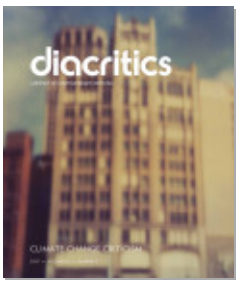
She Stood in Tears amid the Alien Corn: Thinking through Agrilogistics



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THINKING THROUGH AGRILOGISTICS

TIMOTHY MORTON

Dim and wonderful is the vision I have conjured up in my mind of life spreading slowly from this little seed bed of the solar system throughout the inanimate vastness of sidereal space.
—H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*

>> Great Disillusionments

Let us begin with the opening paragraph of *The War of the Worlds*. It was published in 1898, almost exactly halfway through the Anthropocene so far. Before quoting it, let me stress the strangeness of being able to write "halfway through the Anthropocene," let alone "almost exactly." The strangeness is a function of this essay's topic, the state of criticism in the shadow of climate change. Moreover, the debate within geology and the humanities as to the start of the Anthropocene is happening because the time of the Anthropocene is strange—it seems to gather within itself a series of concentric loops of temporality that include the last two centuries, and the uncanny normality known as nature, a normality that at least one geologist (Jan Zalasiewicz) takes to be a function of the periodic cycling of earth systems since the advent of human intervention in the biosphere at a scale sufficient to affect them as a whole. Nature was always, and literally, an artificial construct. In this essay, I show that the supposed normality of this periodic cycling was already something alarming. It is just that now we are witnessing the logarithmic acceleration of this alarming tendency.

Wells articulates the weirdness of seeing on different scales at once:

> No one would have believed, in the last years of the nineteenth century, that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinized and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinize the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. It is possible that the infusoria under the microscope do the same. No one gave a thought to the older worlds of space as sources of human danger, or thought of them only to dismiss the idea of life upon them as impossible or improbable. It is curious to recall some of the mental habits of those departed days. At most, terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars, perhaps inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise. Yet across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us. And early in the twentieth century came the great disillusionment.[1]

Wells is suggesting that humans are being watched from afar. This is a predominant phenomenon in Victorian-period philosophy thanks to Immanuel Kant's discovery of an irreducible gap between phenomenon and thing. But it is also a predominant phenomenon of the early twenty-first century, in which humans are once again confronted with the vertigo of geological time, as if the Victorian period had not stopped—an idea

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that is correct, insofar as the Anthropocene just is modernity, that is to say, the last two hundred years.

The source of the Kantian gap between phenomenon and thing is located just behind one's head, so to speak, in a dimension one cannot access: it is a colossal ocean of reason that bestows the basis for things like understanding, calculating, and representing. I am being watched from afar (from infinitely afar) by this Kantian subject, which is not me . . . Yet the infinite distance of the subject does not mean that reason is far away: it is peculiarly near at hand. Whenever I count on my fingers, reason gives me the ability to count—or, as Kant would say, its condition of possibility. So I am simultaneously being watched from "afar" since I cannot access reason directly, and from an infinitesimally intimate proximity since reason shows up (albeit in an oblique way) in everything I think and do. This is analogous to Martians watching me from the planet next door: I cannot directly access them but they are uncannily close.

The War of the Worlds bookends a century at whose other end Kant had established an irreducible and disturbing phenomenon–thing gap. And this is what fully accounts for the "great disillusionment" that the paragraph talks about. It has already happened, but we are not yet aware of its full implications. This to-come quality of disillusionment scoops out time and is irreducible, insofar as once its possibility begins to be thought, it cannot be unthought, as if one had opened a Pandora's box. This pertains directly to thinking climate change. On the one hand, "we are already dead," it is already the end of the world: apocalyptic calls for judgment and sudden reversal are in this sense contributing to the problem, not solving it. On the other hand, global warming's amortization rate (one hundred thousand years) spreads out before us, ten times longer than the history of "civilization," which is to say, the spread of a certain logistical mode of agriculture, which this essay calls *agrilogistics*.

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Agrilogistics is a term whose valence will become ever clearer as we proceed. But for now let us think it as an implicit, physically embodied version of the metaphysics of presence—the assumption that to exist is to be constantly present. No matter what the appearances might be, essence lives on. Ontologically, and socially, what we encounter in agrilogistics is immiseration. Very soon after its inception, agrilogistics led to patriarchy, the impoverishment of all but a very few, a massive and rigid social hierarchy, and feedback loops such as plagues or, as they were known in Greece, miasmata. Appearance, phenomena, are of no consequence. What matters is knowing where your next meal is coming from.

The physical embodiment of this thought takes the form of the fields that surround the city-state at the start of the particular agricultural mode in the Fertile Crescent, the form that encloses all other modes of production from feudalism to capitalism to Soviet economies. I could plant anything in this field: barley, wheat, I could farm cattle, the field could remain fallow—and underneath it is the same field, my field. No matter what happens to it, it remains constantly present. This idea of constant presence goes along with an implicit utilitarianism, according to which I decide that having more beings like me, existing for longer, is better than anything else. This default utilitarianism is also a metaphysics of presence. No matter whether I am hungrier, or sicker, or more oppressed, underlying these phenomena, I and my brethren remain, constantly, down the generations. These two ideas together might form what Jared Diamond has called "the worst mistake in the history of the human race."[2] The mistake now plays out at the temporal scale of climate change. This is because agrilogistics supplied the conditions for the Agricultural Revolution, which swiftly provided the conditions for the Industrial Revolution. Which is why there is an appropriate reaction to the "modernity 2.0," "once more with feeling" solutions to global warming—bioengineering, geoengineering, and other forms of what this essay shall call *happy nihilism*. Happy nihilism reduces things to bland substances that can be manipulated at will, without regard to unintended consequences. Such solutions are exemplified by James Lovelock, who calls us the "species equivalent" of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Reading between the lines, we can almost hear him pleading: "Please let us be Dr. Jekyll, we know we have been Mr. Hyde, but we will be better."[3] The appropriate reaction is distress and horror.

The temporal scale of global warming acts like a polymerase chain reaction that blows up the "existing is better than any quality of existence" idea that forms the logical DNA of agrilogistics, so to speak. One blows it up to a magnitude that renders it susceptible to careful study. At this magnitude, Derek Parfit argues that trillions of humans living near "the bad level" or Giorgio Agamben's *bare life* are always better than even billions of people living in a state of total bliss.[4] Parfit's project was to think utilitarianism, in the name of addressing pollution and radiation (in 1984, when global warming was not publicly well known), in a certain "deconstructive" manner, though not announced as such. To stress test utilitarianism, as it were, until it comes apart, such that the temporality of "slow violence" (Rob Nixon) associated with pollution, radiation, and climate change is found to necessitate new forms of ethics and politics.

Along with the almost immediate unintended consequences of agriculture—epidemics, drastic social and gender stratification, and general misery (exemplified by the sudden decrease in average human height in the Fertile Crescent)—goes a deeper, philosophical consequence of the war against anxiety, which turns into war against (mere) appearance in the name of some simple, integrated essence. Thus the Heideggerian-Derridean task of destructuring the metaphysics of presence gains an urgently ecological resonance.

To return to how Wells's "great disillusionment" displaces temporality in two ways. Isn't the double displacement of temporality also the case with the scientific

discoveries of the nineteenth century, which are Kantian insofar as they tend to point out this rather disturbing gap between phenomenon and thing? For in these discoveries, vast swathes of time unfurl. This is a stranger thought than the now familiar idea that suddenly humans become aware of empirically colossal depths of time, stunning as that is. It has to do with a gap between what one can see and understand, and what one can think. Consider the case of evolution. It is happening, but I cannot point to it: when I try all I indicate are roses, badgers, and orangutans. Consider the case of electromagnetism. A gigantic ocean of energy is rippling throughout the universe, strafing us and penetrating us. Think about El Niño and La Niña, the weather systems in the Pacific that were discovered later in the Victorian period.[5] One is incapable of seeing them directly but one can compute them and map them. And they cause all kinds of weather that one can sense directly. Think about the Freudian unconscious, existent but inaccessible save obliquely through slips of the tongue and dreams. Think about capital, from the point of view of a Marxist: one can see its effects everywhere, but one cannot directly touch it. Such entities count as the first of what I elsewhere call the hyperobjects.[6]

Isn't it also the case that the technological developments of the Victorian period also have to do with this form of decoupling phenomenon from thing? Consider a steam engine, the device whose patenting in 1784 announces for Marx the start of industrial capitalism, and for Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer the start of the Anthropocene.[7] As Marx argues, this is the quintessential and originary capitalist device, because one can plug it into all manner of other machines.[8] For instance, one can fit it onto a giant hammer, which can now bash in enormous bolts that no human, not even a large group of humans, could hammer in on their own. Yet it can also hammer in a tiny little nail with great gentleness and precision. The cyclopean hammer (as Marx calls it) can do things that are far beyond human activity; but it can also do things that are intimate to the familiar human lifeworld, such as beating small tacks into "a piece of soft wood with a succession of light taps."[9]

Things such as steam-powered hammers make a mockery of phenomena that are supposedly human. The steam engine arises as the logical precursor (though chronological successor) of industrial machinery: an instance of a strange recursion to which we shall return. This means that there is something already not quite human about the industrial machines that chronologically precede the steam engine—as if they are lying in wait for their completion by another machine, not by a human. Human time is, again, hollowed out from within.

Furthermore, the steam engine thus shares something with the computer and the music synthesizer. A computer can pretend to be a calculator, a diary, a piece of paper, a telephone, or another computer, or a machine that can assemble other machines through the writing of lines of software code. Likewise a synthesizer can pretend to be a violin, or a trumpet, or to make some hitherto unspecified sound, or to be a machine that can make other sound machines by combining and modulating sound waves. Steam engines, computers, and synthesizers thus betray something about machines and, one wants to argue, about things in general—that they are riven from within between what they are

and how they appear. A steam engine is not only about efficiency and power. A steam engine is about pretense and simulation. Synthesizers, computers, and steam engines evoke a strange unfathomability of the thing, an unfathomability that object-oriented ontology now names *withdrawal*.[10]

Something is wrong. There is a crack in the real, which I can detect in the gap between, say, counting and number. I can count but I am at a loss to show you number as such: I have to resort to counting—this is Kant's example.[11] Here is another. I feel raindrops. They are not gumdrops, more's the pity. They are raindroppy—their phenomena are measurably to do with themselves. But I cannot access the actual raindrops. Their phenomena are *not raindrops*. There is a fundamental, irreducible gap between the raindrop phenomenon and the raindrop thing. But it is worse than that. I cannot locate where this gap is anywhere in my given, phenomenal, experiential, or indeed scientific space.[12] Unfortunately raindrops do not come with little dotted lines around them and a little drawing of scissors saying "cut here"—despite the insistence of philosophy from Plato up until David Hume and Kant that there is some kind of dotted line somewhere on a thing, and that the job of a philosopher is to locate this dotted line and cut carefully.

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By positing a transcendental subject capable of mathematizing reason, predicated on an implicit ontology of bland substance that is contradicted by his own wariness about making metaphysical statements about what a thing is, Kant himself tries to police the crack in the real that his thought opens up. One way in which he does it is to bracket off things in themselves, thus enabling the thought that a thing is nothing in particular until I make something of it. The implicit sadism of this thought has been noted.[13] In this essay, I shall be trying to keep the crack open so as to avoid the sadism. In effect, to do so is to designate philosophy's objects as appearances haunted and conditioned by a thing that exceeds them.

To return to the question of pretense opened up by the steam engine, what Lacan says about human pretense can be said of any phenomenon whatsoever in the Anthropocene: "What constitutes pretense is that, in the end, you don't know whether it's pretense or not."[14] This irreducible element of play works against the happy nihilism exemplified by agrilogistics, which tries to reduce or eliminate play.

Disillusionment is thus not about demystification. Demystifying a thing inevitably involves a violent attempt to peel appearance away from substance—violent because thwarted by the thing's reality. But what appears out of disillusionment are more (mysterious) things. The inner logic of agrilogistics subverts the demystificatory project. What Wells calls *the great disillusionment* is a weird doublet of massively increasing efficiency and gigantic machination on the one hand; and a disturbing feeling of unreality on the other, disturbing precisely insofar as there seems to be no easy way to peel appearance

from reality. Ironically, this difficulty emerges just as the technical capacity to do all kinds of peeling and powdering emerges.

What is being undermined is the metaphysics of presence—the idea that to exist is to be constantly present, and that there is a thin bright line between what something is and how it appears. Climate change criticism is thus well advised to invoke the spirit of Derrida, whose work, including the nuclear criticism in this journal, is only anxiously papered over by the eliminationist and "new" forms of materialism that seek to resolve the tension between phenomenon and thing—that is, to resolve the tension of the Anthropocene as expressed in philosophy.[15]

In concluding this section, let us consider a highly relevant, paradoxical, and pressing example of the phenomenon–thing gap. Think about the concept of the human *species*, the concept that is adequate, argues Dipesh Chakrabarty, for thinking at the scale of climate change.[16] This is a concept that Derrida's essay on nuclear criticism also touches on, not entirely ironically and certainly without cynicism.[17] This seemingly out-of-date and, for many scholars, dangerous concept appears superficially easy to think: after all, contemporary texts from Sesame Street ("We Are All Earthlings") to Live Aid's "We Are the World" appear designed to convey it.[18] Yet for me to know, through the very reasoning with which I discern the transcendental gap between phenomenon and thing, the being that manifests this reasoning—this might be the strangest task of all the ones named thus far. To know in this way might be like for a serpent to swallow its own tail, to put itself in a loop. To use one's reason to think one's reason. Is it not the case then that what appears to be superficially the nearest—my beingness qua this actual entity, writing these words at this moment—is phenomenologically the most distant thing in the universe? And is it not then likely that the Muppets and the other voices trying to convince me that I am an earthling are in fact precisely *inhibiting* what Chakrabarty takes to be the necessary ecological thought?

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Moreover, and this is the force of *On the Origin of Species*, there technically *are no species* and *they have no origin*—and yet a human is not a cat. This is precisely Charles Darwin's appropriation of the phenomenon–thing gap. There is an urgent nothingness that flickers around the notion of species.

What, then, is required for thinking at a scale that is no longer caught in the headlights of climate change—headlights that stay on for one hundred thousand years?

>> The Long March of Happy Nihilism

There are no prefabricated incisions or dotted lines on a thing to guide the cut of metaphysics. Plato compares this cutting to skillful butchery. A good philosopher carves the *eidos* at the joints—that are as it were the dotted lines on the animal telling one which parts are which.[19] This essay takes at least the bleak scope of Martin Heidegger as its basic ground, the scope in which Plato is the beginning of a certain pervasive nihilism in Western thought. Plato is a nihilist precisely insofar as he argues for a thin bright line between a realm of appearances and a world of realities that take the form of reified, constantly present beings: the world of the *eidos*. Indeed, there is no reason to suppose that Heidegger's beloved Presocratics were not also metaphysicians of presence, insofar as they posit a (usually material) substrate of appearances that is more real than anything else—fire, water, atoms, an unbreakable One.

Animal limbs, the very things that Plato uses as his analogy for what philosophy can cut skillfully, fail to tell one which bits are which—indeed, this is exactly what they *do not* do. This begins to be known in the first century of the Anthropocene. Darwin shows how swim bladders evolved into lungs.[20] Is it possible to see anything lung-like about a swim bladder? There is a correct, negative answer to that question. And yet there is a weird affinity: swim bladders did not evolve into eyes. In the same way, raindrops are raindroppy, not gumdroppy. Just these phenomena (wetness, coldness, transparency) apply to just these things. So there is a rather disturbing reality in which there is a gap that rigid logic is unable to cope with—because a thing is, and is not, its phenomena at the same time, violating the law of noncontradiction. This rigidity collapses the possibilities of logic into a *logistics* that is the philosophical equivalent of the technics that hastened the arrival of the Anthropocene. For it is these techniques that ensure that fields should be shorn of weeds, voles, and any other life-form or geological feature that gets in the way of ensuring the continued existence, no matter how miserable, of humans. These techniques, amplified and specialized, result in the release of carbon compounds in quantities sufficient to cause human history to intersect with geological time.

The "cut along dotted line" genre of metaphysics underwrites the dotted lines that appear on diagrams of cows that specify how to turn cows into beef. With the addition of the steam engine, the appearance of cows could be eliminated in favor of concentrated cow essence, and thus Britain witnessed the arrival of Oxo, Bovril, and other forms of powdered cow, halfway through the Anthropocene. The Chicago disassembly line gave Henry Ford the idea of massively efficient motor production. And without doubt, the agrilogistical product of our era has also been the industrial scale agribusiness now responsible for an alarming amount of global warming emissions.

I have already named the implied philosophy of this production *happy nihilism*. Happy nihilism is the long march from, or rather within, agrilogistics to motorized death and global warming. Happy nihilism asserts that the appearance of a thing—it moos and has horns, for instance—is strictly irrelevant to its useful, and possibly delicious, essence, which makes a nice spread or healthful drink.

Consider a philosophical mode of happy nihilism, called eliminative materialism (Wilfred Sellars, Ray Brassier). For the eliminative materialist, a mind really isn't a mind—it is a brain. Apart from actual minds, what is happy nihilism trying to eliminate? Meat factories went from being dangerous places where limbs could be lost to being safe, quite well-paid places—where there was a sweet spot between humans and machines (but not between cows and machines of course)—to being dangerous places again, once industrial capital had figured out how to extract more money and more cow powder. The recent horsemeat scandal is a small, pathologized, criminalized region of a possibility space that is itself a species of crime, namely the agrilogistical insistence on noncontradiction that gives rise to pink slime and meat powder machines in the first place.

Beyond cows and minds, what happy nihilism is trying to eliminate is just what philosophy opened up at the start of the Anthropocene. Reality is *weird*, since the two gatekeepers of modernity, Hume and Kant, prevent me from smuggling metaphysical factoids such as cause and effect into my description of it. And, just to make it even weirder, at the very moment Hume and Kant are saying this, steam engines are enabling human history to intersect with geological time literally by drilling down into the very reality that I cannot access directly—the intersection we now call the Anthropocene. Happy nihilism is the metaphysics of presence in its purest form, without the need to preserve phenomena at all, just as Bovril is the purest form of a cow.

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Post-Kantian logic reacted to Kant and tried desperately to close the phenomenon–thing gap. The first half of the Anthropocene so far, within the history of logic, was precisely the story of finding a logical sealant that would do the trick. Consider John Stuart Mill, a proponent of *psychologism*. Psychologism argues that logic is just the rules for how a healthy brain functions. Thus statements such as "if *p,* and if *p* then *q,* then *q*" are, so to speak, percolations of the brain. There is no gap between logic and matter: logic is just an outcome of material reality, in this case, correctly arranged and healthily functioning components of the brain. Now the trouble is that this statement is also a brain percolation on its own terms. The idea that logical statements are brain percolations is also a brain percolation, which means that there is an infinite regress. One finds oneself incapable of checking what counts as a healthy brain, which is just what one wanted to do. So it becomes necessary to concur with Edmund Husserl that thoughts are independent of the thinking of them.[21] Thoughts are like Martians in one's head, which is to say that they are like seeds, viruses, and flowers—a notion that this essay shall exfoliate.

Arthur Schopenhauer was an inheritor of Kant and has some rather amusing things to say about Hegel, whose whole system was designed to paper over the phenomenon–thing gap: for Hegel, since I can think this gap, there is no gap as such, a confident thought suitable for a confident demarcation between the privileged holders of this thought (*Geist* in the form of white Westerners), and everyone (and everything) else. By

contrast, Schopenhauer's prose bestows a disturbing feeling of the vastness of phenomena—gigantic things persisting for thousands and thousands of years. When it comes to thinking climate, Schopenhauer deserves revisiting.

Moreover, this empirical feeling is backed up by an even more disturbing acceptance of the Kantian phenomenon–thing gap. This gap is intimately present in the most trivial interactions, such as when a hammer bangs in a nail, not just in the birth and death of stars. The empirical data are well within the Burkean sublime: big things generate big feelings. But the reason for the data is within the Kantian sublime, which is the vertigo of the difference between empirical *me* and transcendental subject *I*. There is again a resonance with Wells's opening paragraph, in his derangements of scale (as Timothy Clark puts it), so evocative of the empirical data pouring in through the Victorian period.[22] This data, plus the Kantian gap, does something akin to a Hitchcockian pull focus: one stays in place while one's reality seems to distort around one, getting closer to things while withdrawing from them at the same time.

Schopenhauer thinks about plants. He thinks about them as manifestations of the will, which cannot be seen directly, only inferred, like evolution, electromagnetism, and Dracula. Seeds can lurk for thousands of years before they begin to unfold their program. They wait around in the same way that chemicals wait to be activated by some "reagent."[23] There is something destructive, rather than simply on the side of "creation" or "life," about seeds, which are in Schopenhauer's sense far more efficient embodiments of will (the thing in itself) than gravity or metals. Schopenhauer imagines a machine consisting of all kinds of metal components. He then subjects the machine to all kinds of forces it is unable to cope with. Magnets stop the machine from moving with its heavy iron weights that utilize gravity. Acid and zinc plates turn the machine's copper wheels into a battery. Oxygen causes the machine to burst into flame. The resulting metallic oxide then combines with an acid and starts to form crystals. Then "the crystals disintegrate, mix with other materials, and a vegetation springs from them, a new phenomenon of will."[24]

It is as if industrial machinery is being destroyed from within by the very forces that it harnesses and unleashes upon nails and humans and cattle. It is as if, in Schopenhauer's image, a nightmare of modernity is being dreamed, as an alien will outside the phenomenal realm bends metal to its blind purposes. Is this not an apt depiction of the autoimmune disorders of modernity? From this basis, Schopenhauer proceeds to talk about the power that lurks within seeds. Seeds are like H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu, a horrifying insane god slumbering "dead" for eons at the bottom of the ocean, brought back to life by his worshippers. The hauntingly agricultural example that Schopenhauer gives in a note for this slumbering will is not an accident:

> On 16 September 1840, at a lecture on Egyptian Antiquities given at the Literary and Scientific Institute of London, Mr. Pettigrew exhibited some grains of wheat, found by Sir G. Wilkinson in a grave at Thebes, in which they must have been lying for three thousand years. They were found in a hermetically sealed vase. He had sown twelve grains, and from them had a plant which had grown to a height of five feet, whose seeds were now perfectly ripe.

> From *The Times*, 21 September, 1840. In the same way, in 1830, Mr. Haulton produced at the Medical Botanical Society in London a bulbous root that had been found in the hand of an Egyptian mummy. It may have been put there from religious considerations, and was at least two thousand years old. He had planted it in a flower-pot, where it had at once grown up and was flourishing. This is quoted from the *Medical Journal* of 1830 in the *Journal of the Royal Institution of Great Britain*, October 1830, p. 196. "In the garden of Mr. Grimstone, of the Herbarium, Highgate, London, there is now a pea-plant, producing a full crop of peas, that came from a pea taken from a vase by Mr. Pettigrew and officials of the British Museum. This vase had been found in an Egyptian sarcophagus where it must have been lying for 2,844 years." From *The Times*, 16 August 1844. Indeed, the living toads found in limestone lead to the assumption that even animal life is capable of such a suspension for thousands of years, if this is initiated during hibernation and maintained through special circumstances.[25]

The epigraph quotation from Wells should now achieve something like the full measure of its disturbance. Lurking in their jars, Schopenhauer's seeds are like Martians in their cylinders. The note calls on Thebes, city of agrilogistics, home of Cadmus and the serpent, and later the encounter between Oedipus and the Sphinx.

Both Oedipus's and Cadmus's encounters with monstrous females are myths about fending off contradiction and enmeshment in fate, and as such they compute the agrilogistical thought that mere existing is better than anything like the appearance of an existing thing (it fails to matter how miserable you are, since you are alive), and that existing is simple and noncontradictory. Oedipus solved the monstrous riddle of a being who walked on four, two, and then three legs by reducing it to simplicity (*man*). Cadmus defeated the Hydra-like serpent, from whose severed neck sprang two heads in place of one—symbol of the autoimmunity endemic to the agrilogistical project, embedded within one of its very founding myths. An autoimmunity predicated on the futile attempt to reduce physical problems—and perhaps the physical tout court—to something uncomplicated, simple, noncontradictory. And predicated on the attempt to ground "civilization" in the interruption of a feminized (the serpent is female) physicality in which one is caught, or, to imagine it differently, an Ouroboros, a self-swallowing, self-referential loop, imagined by Hegelian anthropology (the anthropology born at the start of the Anthropocene) as the cyclic time of prehistory, of the uncivilized. Cadmus sows the dragon's teeth and up sprout the deadly seeds, the Spartoi (Greek, "the sown ones"), fully armed and ready to create through war the city-state. That this severing of the loop or the ever-sprouting heads is also connected with a certain misogynistic violence is not irrelevant to the way in which the origins of agriculture in the Fertile Crescent were connected with the formation of patriarchal social structures.

What interests me, dear reader, right now—and this is a point to which we shall return—is my sense that you might be concerned that I am about to say something ridiculous. It is the inevitability that interests me, the inevitability that one needs to say at this point, "Of course, I am not advocating a dismantling of actual agricultural forms. I am not suggesting that we go back to foraging for nuts and berries or subsistence farming."

Or, "But of course, we all know very well that history has no reverse gear, such that there is no point at all in trying to think outside of agrilogistics." This sense of the ridiculous is precisely what drives Lovelock to insist that we should allow ourselves to be Jekyll without Hyde, as if that were possible.

Yet thinking ecologically might indeed involve thinking in a way that appears ridiculous, or as John Llewelyn once put it, "Sometimes philosophy has to talk nonsense."[26] Or to paraphrase Heidegger, the only emergency is the lack of emergency.[27]

To return to Schopenhauer. The note thinks at a scale appropriate to thinking global warming, which is a logical consequence of the continual unfolding of a thought exemplified by the agrilogistical scheme: more existence (of humans) is better than anything else. This logistics is the condition of possibility for the agricultural revolution of the eighteenth century, which in turn is the condition of possibility for the steam engine and the Industrial Revolution.

Which brings us back to Wells. Martians are evidently vegetables. Intelligent vegetables who limply flop out of cylinders in suburban South London, the sort of space serviced by suburban railways through Wimbledon, Surbiton, and Kingston, access to which from London had been opened up by the District Line (via Wimbledon station) in 1889; and access from which to the realm of Thomas Hardy was enabled by the London and South Western Railway. The sight of the train snaking through the suburban quasi-rural cuttings is itself an alien presence:

> I think everyone expected to see a man emerge—possibly something a little unlike us terrestrial men, but in all essentials a man. I know I did. But, looking, I presently saw something stirring within the shadow: greyish billowy movements, one above another, and then two luminous disks—like eyes. Then something resembling a little grey snake, about the thickness of a walking stick, coiled up out of the writhing middle, and wriggled in the air towards me—and then another. . . .
>
> Two large dark-coloured eyes were regarding me steadfastly. The mass that framed them, the head of the thing, was rounded, and had, one might say, a face. There was a mouth under the eyes, the lipless brim of which quivered and panted, and dropped saliva. The whole creature heaved and pulsated convulsively. A lank tentacular appendage gripped the edge of the cylinder, another swayed in the air.
>
> Those who have never seen a living Martian can scarcely imagine the strange horror of its appearance. The peculiar V-shaped mouth with its pointed upper lip, the absence of brow ridges, the absence of a chin beneath the wedgelike lower lip, the incessant quivering of this mouth, the Gorgon groups of tentacles, the tumultuous breathing of the lungs in a strange atmosphere, the evident heaviness and painfulness of movement due to the greater gravitational energy of the earth—above all, the extraordinary intensity of the immense eyes—were at once vital, intense, inhuman, crippled and monstrous. There was something fungoid in the oily brown skin, something in the clumsy deliberation of the tedious movements unspeakably nasty. Even at this first encounter, this first glimpse, I was overcome with disgust and dread.[28]

The aliens are liquidly Cadmian serpents, snaky Gorgons, or tendrils of ivy, or fungus: a twisting, that is to say looping, wet and quite obviously vaginal state of life without metaphysical boundaries between species and genera. A state of life that violates the law of noncontradiction. A horribly weak and abject state of life armed, moreover, with heat rays that do not require bullets or other physical projectiles, but that are in a sense pure manifestations of will. Revenge of the thing, specifically the phobic thing of patriarchy. And revenge of the pre-patriarchal, pre-agricultural realm—imagined as modernity as such, hypermodernity that spells doom to mere humans. As if modernity could be put into a self-contradicting loop. What is happening here? What is this thing that plops abjectly yet fatally out of a metallic cylinder on a common (leftover feudal agricultural space) somewhere near Woking? These beings are indeed "extra-terrestrial" (Wells's term) in the sense Samuel Taylor Coleridge means when he says "supernatural": that is to say, they are of earth, with thirty percent extra earth added for good measure.[29] And these beings surround us already—they are called life-forms, one of which is us. These beings, thought in the modern way, end the idea that to exist one mustn't contradict oneself.

But what of the extent to which leafy suburbia is already an uncanny space, a space produced by industry and urbanization whose predominant objective is to cover up this production? Cover it up, with nothing other than leaves and tendrils of ivy and the little allotments that spring up around the railway cuttings. They spring up because the sulfur in the train emissions fertilizes the soil.

The War of the Worlds is not a story of pastoral innocence lost. Some gigantic machination has already occurred for suburbia to exist, and this machination is revealed and concealed by the arrival of the aliens. It is this revelation that is disillusioning—the battle to save earth happens in Surrey, for heaven's sake. This revelation—that new spaces have opened up through the machination of industry and urbanization—is exactly what J. R. R. Tolkien tries to cover over. Tolkien tries to paper over the great disillusionment within agrilogistics. Hobbiton is a suburb without a District Line. The gigantic expenditure of energy and planning that created Surbiton and other quasi-pastoral dwelling places for workers is totally lacking in the account of Hobbiton: the fact that historically it must be the direct product of Mordor-like industrial forces. It is strangely telling that the director Peter Jackson approved of bricks, carefully fired industrial bricks, to surround Bag End's infamous front door in *The Lord of the Rings*. Those bricks are uncanny remainders of the erasure process, which simply cannot be complete. The logistics it takes to build a cinematic Hobbiton in the first place necessitates the deployment of bricks.

We have not departed from the theme of agrilogistics, which this essay takes to be the condition of possibility for global warming. There are machines that can carve up suburbia because of the phenomenon–thing gap. Because reason can project and compute and calculate. And the gigantism of the machines reveals the irreducibility of this phenomenon–thing gap. A logic of the always-already is in play. The gigantic machination reveals that reason was always already far vaster and much less human than we

had supposed. But this can only happen in retrospect, in a mode of irony one might call *apoleptic*. Proleptic irony is the irony of anticipation. Apoleptic irony is the irony of twenty-twenty hindsight. This is the irony in which the first paragraph of *The War of the Worlds* traffics, carving out the present time of narration with a futurality that is, like a Martian, looking back on that present, as if we could be in two places at once.

The temporal logic of the pull focus, which was discussed a little earlier, is then just the weird sliding of pastness—the vast tracts of geological and evolutionary time—and futurality—opened up by the capacity to reason, to discern gaps in the empirical world. A sliding like two trains in a District Line station, slowly pulling away from each other, in a queasy relative motion. The present time of reading and narrating is thus revealed not to be a static or atomic now-point, but rather an uncannily quiet suburban station in which past and future slide against each other, not touching.

Again, the Anthropocene reveals something about things in general, something one can detect in reading a poem. The form of the poem is (in) the "past," the calcification of many decisions to use just this rhyme, just this rhythm, just this diction and so on. The "meaning" of the poem is (in) the "future," insofar as it is a not-yet that in some sense never fully or finally arrives. The "present" time of reading is just the uncanny sliding between the poem's form and its significance. Just as steam engines show how a thing withdraws from access—so that a certain type of machine could pretend to be anything, like a computer or a synthesizer—so the agrilogistics taken to the extreme in the Anthropocene puts immense pressure on the idea of the present, and of presence, as a definable, bounded atom, whether that atom is one nanosecond or one hundred thousand years long.

The present time of reading and narrating is thus revealed not to be a static or atomic now-point, but rather an uncannily quiet suburban station in which past and future slide against each other, not touching.

Putting these two paradoxes together, we are able to state a third pair. First, the very success of agrilogistics points out its shadow side, the possibility that it need not and perhaps cannot encompass all of earth. Secondly, the happy nihilism of agrilogistics reveals a darker nihilism, in which the thing flickers with a nothingness that prevents me from pinning it decisively to this or that phenomenon; and in which the present flickers with a nothingness that scoops out atomistic, logistical time.

>> The Disillusionment of Disillusionment

Yet by the same logic there must be a *disillusionment of disillusionment*. Otherwise disillusionment itself would become a form of metaphysics, and metaphysics is what Kant begins to allow us to leave behind. We might see the speculative realism movement, as true as what it says might be, to inculcate an attitude that hosts its thoughts, an

attitude we might define as precisely this modernity horror, modernity as horror. What is unthinkable and unspeakable becomes the favorite philosophical thought, and the favorite subject position with which this thought is replicated is one of horror—a dark version of the wonder or love that Socrates and Plato imagine to be the basic philosophical affect. For instance, in a book whose subtitle is *Horror of Philosophy Vol. 1*, Eugene Thacker asserts that Lovecraft's monsters violate the law of noncontradiction, as we have seen Wells's Martians do, and that this violation must be inherently disturbing—and point to the impossibility of "life" as a concept.[30] Yet once we have thought this impossibility, there we are, thinking it, and so it is not all that foreign to thinking—and so if we are to continue along the path of horror, we need more stimulation. Hence arises a war of escalation in which bigger, badder, scarier versions of the thing in itself keep being replicated, as if a virus were *actually* in charge of the thinking. What is this virus?

To get beyond is not to cast the argument away, but to find an alternative to horror as a host for the argument. What we need to do is to find within horror some form of *laughter*.

If we do not try to imagine the thought virus that creates horrifying Cthulhoid modernities, we are left with a bleak certainty, which is the way modernity thinks the impossibility of ever getting outside of itself—which is the loop that sustains modernity as such.[31] How does one get out of a self-reinforcing loop? To get beyond is not to cast the argument away, but to find an alternative to horror as a host for the argument. What we need to do is to find within horror some form of *laughter*. We are going to proceed there by examining a dominant phobia of modernity: the one we can detect in the attempt to get rid of the self-contradictory, narcissistic loop of the aesthetic in which I discover my reason projected into the ungraspable beauty of a thing. To coin a phrase and allude again to Tolkien, *the ring must be destroyed*. *Encore un effort*—agrilogistics can be righted if the loop form of things is eliminated.

>> Ouroborophobia

The Lord of the Rings is a desperate attempt to separate the two realms that Wells thinks together, the realms of understanding and just "getting on with it" without question. This "keep calm and carry on" sort of mentality is mapped onto feudal space without royalty (the Shire) and is opposed to reason, the ever-watchful great disembodied eye (Sauron)—mapped onto industrial war space with its tyrants, removed as far as possible from the space of just getting on with it. This removal hides in plain sight the fact that we are dealing with a preprogrammed agricultural space: a space in which *Realm x* is hither, and *Realm y* is over yonder. This is already a logistical space that is already about more people being better than happier people, which is the basic agricultural decision.[32] A space that is, in other words, not really about opposing the demonic cloning logic of Mordor in which there is no "proper" sexual reproduction, but just an endless proliferation

of machinic, blind slaves of the will of Sauron, the great antagonist. A proliferation that does not contradict, that produces existence as noncontradiction—that perfectly embodies the injunction to make more of oneself, for making more of oneself's sake.

Tolkien's problem is *how to get rid of the ring*. This is also of course the problem of *how to get rid of Wagner*, whose *Ring* is Tolkien's template. What Tolkien aims to eliminate is the loop that joins these two realms: it shows up right in the middle of Hobbiton. This means getting rid of the loop of which the ring is a symptom, the gap and weird join between thing and phenomenon, or to put it another way, the gap and weird join between physical thing and symbolic system. The ring is something like a virus that summons Sauron into being simply by being worn and carried around. It lives in the owner's pocket, draining her or his life force, turning its owner into what appears to be a goth, a Ring Wraith, a contradictory hole in presence, a ghost who is there and not there at the same time. When one throws it into the fire, the ring glows with Black Speech that tells one what it is, just like flowers or viruses tell you what they are—that's how they start to download themselves into one's system. In Jackson's film version, the Black Speech on the ring bursts into flame and penetrates itself, like a self-swallowing snake (Ouroboros): a compelling touch that is far from accidental.

It is also not an accident that one can actually buy this ring on all kinds of kitsch product websites. There is something about the aesthetic dimension that the Tolkienesque machination is trying to dispose of. The trouble is that in the very attempt to get rid of it, Tolkien reproduces it. To understand this, let us return to Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer's positing of a gigantic invisible and omnipresent will that machinates behind everything is, of course, strictly on the very Kantian terms he endorses, just another metaphysical construct that does not really account for things. What we might suggest instead is that the machination is ontologically *in front* of things, an abyss that does not subtend but flows out of entities in waves of spacetime, energy, causality. This abyss is what we know quite well in English departments: it is the aesthetic dimension.[33] Schopenhauer already knows most of this, since he accepts that causality is on the side of phenomena, not things. And indeed Schopenhauer argues (right after the ancient seeds passage) that causality is just as Malebranche describes it, occasional. In other words, there is no such thing as causal engineering "behind" phenomena, just the surging of will.[34]

But what we are talking about when we think will is actually what begins in the Victorian period to be called *computation*, the way algorithms can shunt numbers and logical symbols around. This algorithmic, computational possibility space is the space of the aesthetic. Think of a trope. It is just an algorithm. For instance:

(1) Choose a noun.
(2) Choose another noun.
(3) Insert the verb *is* between the nouns.
(4) This is called a *metaphor*.

Or:
(1) Choose a noun.
(2) Choose the cause of that noun or some part of it.
(3) Substitute (2) for (1).
(4) This is called *metonymy*.

Algorithms happen right in front of one's eyes, like any other form of computation—yet there is a gap, as we have seen, between the computation and the thought it expresses. In light of knowing about algorithms, Schopenhauer's discussion of seeds makes sense as the beginnings of a discussion about viruses. Recall that for Schopenhauer seeds wait around until some suitable environment begins to unlock them. We can explain this without recourse to a swirling will behind the seed, because we accept that physical entities can make symbols. These sorts of algorithms happen in front of the eyes of proteins.

As steam engines are to industrial machines, so viruses are chronologically secondary to bacteria, but logically prior. This is because DNA and RNA are viral. Why? Because they are loops of physical substance that become symbolic when you put them in the right medium—for instance, ribosomes that "read" the DNA code and cause it to replicate, like little factories machinating away in one's cells. Thus what is called *life* is merely this computational process executing away in what Wells calls the *infusoria*, namely the chemical soup and the entities that reproduce in that soup. In this sense, although they emerge from plants (and are substantially later than the basic machinery of plants), flowers are the logical core of plants, the way we get to see how they execute; and indeed flowers are viral machines that force entities like bees to help reproduce them. A logical core that is visible to the naked eye.

There is a reason why tropes are called flowers. This is because flowers are also algorithmic procedures, plots of algorithms rather than pictures of something deeper. This is what disturbs about plants and flowers and rhetoric: they just execute. There is often something slightly evil, for a certain sort of philosopher, about this flowering—otherwise known as the aesthetic. Charles Baudelaire was able to write *The Flowers of Evil* because flowers *are* somewhat evil: they just happen. Simply liking flowers for no reason allows Kant to dive into the aesthetic experience of beauty, which is liking things for no good reason at all.[35] Beauty gives me an empirical version of the phenomenon–thing gap because I just like this flower phenomenon, but I cannot peel it open to see what exactly I like. There is no active ingredient of beauty as it were, either in the flower or in my subjectivity. The flower is a weird loop: it takes me out of myself and yet returns me to myself, as if there were something in me that is not me—which, for Kant, of course is technically correct, since my reason is not really me, and the beauty experience is evidence of that not-me-ness.

Thus the aesthetic experience is also a kind of flower, which is to say that it is a kind of virus, which is to say that it is a strange loop that makes more of itself via thinking, in which it unfolds like a parasite in a host. To feel beauty is to acknowledge that one is always already infected with a virus. Isn't that the point of reading a poem, as Plato

worried—to reproduce the demonic (which is to say causal) energy that flows through it, in other words, to replicate an algorithm for no reason?

The tightest loop we can imagine that enacts or indeed *computes* this circle of me and not-me, of thinking and the thought that is parasitic on the thinking, is Narcissus gazing at himself for no reason, entranced by his own image, and for that very reason turning into a flower. It is this peculiar viral supplement of me, my thinking and the thoughts I'm having: this is what Hegel, eliminative psychologism, then speculative realist horror are warding off. If we were to force this horror to speak, it might say something like: "This thought is not a loop." Or it might say "This sentence is not a self-swallowing snake." Or "I am not a self-fellating narcissist." "There is no loop. I am looking at reality, not my reflection. I am outside of reflection." We can force the horror to speak in the same way that we can force a coherent logical system to say strangely recursive things, like "This sentence cannot be proved."[36] Its seemingly watertight coherence can be forced to speak about itself, in a weird self-reference. What is warded off in speculative realism takes the form of a *circle*, the correlationist circle in which I make things real by interacting with them, or opening them, or adding my Da-sein to them. Don't we detect in this hostility concerning the correlationist circle a phobia about loops, and moreover the aesthetic, since the correlationist circle is a loop that the aesthetic experience exemplifies? Thus the favorite term of accusation by the Hegelian (for whom A=A is the evil loop) and the speculative realist (for whom it is the correlationist circle) is *narcissist*.

The tightest loop we can imagine that enacts or indeed *computes* this circle of me and not-me, of thinking and the thought that is parasitic on the thinking, is Narcissus gazing at himself for no reason.

Is it not possible that the hostility to correlationism exposes not a fear of the subject imposing its will on things, but just the reverse—the fear that for reason to grasp the object, there must always already be unspeakable, given things: a thing such as a flower or a poem, and reason, for instance, the invisible ocean behind my head? And thus the hostility against narcissism is actually hostility against the idea that my free will is overrated, and that *I am an object-like entity*.

Hegel papers over the phenomenon–thing gap by asserting that since I can think the gap, there is no gap. The speculative realist reverses this operation, instead trying to explode the gap.[37] The strategy is akin to psychologistic logic's materialism, hence the turn of some speculative realists to eliminative materialism. Yet despite the attempt to think "the world without us," there is a pervasive feeling, a pervasive subject position that hosts this thinking: horror. Horror is supposed to lie outside of the dreaded narcissistic loop. Yet *horror is the loop par excellence*, as any glance at Oedipus will affirm: the logic of modernity is such that the computational devices (both machinic and mental) that measure the downfall of the human and the human lifeworld are also implicated in that downfall. The detective finds out that he is the criminal.

"I am not a narcissist" is precisely a *hilarious* version of the loop in question, because it depends on the paradoxical sentence "This sentence is not in a loop." Like Sauron, all the energy of denial (Hegel, psychologism, eliminative materialism, epistemological forms of speculative realism) is bent on avoiding this hilarity at all costs, which is what makes it a little bit hilarious at another level. Another word for this hilarity is *feminine*. As in French feminism—Luce Irigaray theorizes this best—what is being disavowed is a self-touching entity that is thus both auto-affecting and hetero-affecting at the same time, without a thin bright line between auto- and hetero-affection.[38] Without the understanding of paradoxical loops opened up by Victorian and post-Victorian logic (Georg Cantor, Kurt Gödel) and by deconstruction and French feminism, speculative realism is doomed to repeat Victorian horror to kingdom come.

Isn't this what the avant-gardist art of modernity (from 1790 to about last week) is desperately trying to ward off, the demonic version of beauty for no reason, otherwise known as kitsch? Kitsch being the enjoyment thingies of the other—how we see the other caught by a thing, stuck in a loop of enjoyment with some inadequate (to our eyes) thing. What does she or he see in it? So that the zero degree of the phobic aesthetic object—that is the one that tells us the open secret of how the world actually works—would be a certain Pre-Raphaelite (even better, a derivative version of that style) painting of Narcissus? (The dreaded art of the Pre-Raphaelites, both "culinary"—Adorno's term—and aestheticist.)[39] Like John William Waterhouse's *Echo and Narcissus*. Along with the strange loop in the foreground, what fascinates about Waterhouse's painting is the background: the water, the tree, the meadow in the middle distance. What are we seeing here? The space of agrilogistics, planned and exclusive of the weird loop in the foreground? Or some more ancient space, the savannah watering hole, peered into by the thirsty human?

When we put disillusionment into a loop, modernity collapses. The ecological awareness that completes and thus ends modernity must therefore involve the laughter of this loop.

The great disillusionment is the tragic loop modernity is stuck on. Yet when forced to speak, this loop becomes a comic one. Without avoiding the nihilism of the great disillusionment, we should instead become disillusioned about disillusion. When we put disillusionment into a loop, modernity collapses. The ecological awareness that completes and thus ends modernity must therefore involve the laughter of this loop.

Yet this laughter is found with the melancholia that comes with noticing the vastness of the loop, its ten-thousand-year agrilogistical scope, let alone its hundred-thousand-year future. The laughter, if it is at all possible, is found in the possibility of hearing a sound from outside a certain field, or outside agrilogistical fielding altogether. John Keats imagines it as hearing the call of a nonhuman that recedes beyond the horizon, and perhaps beyond all horizoning, from a time or space that is routinely dismissed as primitive or, and this is a favorite modern term of abuse, merely aesthetic. A call that comes

John William Waterhouse
ECHO AND NARCISSUS, 1903
Oil on canvas, 109.2 x 189.2 cm
Photograph provided by the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

not as a cry of nature, that agrilogistical product shorn of ambiguity and pretense, but precisely as the ambiguous charm of appearance itself, and thus a call to which contemporary humans—including contemporary humanists—are studiously deaf. A call, fading and untraceable, that resonates with dark nihilism, not with happy nihilism:

> Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
> No hungry generations tread thee down;
> The voice I hear this passing night was heard
> In ancient days by emperor and clown:
> Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
> Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
> She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
> The same that oft-times hath
> Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.
>
> Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
> To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
> Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
> As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.
> Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
> Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
> Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
> In the next valley-glades:
> Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
> Fled is that music—Do I wake or sleep?
> —Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale"[40]

The call of an uncanny home resonates in "forlorn." Faint, degraded, barely audible, this signal emanates from a space alien to the "alien corn" of agrilogistics. This space is again audible, terribly—both degraded and disturbing—now that the entire surface of earth and its biosphere are subject to drastic climate change. The shrink-wrapping of earth in happy nihilism cannot be completed, for ontological reasons given here. There is always a remainder, a faint sound that can only be experienced as a wavering, tricksterish illusion. An illusion that, moreover, is passed over as aestheticist narcissism, in the mad dash to the false exit, nature. It is ironic that this illusion bears within it the structure of ecological awareness, in which the reality of things is precisely their sparkling nothingness.

Notes

1 Wells, *The War of the Worlds*, 7.

2 Diamond, "The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race," (*Discover Magazine*, May 1987).

3 Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia*, 6–7.

4 Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 381–90, 419–41.

5 Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, 12–14.

6 Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*.

7 Crutzen and Stoermer, "The 'Anthropocene'" (IGBP newsletter, 2000).

8 Marx, *Capital*, 1:496–97, 499.

9 Ibid., 1:506–8.

10 Harman *Tool-Being,* 4–5, 25–26, 35, 134–35, 166–67, 170–71, 198–99, 210, 232–33.

11 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 84–85; A45–A47/B63–64.

12 Ibid.

13 Lacan, "Kant with Sade."

14 Lacan, *The Psychoses*, 38; translation modified.

15 Derrida, "No Apocalypse, Not Now."

16 Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses."

17 Derrida, "No Apocalypse, Not Now," 22.

18 Sesame Street, "We Are All Earthlings," *Sesame Street Platinum All-Time Favorites* (Sony, 1995); USA for Africa, "We Are the World" (Columbia, 1985).

19 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 55; 265e.

20 Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 160.

21 Husserl, "Prolegomena to Pure Logic."

22 Clark, "Derangements of Scale," in *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change*, edited by Tom Cohen.

23 There is a strange anticipation here of Uexküll's tick, which waits for the scent of butyric acid (Uexküll, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*, 45–48).

24 Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:136; §26.

25 Ibid., 1:137n13; §26.

26 John Llewelyn, Question and answer period after the talk "Barbarism, Humanism and Democratic Ecology" (International Association for Environmental Philosophy, University of Oregon, Eugene, June 20, 2008).

27 Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, 75, and elsewhere.

28 Wells, *The War of the Worlds*, 21–22.

29 Ibid., 18.

30 Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet*, 104.

31 It is not a coincidence, argues Graham Harman, that the first four philosophers of speculative realism are fans of Lovecraft. Exemplary studies from this lineage include Harman's *Weird Realism* and Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet* (esp. pp. 9, 19, 74–84, and 104).

32 Diamond, "The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race."

33 Morton, *Realist Magic*, 67–72.

34 Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:137–38; §26.

35 Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* 49; §4, 221–22; §58.

36 Gödel, "On Formally Undecidable Propositions of *Principia Mathematica* and Related Systems."

37 See for instance Meillassoux, *After Finitude*.

38 Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 205–18.

39 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 121. See Helsinger, *Poetry and the Pre-Raphaelite Arts*, 4.

40 Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale," lines 61–80. In Keats, *The Complete Poems*, 346–48.

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