unit closed to the outside. It remains affected by that which cannot be conceived in its own terms. The spectral therefore manifests through a

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid. p.4

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.6

<sup>109</sup> Derrida, Stiegler, 'Spectrographies', p.41

kind of asymmetry: 'It de-synchronizes, it recalls us to anachrony'.<sup>110</sup> If the ghosts appear to us as the interruption of specularity, of the perceptual reflection of reality, they do so through the opening of its present conditions to a constitutive outside - this frequency of the spectral that we might call also the abyss of differance, the space-time of *à-venir*. Derrida says: 'The specter is not simply this visible invisible that I can see, it is someone who watches or concerns me without any possible reciprocity, and who therefore makes the law when I am blind, blind by situation'.<sup>111</sup> Blindness - or, more accurately, what we could call a symptom of the process of *framing*, the necessary exclusion that gives general perception the cohesive structure of representation - is the deciding factor in internal/external distinctions, the establishment of a frame of reference by which to measure existence as presence.

Wood therefore sees in environmental destruction 'a candidate for this status of *arrivant*. For it arrives as something that has been excluded, much as Freud describes the return of the repressed'.<sup>112</sup> In a similar vein, Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs write, on the event of haunting as a state of uncanny alterity: 'This happens precisely at the moment when one is made aware that one has unfinished business with the past, at the moment when the past returns as an 'elemental' force (and let us signal our interest in ghosts here through this word: 'elemental') to haunt the present day'.<sup>113</sup> "Elemental" invokes a sense of fundamentality, primordially or pre-originality, the de facto conditions for the event, while simultaneously, symbiotically, hauntologically, also invoking the play of weather systems, mineral substrates and the foundational chemicals from which all material reality is comprised. Again, it describes something irreducible. These conditions that are impinging on the present here-now from an

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<sup>110</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.6

<sup>111</sup> Derrida, Stiegler, 'Spectrographies', p.41

<sup>112</sup> Wood, 'Specters of Derrida: On the Way to Econstruction' p.267

<sup>113</sup> Ken Gelder, Jane M. Jacobs, 'The Postcolonial Ghost Story' in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, p.181



anachronistic there-then are fundamental to the composition and structure of the event of the here-now itself.

To give an example (one could in fact take almost any case of anthropogenic influence on Earth systems and observe a similar pattern), despite disagreement around the figures, it is basically universally accepted that the disruption of the carbon cycle as a result of human activity means the volume of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> is increasing, and that this phenomenon is only accelerating with increasing industrial and agricultural development. Figures provided by the IPCC tell us that the time it takes to emit greenhouse gases is drastically shorter than the time it takes for that gas to be released (the equilibration of the atmospheric concentration of anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub>) and according to its Fifth Assessment Report: '15 to 40% of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted until 2100 will remain in the atmosphere longer than 1000 years'.<sup>114</sup> However these figures are significantly different to others that have been put forward, disputing or confusing either the *residence time* (years) of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> or the *adjustment time* (centuries to millennia) of specific changes in anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> concentration.<sup>115116117118</sup> We can perhaps read this variation as exposing the subject's inherent politics, the apparent eagerness of certain researchers to downplay the scope and severity of anthropogenic climate change (see Peter Köhler et al.); however, the question here is not of any specific figure of residence or adjustment time per se, but the effects caused by CO<sub>2</sub> retention within the bounds of an embodied human temporality. Of course, from an anthropocentric perspective thinking forward 1000 years into the

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<sup>114</sup> Ciais P, Sabine C, Bala G et al. 'Carbon and other biogeochemical cycles' in: *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Stocker, ed. TF, Qin D, Plattner GK et al. (UK: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013) p.471

<sup>115</sup> Ari Halperin, 'Simple Equation of Multi-Decadal Atmospheric Carbon Concentration Change', *defyccc.com* (2018) (<http://defyccc.com/se>)

<sup>116</sup> <http://euanmearns.com/the-residence-time-of-co2-in-the-atmosphere-is-33-years/>

<sup>117</sup> Hermann Harde, 'Scrutinizing the carbon cycle and CO<sub>2</sub> residence time in the atmosphere' in *Global and Planetary Change*, Volume 164, (2018), p.65

<sup>118</sup> Peter Köhler et al. 'Comment on "Scrutinizing the carbon cycle and CO<sub>2</sub> residence time in the atmosphere" by H. Harde' in *Global and Planetary Change* (2017) p.1

future is, for the most part, inconceivable without a great deal of largely unsubstantiated speculation. We are therefore left with a delay between cause and effect that calls into question a timeframe that cannot be conceived in terms of lived temporality. Warming created through the greenhouse effect is latent, projected onto a future that cannot be accessed from any lived perspective, yet which will continue to exert influence over the future conditions of this perspective regardless of its current inconceivability. As Wood writes, 'if we stopped all carbon emissions today, the atmosphere would continue to warm into the foreseeable future'.<sup>119</sup> If the effects of warming are already being felt in varying degrees around the globe, then the severity of such instances is only going to increase - a future is promised along with the catastrophes it may bring.

This idea of retention, like the uncomfortable idea of the bioaccumulation of plastic, pesticides or heavy metals in organisms through constant unavoidable ingestion of environmental toxins, couples the state of imbalance and waiting with a disorienting loss of control. Not only is the future bundled into the present but the past always remains, invisible, returning through the channels of measuring instruments: a build up of gases in the atmosphere, petrochemicals in the ocean or a pocket of mercury in the brain; a toxic remnant, *revenant*, returning, the by-product or waste from something long since used up, that served its purpose in the cycle of resource-exploitation. Not only are these discarded remnants excluded from the progression of the industrial modernisation they instigate - being literally buried, cremated or dumped into the sea - but the promise of their return also remains outside of this spatial-temporal order, meaning although the effects of their return are undoubtedly felt, their cause remains disjointed.

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<sup>119</sup> Wood, 'Specters of Derrida: On the Way to Econstruction', p.270

Spectralisation signifies displacement, and in the case of greenhouse gas emissions (and again, we find numerous scenarios in which this also applies) we find a displacement of cause and effect resulting from the dispersal of factors along multiple asynchronous timescales. As a by-product of some long-completed process, something remains. Past actions return, arriving in the present, in a form and to an effect entirely outside of that in which they were originally created. They arrive withheld, suspended, and, to us beings of the here-now, without any localised precedence. Like the ghost that persuades Hamlet, manifesting as a simulacrum of his father; the alterity of the body, the interior materiality into which it returns as an immaterial externality, the by-products of past industrial, mechanical processes return as something far removed from the processes themselves. Clark describes this phenomenon through the concept of *scale*, writing: 'One reason environmental issues are so difficult and fraught is that scale effects entail spectral agencies that present no easily identified target or simple object in empirical reality for politics or law'.<sup>120</sup>

In furthering this concept, the problem of representation he terms 'scale framing', Clark adopts Braden R. Allenby and Daniel Sarewitz's view that the complexity of modern industrial processes 'neutralizes and even mocks our existing commitments to rationality, comprehension, and a meaningful link between action and consequence'.<sup>121</sup> Allenby and Sarewitz break this down into three levels, each describing an increasingly complex system of events and relations. Level I systems are the most basic, calculable relations between cause and effect, that which we would call the embodied, lived boundaries of the here-now - the individual use of the car in an A to B journey, for example. Level II systems describe a set of more complex socio-technological relations, 'infinitely less predictable' than the independent factors of the

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<sup>120</sup> Timothy Clark, 'Scale a Force of Deconstruction' in *Eco-Deconstruction: Derrida and Environmental Philosophy*, p.87

<sup>121</sup> Braden R. Allenby, Daniel Sarewitz, *The Techno-Human Condition*, quoted in Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p.6

events themselves - the complications that arise once the individual use of the car is taken in a wider sociocultural context. These often present themselves through the interruption of Level I systems, recontextualising Level I events as 'embedded in higher-level technical networks, systems of social and technical control, with additional complications in their own security and pricing systems, relations to the law, and so on'.<sup>122</sup> Level III therefore corresponds to an even higher degree of complexity, a register by which relations described at Level II are now indiscernible by Level II standards: 'a proliferation of emergent effects [that] has long exceeded the possibilities of human foresight and planning'.<sup>123</sup> Level III describes a state in which effect is entirely displaced from cause, meaning our techniques of predictive modelling are rendered useless: where, 'at a certain, indeterminate threshold, numerous human actions, insignificant in themselves [...] come together to form a new, imponderable physical event, altering the basic ecological cycles of the planet'.<sup>124</sup> As we can see, the increasing complexity of these systems is accompanied by the increasing inability for humans to mitigate their potential problems. Once we reach a Level III system - with climate change being the Level III system par excellence - innumerable layers of cause and effect have built up over time to the point that any sense of control or even conceivable scope of the problems that Level III interruptions of Level I or II systems may generate is completely outside of our grasp. Scale effects require consideration of various contingencies that reach from our present moment, as we turn the keys in our car, board a plane or eat a burger, into the anachronic non-space of the *à-venir* to come - the disruption of the lived interior of the present by external future virtualities. We see the formal structure of difference reflected in this situation: 'What seems to come from outside, are the cumulative consequences of our own actions'.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, in order to properly account for

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid. p.7

<sup>123</sup> Clark, Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. p.72

<sup>125</sup> Wood, 'Specters of Derrida: On the Way to Ecoconstruction', p.267

these actions, we must confront this outside, an act that can only be achieved through the tympanisation of the metaphysical platforms from which we are able to do so.

## TO LIVE WITH OTHERS

I have already explained how a deconstructive ethics as responsibility towards the other can inform ecological thought, but it serves to mention that the idea of justice Derrida emphasises in hauntology - a justice derived from '[t]he relation to others' - is closely linked with the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. His philosophy can be used to inform the kind of eco-deconstructive hauntological ethics I have attempted to lay out, founded on the key tenet of responsibility toward the other as such.<sup>126</sup> However, Levinas's conception of the other is distinctly anthropocentric - as regarding the *autrui*, the other person - and both Derrida and Deleuze diverge from Levinas's relational ethics in ways that break from this closure. In fact, it is in their treatment of the fundamentality of our relations with otherness that one of the closest parallels between the two can be found, and their respective divergences from Levinas have great bearing on the ecological implications of alterity I am concerned with.

Put simply, the importance of the other is central to Levinas's critique of Western metaphysics. His work shifts from the perceived egoism and isolation of an ontology that reduces the Other into the same: that Western philosophy, through its ontological articulation of being, has historically suppressed the state of otherness. This tradition works by way of an implicit hierarchisation - that, for example, the other can only be realised in terms of the self. The self becomes the a priori condition for the existence of the other, and allows - necessitates, even - a relation with the other based on dominance, exploitation and violence. Levinas moves toward establishing ethics as a "first philosophy", foregrounding the encounter with the Other as a fundamental condition of the existence of the knowing Self (rethinking the Greek metaphysical tradition from which, for example, Husserlian phenomenology or Heideggerian ontology is, in

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<sup>126</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, quoted in Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.26

ways unique to each, developed). Our ethical imperative is therefore to maintain otherness by resisting its projectivistic refiguration as per ontological tradition, since the Self is found only as infinitely obliged to the Other, the transcendent Good.

For Levinas, the dimension of infinity that occupies the Other encountered in the face-to-face relation with the enclosed totality of the Self remains, from within, entirely outside the realms of comprehension. This throws an ontology of Sameness (the introduction of a unifying term that subsumes the Other and the Self, thereby neglecting the absolute alterity of the Other - having the mutual identity of "being", for example) into question. However, as Derrida points out in *Violence and Metaphysics*, the absoluteness of the Other presents a paradox. He asks: 'How to think the other, if the other can be spoken only as exteriority and through exteriority, that is, nonalterity?'.<sup>127</sup> Alterity is necessarily relational, meaning the Other cannot in fact exist as an absolute. Once it is encountered, rendered in language, given the name "other", its exteriority collapses as it is absorbed into the interiority of discourse. Ontology is violence, but speech, as the condition for this encounter, is violence also. As Derrida writes: 'The distinction between discourse and violence always will be an inaccessible horizon. Nonviolence would be the telos, and not the essence of discourse'.<sup>128</sup> Violence is therefore intrinsically tied with a justice toward the other founded in discourse, in that to render the other in language necessarily excludes the state of otherness as such. Levinas's fundamental ethics is dependent on an immediate, concrete encounter wherein the Other is revealed through speech, yet absolute alterity must be figured as something prelinguistic, the primordial inscription from which the experience of knowing is first derived. Therefore the otherness of the other can only be maintained through its differance, its suspension, the opening of concrete experience beyond itself. Indeed, this means the very notion of an infinite is problematised. The

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<sup>127</sup> Derrida, 'Violence and Metaphysics' in *Writing and Difference*, p.145

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. p.145

Other cannot be absolute, since the conditions for its existence as such rely on the difference of the same, and likewise, the Same cannot exist as a totality, since it is always determined by, and therefore contains, in its exclusion, the other. This means there is always more than one beyond the infinite contained in the *autrui*, that the Other can never manifest as such, but only as a trace, an *arrivant*. With this in mind, Davis identifies the Derridean spectre as 'occup[ying] the place of the Levinasian Other', again emphasising the ethical dimension of hauntology as a more-than-present refiguration of ontology. Only in this case, the ethical system is not dependent on the transcendent Good of the Other, but the immanence of radical alterity opening the present to the promissory future of a justice-to-come.

Despite the undeniability of Levinasian echoes, hauntology lets us glimpse that which is presupposed in Levinas's fundamental ethics, that the separation of Self and Other realised in discourse is still dependent on the originary violence of difference that structures all experience. To experience nonviolently is to experience nothing at all, and it is only in tension that ecological existence and an ethical system thus attuned can emerge: suspended, continuously reconfigured from its instance and therefore oriented as close as can be to the possibility of nonviolence inscribed in any given scope of experience.

Further developing the ecological nature of this relation, we can draw a line by which the spectre, like the other described by Deleuze in *Logic of Sense*, 'is not reducible to either an alternative subject or particular object, but is rather that which announces the structure that makes possible a coherent account of the world'.<sup>129</sup> This intimacy with the Other is explained by Deleuze:

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<sup>129</sup> Grant Hamilton, 'The Man Without Others: Deleuze's Structure-Other' in *IAFOR Journal of Ethics, Religion & Philosophy* (2003) p.11



‘The Other assures the margins and transitions in the world [...] Others, from my point of view, introduce the sign of the unseen in what I do see, making me grasp what I do not perceive as what is perceptible to an Other. In all these respects, my desire passes through Others, and through Others it receives an object’.<sup>130</sup>

The responsibility towards the Other we see in Levinas is refigured as immanent to the very structures of perception: ‘the Other makes manifest a structure, one that describes a triadic relation-function of subject to object, and in so doing ensures a coherency to the world for the fact that it guarantees the existence of those dimensions that are forever unseen to the observer. In a very real sense, then, the Other “completes” our perception of the world’.<sup>131</sup> The other is preserved as ‘neither an object in the field of my perception nor a subject who perceives me: the Other is initially a structure of the perceptual field, without which the entire field could not function as it does’.<sup>132</sup> As we have seen, this notion of a frequency of perception outside the realms of synchronised space-time interiority is a key aspect of Derrida’s spectrality: the invisible structure of visibility itself, the immanence of alterity that motivates differance. However, to conflate the two projects in a way that reads one through the other is erroneous. Rather, I want to draw a productive line of flight between the two thinkers in the hope of illuminating aspects of the projects of each as they relate to the precarious ecologies of the Anthropocene.

Daniel W. Smith notes that, following Giorgio Agamben’s identification of the reinterpretation of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology as the crux of the two thinkers’ divergence, ‘Deleuze attempts to develop an immanent ontology, while Derrida’s deconstruction necessarily

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<sup>130</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* (London, Bloomsbury, 2015) p.314

<sup>131</sup> Grant Hamilton, ‘The Man Without Others: Deleuze’s Structure-Other’, p.14

<sup>132</sup> Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, p.315

operates on the basis of a formal structure of transcendence'.<sup>133</sup> Of course, one of the primary differences between the philosophical projects of Derrida and Deleuze is their relationship to philosophy itself, namely towards the practice of metaphysics. As I have said, Derrida, following Heidegger's proclamation of "overcoming metaphysics", attempts to disrupt the closure of traditional metaphysics - the metaphysics of presence - through the method of deconstruction: 'Immanent within metaphysics, there lies a formal structure of transcendence that can never be made present as such, but that nonetheless functions as the condition (the "quasi-transcendental" condition) of metaphysics itself'.<sup>134</sup> To think this transcendent non-presence within a metaphysics of presence 'constantly disrupts and "destabilises" metaphysics' through reading the 'the regulated play of philosophemes' as 'symptoms of something that *could not be presented* in the history of philosophy'.<sup>135</sup> It is the same sense of quasi-transcendence that forms the spectral trace. It is of the other, the beyond, the externality immanent to any interior. This is how Derrida understands the emanation of the referent Barthes describes upon viewing the photo: 'This Thing is the other insofar as it was already there - before me - ahead of me, beating me to it, I who am before it, I who am because of owing to it'.<sup>136</sup> This perspective is transcendent in that it is founded on moving beyond the immanent conditions of the present, yet the fact that this extraneous, futural dimension is not an a priori determinant but a fundamental component of these immanent conditions means we cannot call the spectre a transcendental entity in the proper sense, an ideal from which the event of being is then derived. Rather, the ghost manifests through a kind of transcendence in immanence, a

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<sup>133</sup> Daniel W. Smith, 'Deleuze and Derrida, Immanence and Transcendence' in *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, p.48

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. p.49

<sup>135</sup> Derrida, quoted in *ibid.* pp.48-49

<sup>136</sup> Derrida, Stiegler, 'Spectrographies', p.42

motion that is revealed most jarringly in the anachronic system of death and the referent, but that in fact, again, gives structure to phenomenal experience itself. All experience is spectral.

As I have said, in that it is already understood outside of the Derridean context the ghost is the perfect metaphor to mobilise in critiquing the metaphysics of presence. As a concept that has travelled from outside of philosophy, when it is applied in the field it both subtends and agitates the lines of thought to which it is added, opening these boundaries through the network of trace meanings and inferences it introduces. If the multiplicities revealed through the deconstructive technique are teased out by uncovering the aporias in frameworks of knowledge or perception, that which we uncover must necessarily remain inaccessible to us from inside the frameworks we are working to interrupt. The point of deconstruction is to reveal openings and discontinuities by communicating with the spectral frequency of semantic impossibility. Deleuze's philosophy of immanence, however, rather than working from the margins of philosophy with a view to interrupt its constraints, to tympanise, to trouble and disturb its boundaries, operates strictly inside the bounds of metaphysics. He is, as he described himself, a 'pure metaphysician': 'If one is critical of traditional metaphysics, [...] then the philosophical task is not to attempt to 'overcome' metaphysics, but rather to actively construct a *different* metaphysics'.<sup>137</sup><sup>138</sup> Rather than formulating a methodology based around escaping the confines of a closed, constrictive metaphysical system, Deleuze creates a new system, a new structure that remains fundamentally open, thereby resisting the trappings of the tradition of Western philosophy that Derrida seeks to interrupt from within. Smith sums this methodological difference up as such: 'Put crudely, then, if Derrida sets out to undo metaphysics, Deleuze sets out simply to *do* metaphysics'.<sup>139</sup> With this in mind, we can begin to formulate an approach for

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid. p.49

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. pp.49-50

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. p.50

thinking not only *through* the aporia of the Anthropocene, but *with* it, and crucially, at the same time, *beyond* it. The kind of dual motion required in a deconstruction can, in an ecological sense, in fact accommodate these divergent approaches to metaphysics. I negotiate this through the methodology of the eco-, a necessary thinking together rather than a thinking against or apart: to think ecologically as in becoming-together, avoiding synthesis or closure and remaining open to flight and the fluidity of contextualisation via the ethico-hauntology of mutual responsibility from which these relations emerge.

One of the key factors in this approach is the realisation of the terrestrial assemblage in not only describing the entanglement of heterogeneous agencies but in understanding the dynamics of the systems themselves. This would involve a break with the idea of the system as a closed network of information exchange, instead emphasising openness and dynamism in constantly shifting structures of connectivity. The fluidity and instability of assemblages results from the movement of particular components along vectors of deterritorialisation. If we take the assemblage of an ecosystem for example, climate change as an ongoing geophysical phenomenon operates as this deterritorialising element. It induces reconfiguration of other parts, thereby providing the assemblage with its necessary temporality based on an entropic disorganisation and eventual dissolution. This means it is distinguishable and measurable as these alterations, its arrival manifested as a deterritorialisation - the displacement and reformulation of the ecosystem's components. The bleaching of a coral reef due to rising ocean temperatures involves the displacement of the algae that lives symbiotically in its tissue: the interruption of a territorialisation, the formation of connections that maintain the status quo identity of the assemblage. The coral may find new occupants more suited to these environmental stressors or may remain empty and die, but either way, changes in connectivity; disorganisation and reconfiguration, have occurred as a result of the deterritorialising force of a

particular component, transforming the structure. Anthropogenic activities such as deforestation have the same deterritorialising effect, as do geophysical phenomena like volcanic eruptions or tsunamis. However the assemblages formed in the Anthropocene are characterised by a distinct kind of deterritorialising element: one that does not run concurrent with the processes of evolutionary mutation or geophysical phenomena preordained by natural law (although I deploy this term cautiously), but that can be explicitly tied to human activity, therefore presenting an ethical injunction.

Since assemblages are comprised of actual and virtual entities, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between “relative” and “actual” deterritorialisation, where relative deterritorialisation describes the reconfigurations of the actual and absolute deterritorialisation describes reconfigurations of the virtual. Paul Patton writes: ‘In itself, absolute deterritorialisation remains an unrealisable or impossible figure, manifest only in and through relative deterritorialisation, meaning relative deterritorialisation only occurs because there is ‘a perpetual immanence of absolute deterritorialization within relative deterritorialization’.<sup>140</sup> We can therefore see that deterritorialisation works through the same promissory futural dimension as the difference of justice, the openness of the to-come, with actual deterritorialisation occupying the unrealisable, impossible horizon of the destabilised spacing and temporisation of *à-venir*:

‘Absolute deterritorialisation is the underlying principle which ensures that the future will be different from the past, or that the future must be understood as inhabited by the permanent possibility of otherness or monstrosity. In political terms, absolute deterritorialisation is manifest as revolution or the minor forms of becoming-revolutionary

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<sup>140</sup> Patton, Deleuze, Guattari, *ibid.* p.22

which are not to be confused with the past, present or future of actual revolutions, but which nonetheless call for new earths and new peoples'.<sup>141</sup>

In a similar vein, the anachrony of the spectral frequency and its promise of a democracy to come is identified by Derrida as the energy of revolution: 'As soon as one calls for the disappearance of ghosts, one deprives oneself of the very thing that constitutes the revolutionary movement itself, that is to say, the appeal to justice [...] which must carry beyond the synchrony of living presents'.<sup>142</sup> For example, systems of law manifest in an ongoing and open process of oscillation between deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, always oriented to a futural dimension. It is exactly this kind of transformative revolutionary movement, one that takes place beyond institutional or governmental arrangements, that ecological matters are concerned with, since it is through this horizon of the to-come that we can begin to comprehend the context - in a very literal, environmental sense, the environment as the conditions for existence itself - from which these systems emerge. To think ecologically is to question any ideal of the predetermined, static, closed, *non-living* system of thought - one that does not account for the multiplicity, dynamism and inherent violence of the natural world from which it arises.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid. pp.25-26

<sup>142</sup> Derrida, Stiegler, 'Spectrographies' pp.45-46

## THE MANY ANTHROPOCENES

As it has spread throughout the collective consciousness, any form capable of critique will, when engaging with the Anthropocene, at some point find as its foundation a condition of interconnectedness, entanglement - the 'inescapability of relations'.<sup>143</sup> Questions of multiplicity abound, and this structure is typical not only of the various spatiotemporalities of the Anthropocene and the coordination of the entities and objects existing therein, but reveals the counterintuitive, multifactorial nature of the concept itself. The Anthropocene, as an epoch characterised by the immediate foregrounding of various kinds of entanglement, is itself composed of entanglements, of openings and deferrals, meaning a holistic approach will only serve to obscure the interplay of its contexts and strata. Zalasiewicz writes: 'there are many Anthropocenes out there, used for different purposes along different lines of logic in different disciplines', but, as we know, any one of these Anthropocenes cannot be invoked entirely in isolation.<sup>144</sup> The relational structure of the concept means that to think it effectively is to reconcile various divergent spatiotemporal scales, to counterbalance multiple, often contradictory narratives with a view to allow for an articulation of the human that remains open to the depth of its ecological interconnections.

This distribution is not necessarily a question of adoption, that the term is operative in one methodological system, then stripped of these operations as it is transposed onto another, different system (as in the adoption of object oriented ontology from computer science for example), but that the concept as an object of study actually operates *through* its own entirely

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<sup>143</sup> Ben Dibley, 'The Shape Of Things To Come': Seven Theses On The Anthropocene And Attachment' in *Australian Humanities Review*, 52 (2012) p.148

<sup>144</sup> Quoted in Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Anthropocene Time' in *History & Theory*, 57, 1 (2018) p.5

indisciplined multiplication. Again, there is always more than one of them: to think the Anthropocene in one field is to at once summon a network of functional registers that remain suspended from any given, immediate application, yet through which this application is itself actualised. While it can of course - with a view to criticise any potential obfuscation, being as it is a central point of contention in a very severe and urgent situation - be argued that as the term has proliferated it has only become distorted and reformulated by the distinct methodologies of various fields to the degree that any two given definitions may share little common ground, it remains that this sense of auto-dispersal; that the Anthropocene cannot be thought at the kind of transdisciplinary frequency it seems to naturally reside without being broken into various antithetical sub-narratives, deterritorialising itself, so to speak, presents a situation in which the compossibility or 'inclusive disjunction' of its strata - the Anthropocene as '*both* yet one more way of understanding the whole existing alongside any others, *and* a way of organising and subsuming all others' - is not an inconvenient byproduct of over-analysis but an implicit function of the concept.<sup>145146</sup> One could say that due to its existence as such, it is impossible to distort the Anthropocene to the point of obscuration since it is, taken in present, ontological frames of understanding, already obscured by the palimpsestic nature of its manifestation in discourse.

Although wary of making an argument specifically for or against the use of the Anthropocene over the many other -cenes generated in its wake, in keeping with Colebrook I want to follow her use of the Anthropocene in an essentially stratigraphic sense as per Deleuze and Guattari: 'to intensify the geological stratification that opens the thought of the Anthropocene'.<sup>147</sup> For now, the term Anthropocene is useful precisely as a result of its self

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<sup>145</sup> T Toivanen et al. 'The Many Anthropocenes: A Transdisciplinary Challenge For The Anthropocene Research' in *The Anthropocene Review*, 4, 3 (2017)

<sup>146</sup> Claire Colebrook, 'A Grandiose Time of Coexistence': Stratigraphy of the Anthropocene' in *Deleuze Studies* 10.4 (2016) p.442

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.



problematisation, and of course, to deploy the term in a stratigraphic sense summons its own groundlessness as a geochronological superimposition with the histories preserved in Holocene strata - the past interrupting the present by opening it to a promissory future. Through generating narratives that trouble any sense of linear scope or boundaries, rather than cementing the figure of an Anthropos and the kind of univocal history it implies, the inclusive disjunction of the concept's own stratifications can provide ways of thinking these multiple narratives together, so long as resistance to the possibility of one incorporating all others through reterritorialisation can be maintained. This approach has a deconstructive inflection, with the asymmetry of the inclusive disjunction bearing a distinctly spectral character. It is the logic through which a relation with the other as other can be maintained, a productive connection that does not require its terms to share any sense of cohesion in themselves due to the suspended possibility of a cohesion to come. It therefore describes an encounter with the other without closure or assimilation, crossing the gap without any mediating commonality, an irreducible relation that occurs through maintaining difference rather than synthesising its factors into a homogenous unity.

As just one example of the multidimensional arrangement of these narratives, Ben Dibley sets out seven theses of the Anthropocene, each of which falls under or extends into an otherwise separate methodology or disciplinary plateau: (1) '*as epoch and as discourse*', the recognition of humanity as a geo-biological force altering the composition of the environment.<sup>148</sup> (2) as '*the crease of time* [...] the appellation for the folding of radically different temporal scales'.<sup>149</sup> (3) as '*oppos[ing] freedom*', countering the emancipatory politics of modernity, 'posit[ing] absolute limits to human activity, curtailing the sphere of human freedom'.<sup>150</sup> (4) as '*nostalgia for*

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<sup>148</sup> Ben Dibley, "The Shape of Things to Come": Seven Theses on the Anthropocene and Attachment', p.139

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.140

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.141

*the human*', eradicating the possibility of any distinction between nature and society, yet remaining nostalgic for this distinction.<sup>151</sup> (5) as *'hail[ing] Earthlings'*, rejecting humanity's 'omnipresent mastery' over other species.<sup>152</sup> (6) as *'an emerging apparatus'*, introducing new ways of conceptualising Earth as a complex bio-geo-chemical system.<sup>153</sup> And (7) as having *'no future'*, but instead *'prospects'*: a rejection of the narratives of futurity and progress upon which the onto-political model of modernity rests.<sup>154</sup> While the contents and scope of a list such as this is by no means exhaustive, we can see from just this single and relatively early (2011) study the network of problem-discipline relations the concept introduces. Now, while divisions of interest between the natural sciences and humanities is obvious for example, it remains that, as these narratives are generated, stratified along disciplinary plateaus, if we are to consider the Anthropocene as a concept coexisting within various chronologies - perceived through a particular observational apparatus, part of a particular ecology of ideas - we find these stratifications already open to deterritorialisation, already reaching beyond themselves and already interrupted by the spectral intrusions of others, disrupting their boundaries and therefore inciting the production of novel vocabularies, methodologies and narratives. The key to thinking these properly, however, is to maintain the differences of each without resorting to hierarchisation and univocality.

The Anthropocene can therefore be envisioned as 'a rush of stories', as Anna Tsing writes in *The Mushroom at the End of the World*:

'A rush of stories cannot be neatly summed up. Its scales do not nest neatly; they draw attention to interrupting geographies and tempos. These interruptions elicit more stories

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid. 142

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. 144

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. 145

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. 147

[...] it is just these interruptions that step out of the bounds of most modern science, which demands the possibility for infinite expansion without changing the research framework'.<sup>155</sup>

At both the macro and micro level, scale is one of the Anthropocene's central problems. We are at once faced with the irreconcilability of human-level and Earth-level spatiotemporalities, the timescale of the individual against and within the timescale of the planet, where the 'deep time of geology' and the 'rather shorter history of capital' must be thought simultaneously.<sup>156</sup> As I have said, the Anthropocene as a concept applied in any one field is always haunted by its application in others. It remains partially withdrawn, not all there, and scalability is the crux of this tension of distribution. However, we cannot take Tsing's argument and claim a reformulation that would allow the concept to be exchanged freely, to scale endlessly (therefore exorcising any tendencies towards spectralisation) would be in any way less troublesome. In fact, this would run counter to the kind of multivalent thinking the problem demands by developing through overcoding rather than differential, ecological multiplicity. If the Anthropocene marks an interruption in the temporality of modernity as marked by progressive, vertical development, the Anthropocene's unscalability, its counterintuitiveness and inherent transdisciplinarity, in fact manifests as something horizontal, fragmentary and multidirectional, thereby directly countering modernistic thought. Tsing defines scalability as 'a hallmark of modern knowledge [...] the ability of a project to change scales smoothly without any change in project frames'.<sup>157</sup> The disjunction of the Anthropocene concept signals that something has become unhinged, always been unhinged, with the history of modernity around which these various narrative temporalities

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<sup>155</sup> Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015) p.37

<sup>156</sup> Dibley, "The Shape of Things to Come": Seven Theses on the Anthropocene and Attachment', p.140

<sup>157</sup> Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, p.38

coalesce. In a sense we can see the figure of a unified Anthropos paralleled in this singular articulation of a history determined by progress and modernisation. Scalability as a function of the concept is central to the development of knowledge within modernity's arborescent model of history, but since this unified anthropos is in actual fact nowhere to be found, the Anthropocene does not fit with this model. If the thrust of modernity is displaced as the primary temporal mode we can perceive without speculative ventures into more-than-human timescales, history in the Anthropocene becomes, as Tsing writes, 'indeterminate and multidirectional'.<sup>158</sup> Tsing sees the 'contaminated diversity' of assemblages as a way to approach the dual problems of scalability and historicity, contrasting the production model of colonial European sugarcane plantations - 'an inspiration for later industrialisation and modernisation', enabling the passage of time through a sense of vertical progress - with the system of 'transformative relations' that constitutes the matsutake mushroom forest, a horizontal temporality motivated by the ongoing process of reconfiguration through deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation.<sup>159</sup> Matsutake require a specific arrangement of other flora in order to grow, and complex relational structures such as these cannot be translated to the scalable model of the plantation meaning it is impossible for humans to cultivate them. Systems such as the matsutake forest are non-scalable because their elements are constituted by way of their relations: 'assemblages don't just gather lifeways; they make them'.<sup>160</sup> However, if time in the Anthropocene becomes multidirectional and indeterminate - anachronistic, in other words - in a deconstructive sense this would entail the breaking down of the very idea of narrative itself. If narrative is determined through an originary foundation, a sequential orientation in terms of which it is determined - the birth-death of the individual, for example, where the sense of narrative is derived from the

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid. p.23

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. p.40

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. p.23

temporality of lived experience - then we are forced to reconcile with the relational context that determines this foundation as such, thereby destabilising its self-identical boundaries. How to think narrative in a time without narrative? Simply abandoning any concept of cohesion is of course not useful, yet as I have said the solution to this does not rest on thinking by way of constriction and closure, by determining narratives through self-identification. Rather, to conceptualise narratives through differential relationality, so that each determines the other, retaining their own agencies through the maintenance of these relations, means that we can hold such ideas to task without sacrificing the modes of existence they describe. It is not so much that “narratives” no longer exist, it is just that they manifest in fluidity, tension and multitude, meaning we must attend to an intellectual framework that allows us to think them as such.

The concept of the Anthropocene occupies both a position of generalisation and differentiation. Like capitalism, it ‘determines the conditions and possibility of its own universal history’ - the history of species-man - but only ‘insofar as [it] has to deal essentially with its own limit, its own destruction’ - through the proliferation of sub or counter narratives (capitalocene, plantationocene, chthulucene, etc.).<sup>161</sup> The inclusive disjunction Colebrook employs here is ‘a way of thinking about *intensifying* the tendency of the Anthropocene, and to move from its reterritorialisation (the creation of a unified humanity, even if only some were responsible), to a higher deterritorialisation’.<sup>162</sup> This deterritorialisation is achieved through the geological stratification that allows us to envisage temporalities beyond our own, while ‘resist[ing] the reterritorialisation that would allow this stratification to co-opt all others’.<sup>163</sup> Thinking the Anthropocene in this way, as something simultaneously organised and organising, always open

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<sup>161</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, quoted in Colebrook, “A Grandiose Time of Coexistence”, p.441

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. p.442

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

to alteration, gives us a framework through which to comprehend its inherent aporia. So again, this move can be understood as a deconstructive one: like the twofold action of the spectre, both signifying and enacting the spectral openness of difference, to think the Anthropocene in a stratigraphic sense grants the concept the kind of openness that is needed to accommodate the multivalent, contradictory lines of thought that our current ecological situation demands. Our ethical imperative is to comprehend our entangled state in a way that does justice to it as such, maintaining it in its trace, hauntological relativity so as not to delude or damage our multi-species relations by implementing an exclusionary metaphysical framework; allowing for the constant remodelling of the law of the present based on the endless deferral of a justice to come, the promissory future of a present that remains ‘always open, anarchic and therefore potentially open to a justice, democracy, friendship or hospitality that could not be constrained by the history of ‘humanity to date’’.<sup>164</sup>

Of course, it serves to mention that maintaining a radical openness to possibility can invite some incredibly damaging modes of thinking and being-in-relation that are absolutely not conducive to ecological thought. However, this is where the responsibility to the other at the core of hauntological ethics comes into play. Maintaining openness to the generative potential of the to-come does not imply simply intensifying vectors of deterritorialisation so as to bring about radical change, since the inherent malignancy of these (almost universally anthropogenic) forces do not ultimately allow for all divergent modes of present existence to continue within a spatial or temporal scale of their own. Forms of existence that can be maintained under such conditions are swept up, transforming and proliferating, while all others are eliminated. A good example here would be again to compare the sustainable ecological deterritorialisations of evolution with the virulent, deleterious deterritorialisations of anthropogenic climate change.

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<sup>164</sup> Claire Colebrook, ‘Anti-Catastrophic Time’ in *New Formations*, 92 (2017) p.114

Both function through destabilisation of that which currently exists, a constant moving towards alterity, but the latter is not conducive to multiple lifeways, instead maintaining its own velocity through their exploitation and erasure. New modes of existence are produced, but only through the sacrifice of all others. Although I have spoken about the need for a metaphysical system that resists closure in favour of productive openness, Clark makes a point that helps to ground the potentially harmful deterritorialising forces that can arise from these conditions: that we find, when considering a problem such as climate change, we are actually presented with a very defined and absolute “limit” in the finite resources of the Earth itself. I have already mentioned the method of “thinking ecologically”. This shares with deconstruction a sense of fundamental openness to change, even through tension, based on the co-existence of various organisms, ideas and spatiotemporalities along multiple vectors of destabilisation and reconfiguration. This limit is one informed by a living condition, a realisation of the other through boundless multidirectional evolution, a horizontal development through ever-increasing complexity. A mutating, living, non-stationary limit - an evolving limit, one that remains fundamentally open, reaching beyond itself through its own constant deterritorialisation - a deterritorialisation facilitating the multiple lifeways that comprise the biosphere.

If we take Haraway’s incentive to make the Anthropocene as short/thin as possible, if we resist the temptation to overcode, maintaining the distinct lineages of its various dimensions and keeping them open to alteration, then the concept’s transdisciplinary, generative potential manifests in the same way. As such, a concept that is in some respects emblematic of the worst modernistic tendencies, of conceding to myths of human mastery over a subordinate natural world, in fact runs counter to the vertical, arboreal nature of a modernistic thought based on an ongoing process of synthesis and elimination. Additionally, if we accept the implications of a hauntological ethics, to do justice to the other as other, accepting responsibility for the other as

the inaccessible structural determinant of all present, anthropocentric experience, then we, as Colebrook writes, would 'act and think as if our world and our time were one among others'.<sup>165</sup> Calls to a more-than-human thought are not calls to abandon the human perspective entirely, for it is now that the human perspective is more valuable than ever. However, it is also the point at which we must understand this human perspective as a limit, a closure, something to which the constitutive outside will always remain inaccessible. For example, the imperialist mission to terraform Mars (to us, through the lenses of our rovers, a blank non-place primed for anthropogenic colonialism - a home for the Anthropos, perhaps?) with the hope of escaping any potential of an uninhabitable Earth is simply another refusal to accept this limit, that there is nothing beyond the vertical, here-now progression of anthropocentric modernity; another effort to escape the determining non-presence of the inaccessible other at the heart of our terrestrial existence. It is therefore the point at which the human perspective can open itself up as one world among others; worlds with divergent and unthinkable ways of existence, ensuring that we are not only open to *the* future, *our* future, but multiple futures, both human and more-than-human.

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<sup>165</sup> Colebrook, 'Stratigraphy for the Anthropocene', p.453



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