Journal of Boredom Studies
Issue 1, 2023, pp. 1-21
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8028125
https://www.boredomsociety.com/jbs

Make the Holocene Great Again! Or, Why Is Climate Change Boring?

MICHAEL E. GARDINER
University of Western Ontario, Canada
megardin@uwo.ca
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4727-7181

How to cite this paper: Gardiner, M. E. (2023). Make the Holocene Great Again! Or, Why Is Climate Change Boring?. *Journal of Boredom Studies*, *1*. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8028125

Abstract: This article addresses the conundrum: if climate change is an "existential threat" to our species and the integrity of our entire planetary ecosystem, why is climate change "boring" for even informed, well-meaning individuals? Three main areas will be addressed. The first task is to discuss how "boredom" itself can be characterized as a relatively coherent and valid analytical concept, and how it might be linked to the climate crisis specifically, through sociology of emotion and psychoanalytical approaches. Second, climate change's ontological status as what Timothy Morton calls "hyperobjects" will be examined – entities so complex, and extended across almost limitless time and space, they cannot be comprehended by our usual analogies, perceptions, and metrics. Boredom looms here as affective and libidinal disengagement protecting the psyche from the hyperobject's unsettling effects of cognitive overreach and emotional dissonance. The third theme is "climate apocalypticism": endless reiterations of our dystopian future, it is argued, evince a monotonous similarity, resulting in emotional exhaustion, melancholia, and morose resignation – and ultimately boredom. The article's conclusion will focus on some of the ways in which "climate boredom" might prompt a more critical and engaged collective responses to the climate emergency.

Keywords: apocalypse, boredom, climate crisis, emotions, hyperobjects.

Received 13 August 2022; Accepted 10 June 2023.

1. Introduction

As nuclear winter turns to ever-hotter summers, it is worth asking: why is climate change a boring topic for so many? After all, in a phrase beloved by climate activists, and a few high-profile (if grossly hypocritical) politicians, global warming represents an "existential" threat to the very continuity of our species, as well as the integrity of our entire planetary ecosystem. If we take this danger at face value, as pretty much every qualified climate scientist does, it should constitute a clarion-call for governments, industry, and the general populace to mobilize all available resources for transitioning to a post-carbon world as quickly as possible. And yet, an underlying ennui widely persists – not those who more generally skew conservative on such issues, but also for informed, well-meaning individuals with otherwise impeccably "progressive" *bona fides*. A quick Google search reveals – although it would be remiss not to point out that each of these generates 0.2 grams of CO2, which, multiplying by roughly 3.5 billion searches *every day*, is itself a major contributor to global carbon emissions (Cubitt, 2017, p. 18) – the conflation of climate change with words like "boring" or "boredom" is commonplace. For instance, under the byline "Melting glacier? Yawn," Guardian staff writer Owen Jones (2015) files global warming under the "worthy but dull" column. Similarly, in a roughly contemporaneous *Der Spiegel* interview, filmmaker Randy Olson (2013) berates climate scientists for framing the issue in putatively "boring" statistical and graphical terms that fail to communicate a compellingly effective narrative to a broader audience. These are not the views of climate skeptics by any stretch – Jones is probably the most prominent standard-bearer of the Left writing in The Guardian today, whereas Olson is a trained scientist and worked as an environmental researcher before becoming a documentarian. Each dutifully regards climate change in the era of the "Anthropocene" – the current geological period as defined by the effects of human industrial activity – as a profoundly important issue that needs to be addressed urgently. And yet it seemingly remains a remote and abstract concern, dryly technical in its myriad details and perhaps overwhelming in its complexity, to the point of projecting a blank obscurantism. The situation is doubtless complicated by a well-organized and lavishly-funded climate denialist movement intent on minimizing or trivializing the threat – it is certainly worth noting that the very term "climate change," although it dates from the late 1970s, was actively promoted by Republican political strategist and climate skeptic Frank Luntz in the 1990s precisely for its neutral, anodyne – nay, boring qualities (Flam, 2014). This "weaponization" of mass boredom undercuts the urgency implied by the earlier, and much more accurate phrase "global warming." Nor, on the other hand, is it helped by a climate movement that is reflexively prone to a doubtless earnest, but often dour sanctimoniousness, rhetorically expressed as finger-wagging moralism that helps turn "virtue-signalling" into something of a competitive sport – in a word, pretty boring stuff, at least to many.

The present article seeks to delve deeper into this seeming paradox – the "existential threat" of climate change that nonetheless oftentimes presents itself either as intimidatingly convoluted, or dull as proverbial dishwater (and sometimes both simultaneously). Our discussion will be organized around the following lines. The first task is to advance an overarching interpretive framework whereby "boredom" itself can be characterized as a relatively coherent and valid analytical concept. The key insight here is that, in the words of sociologist Mariusz Finkielsztein (2021, p. 6), boredom can be understood as "an emotion/feeling of engagement

withdrawal from interactions with the social/physical environment due to a sense of meaninglessness." Taking this definition as our touchstone, we will supplement Finkielsztein's more sociological approach with certain psychoanalytical ideas as to how boredom operates as a symptom of malaise at some level of individual and societal psychosocial functioning – a "coping mechanism" protecting the ego-constitution of selves facing up to a debilitating loss of sense-making capability, a lapse or failure of psychological and behavioural adaptation. In the specifically Lacanian version, this concerns the unconscious process of shoring up an idealized, fantasy version of subjecthood so as to avoid a potentially destabilizing and painful encounter with the "Real," which for us is the "capitalist unconscious" of class divisions and the systematic exploitation of the natural world, and the constraints these might offer *vis-à-vis* our pursuit of "surplus enjoyment." But since the moment of "authentic" or pure *jouissance* is always deferred, late-capitalist individuals are typically locked into problematic and habitualized libidinal attachments that end up in disappointment, of which boredom can be symptomatic.

Such briefly-delineated positions might be suggestive, but how can a psychosocial understanding of boredom be marshalled to shed light on our individual and collective (non-)responses to the perilously threatening nature of climate change specifically (which can, of course, take many different forms, boredom being only one particular manifestation)? That is, what is it about the climate phenomenon as such that prompts such feelings of helplessness and abjuration? Part of the answer, as intimated, involves the realization that socioeconomic forces and their contradictions are by no means separate from day-to-day subjective life; indeed, the former are registered profoundly in myriad intrapsychic tensions and conflicts. Just as capitalism recognizes no natural or sociopolitical limits to the accumulative drive, for example, an individual's libidinal economy does not countenance any external constraints on its maniacal yet ultimately doomed pursuit of *jouissance*. And, further, since modern capitalism is necessarily premised on massive hydrocarbon extraction, refinement, transportation, and consumption, our libidinal investments are intertwined inextricably with our fossil-fuelled economy, especially in the form of that peculiar, yet commonplace subjective profile Cara Daggett (2018) calls "petro-masculinity." Importantly, these bindings, identifications, and cathexes operate at a fundamentally unconscious level – or, to be more precise, they allow for a certain degree of conscious recognition, combined with obfuscation and de-legitimation through strategies of disavowal in another, ultimately more pragmatic and efficacious sense. Such libidinal dispositions are not "rational"; and, because of this non-coincidence of knowledge and enjoyment, the Enlightenment conceit that the mere accessibility of scientifically valid information will lead more or less automatically to "correct" behaviour (as regards the climate issue, and so many others), is revealed as misguided at best. This further implies that any viable politics of climate change will have to address the psychodynamics of desire as these are formulated and organized at the societal level, and concomitantly what Byung-Chul Han (2021) astutely refers to as capitalism's underlying "death drive."

A key text conjoining the study of mundane emotional and subjective life, on the one hand, and the unfolding climate emergency, on the other, is Kari Marie Norgaard's (2011) *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life*. As discussed below, Norgaard's book is valuable because it explains convincingly how climate denialism is socially-organized and

managed emotionally by the generally privileged denizens of the Global North's metropole. However, it has relatively little to say about *why* climate change is so often seen as a "wicked," nay insurmountable problem of a sort that often triggers affective responses like boredom or other strategies of distancing and disavowal. In the present article, two central phenomena will be highlighted in order to supplement and extend the pathbreaking research of Norgaard and others. First, it will be argued we need to confront climate change's ontological status as what humanities scholar Timothy Morton (2013) famously calls "hyperobjects" – phenomena extending across vast immensities of time and space (evolution, the biosphere, and climate), and which are, by any standard, fiendishly opaque and complicated. As hyperobjects are felt by Morton to transcend the human scale of perceptual experience, they are exceedingly difficult to grasp, and it is equally hard to imagine how any tangible degree of conscious agency, individual or collective, could be exercised over them. In response to such singularities, one person's awe-struck sublimity is (arguably, much more commonly) another's barely stifled yawn, mainly because problems that cannot be effectively managed cognitively, experientially, or practically are often instantiated as boredom. This segues into our second major theme, that of "climate apocalypse." Such a trope typically attaches itself, remora-like, to discussions of global warming - especially when ecomodernist prophecies of a "good" or even "great" Anthropocene seem increasingly remote, if not downright absurd. Curiously, the "structure of feeling" accompanying the catastrophist mindset is prone to a similar dialectical reversal bedeviling hyperobjects. To wit, reflections on the *non plus ultra* of a post-human futurity eventually lose their initial charm, if that is the right word, not least because they are futile attempts to chart cognitively what cannot be so mapped. However, endless reiterations of dystopian apocalypticism in mainstream narratives evince a monotonous similarity that eventually reaches a point, symptomatically, of psychic exhaustion, melancholia, and morose resignation – and hence of the "normalization" of apocalypse by rendering it coherent, all-too-familiar, and ultimately, as Maurice Blanchot (1997) noted, "disappointing." The paradox here is that whereas endlessly recurring confrontations with the ineffable can induce boredom, so it is with phenomena that are all-too transparently knowable, predictable, and mundanely "ordinary." A brief conclusion will address in particular the question of whether "climate boredom" necessarily leads to denialism and fatalism, or might, in its ambivalent and polyvalent guise, be "repurposed" or at least problematized so as to help envisage different collective futures, for humans and the planetary ecosystem alike.

2. Boredom, Denialism, and the Climate Crisis

As mentioned above, Kari Marie Norgaard's (2011) *Living in Denial* provides us with a useful *point d'entrée* with regard to the nexus linking boredom and climate change. Here, Norgaard develops the general argument that emotions are situated in, and actively sustained by, the profane interactions of everyday life. Moreover, evoking C. W. Mills' notion of the "sociological imagination," such emotions mediate wider sociopolitical, economic, and indeed ecosystemic forces on the one hand, and micro-level psychosocial dynamics on the other. Although it draws extensively on existing literature in social psychology and the sociology of emotions, what makes this particular study distinctive is that it is grounded in ethnographic work conducted in northern Norway during the stunning mild Winter of 2001-2 (during which ski hills could not open, and

lake ice proved too fragile to support fishing), together with a comparative analysis of American attitudes towards climate and more theoretical reflections. When it came to dealing in sociocultural terms with the disturbing thoughts engendered over the course of this particular Winter and its immediate aftermath (which had very tangible socioeconomic consequences, such as a notable decline in tourism), Norgaard found that the Norwegian communities she investigated developed a series of specific, affectively-charged strategies of avoidance and denial so as to safely neutralize, at least in psychological terms, the looming threat of environmental catastrophe. This has the additional effect of performatively upholding current manifestations of power and privilege in a grossly unequal and hyper-exploitative world. Despite many local and national peculiarities (such as the average Norwegian's professed attachment to simple pleasures and love of accessible wilderness, a somewhat affected stance given their typically affluent lifestyles and extensive reliance on oil and gas revenues for welfare-state largess), Norgaard makes it clear that the modes of denialism at work here are by no means foreign to other nations in the Global North. These include dealing with fear and a lingering sense of "ontological insecurity" by directing attention elsewhere, perhaps to more tangible or "positive" things (the rejuvenation of a local park, starting a municipal recycling program); parrying threats to one's self-identity by various rationalizations (one is environmentally aware, but also needs to "fit in" and be a "normal" person; or does "good deeds" through the pursuit of so-called "green" consumerism, and so forth); and finally, giving into helplessness and fatalism, by embracing the feeling that, although the threat is undeniable, nothing effective on the scale demanded by the climate crisis can really be done; assuaging guilt by implicatory displacement (attributing the "real" blame to elites, larger nations, immigrants with large families) (Norgaard, 2011, p. 80). Through cultivating such a repertoire of Goffmanesque "impression management" skills in everyday social contexts, one can "know," and yet simultaneously "not know" about (in this case) the climate issue. It is through the consolidation of this "double reality" that such glaring contradictions are managed emotionally, although of course at considerable psychological and social (and environmental) cost.

The wider point Norgaard is striving to make is not only that emotions constitute the terrain wherein wider social structures intermesh with subjective life, but that such processes are not passive. They require active and ongoing psychic-corporeal work in distinct, socially-organized ways, through such commonplace devices as adhering to "conversation norms" (ostensibly weighty issues might be aired in ordinary talk, but defused through the inherently non-serious medium of "idle chatter," or via strategies of humour and ironic detachment); a preoccupation with the immediate and particular, which seems to be a pervasive feature of everyday life (see Heller, 1984), marked as it is by an "extended present" apparently unflustered by the "deep time" implications of the Anthropocene or other hyperobjects; and the maintenance of what Michael Billig (1999) calls "collective amnesia" through tacit and largely invisible social routines of deflection, mystification, and "willful forgetting." Needless to say, what organizes and gives shape to all these numerous practices and affective deployments is the overarching power structure, which delimits and sanctions what is possible to feel and say and act on, through the usual hegemonic means of culture, media, and education, in ways that are ultimately congruent with the unfettered operation of what Andreas Malm (2016) calls "fossil capital."

By any standard, Norgaard's book is a rich and engaging response to the question of why and how climate denialism is arbitrated in emotional terms and sustained in and through various ordinary social practices. And, although she doesn't cite these authors, Norgaard's nuanced account of a "double reality" discursively acknowledging the reality of major, systemic problems, whilst at the same time failing to advocate changing anything of substance, finds considerable support in such complementary notions as Peter Sloterdijk's (1987) "enlightened false consciousness," or Slavoj Žižek's (1989) "fetishistic disavowal." Each of these concepts serve to draw our attention to the ongoing, lived contradiction between "knowing" and "doing" most of us are intimately familiar with. At the same time, however, from our point of view there are certain limitations in Norgaard's study that requires some fine-tuning and supplementation. First, although she speaks of a multifarious "tool kit" we develop collectively in order to deal emotionally with the spectre of global warming, the specific phenomenon of "boredom" is only mentioned in passing, as part of a broader discussion of conversations culled from ethnographic material. This oversight is consistent with the broader literature, which, with the exception of a recent and very brief "position paper" by Ben Anderson (2023), fails to explicitly include boredom in the range of affective responses to, and engagements with, sociogenic climate change. Second, Norgaard has little to say about unconscious processes *per se*, with or without reference to boredom, whereas it will be argued here that recent developments in psychoanalytic theory that bear directly on the tenor of subjective life under neoliberal capitalism can help us to sharpen our focus and better clarify the issues at stake.

Perhaps a way into this discussion is to evoke the words of Fredric Jameson (2008, p. 465) from a somewhat different context: that boredom, understood broadly as an emotional state marked by lassitude and disaffection, is something akin to "repression, a neurotic denial, a preventive shutting off of affect, which itself finally reconfirms the vital threat of its object," thereby allowing us to pursue the "lesser evil" of avoiding deep anxiety and dread. This neatly sums up many of our preoccupations here: in facing up to the colossal implications of climate change, which threaten at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels (up to and including the biophysical stability of the planetary ecosystem itself), there are a number of psychosocial and behavioural responses available to us, as Norgaard demonstrates by her notion of a "tool-kit" for climate avoidance. These might range from passionate engagement with the most militant wing of climate movement aiming to actively disrupt the fossil infrastructure itself, all the way to aggressive, petro-masculinist denialism, with its fierce opposition to even acknowledging the existence of the climate emergency. Between these extremes, however, are a spectrum of possibilities, many already touched on above, but boredom (as we have argued here) can be singled out for being one of the commonest. This might well have something to do with boredom being a primarily negative, passive state, a slackening or enervation of affective investment (which isn't to say that it cannot spark more agential and consequential outcomes). If we understand that today's pervasive sense of unease and disquiet is largely attributable to what cultural theorist E. Ann Kaplan (2015) calls "pre-traumatic stress disorder," manifested when faced with constant intimations of imminent, planetary-wide disaster (in conventional news sources, but also popular culture and social media feeds), the grief work required to maintain psychic equilibrium presents itself here as offputtingly *hard* and ultimately thankless emotional labour. In this context, boredom - understood as pre-emptive "shutting off of affect," so as to

protect the ego's sense of integrity and maintain a semblance of humdrum but compensatory "normalcy" – offers us the path of least resistance.

Boredom can appear, in short, when the post-Holocene world appears to lack coherence and sense, because it is uncanny and uncognizable and hence intimidates and frightens and makes seemingly impossible demands on us. This opens up a yawning fissure between self and world, the latter often appearing dull and lackluster, bereft of possibility, emptied-out. Of course, there is also the implicit preservation of privileged self-interest at play here too, albeit tinged with an undercurrent of guilt and remorse: all the experiences and things that are supposed to make modern life worthwhile and pleasurable (for those who can afford them, effortless mobility, the cosmopolitan availability of exotic foodstuffs and commodities, the blithe taken-for-grantedness of "limitless" energy sources), turn out on a moment's reflection to be many of the selfsame reasons for the climate catastrophe itself. Climate change presents us with the aforementioned "wicked problem" that avails no easy solution, certainly not by swapping out EVs for gas-powered vehicles, or nuclear for coal-fired power plants, given today's exponentially-intensifying levels of extractivism, rampant over-consumption, and environmental devastation (see Swyngedouw, 2022). Put differently, the climate emergency presents a clear and present challenge to the dominant ideological mindset as to how contemporary societies themselves, at their very fundament, should be organized, which is why the bogyman of the "Great Reset" as envisaged by climate denialists on the Right has more than a grain of truth about it (see Žižek, 2023). Part of climate change's insurmountability is that is seems to be (and is) a sweeping, multi-generational conundrum, implying a difficult-to-comprehend level of individual and collective engagement and responsibility, but also one lacking any sort of clear-but and narratively satisfying "conclusion" (a pervasive theme running through Stephen Markley's harrowing climate novel *The Deluge*). French thinker Georges Bataille's (2004, p. 8) pithy formulation "Boredom is in things done halfway" captures this well. Again, only problems that are widely considered "solvable" in some tangible and time-delimited way are generally considered to be worthy of sustained cognitive and affective attention – which, incidentally, also helps explain why the neverendemic of Covid-19 is putatively "boring."

But, more specifically, what might psychoanalytical theory, particularly in its more recent Lacanian iterations, add to our understanding of boredom? There are several insights that are worth emphasizing here. The first might be Freud's image of the self as a fractured, internally-divided entity that strives to maintain a semblance of ego-integrity against all manner of (real and imaginary, internal and external) threats. In shadow-boxing with such perceived dangers, and adhering simultaneously to the pursuit of the "pleasure principle" (which can take creative or destructive forms), the Freudian self relies on largely unconscious techniques of avoidance and denial, rationalization or sublimation, which, in an era that places a premium on an untethered "sovereign individualism" and the objectification of pretty much all interpersonal ties, encourages a narcissistic interiority. Famously, however, what is repressed returns to haunt the subject, through compulsive object attachments and repulsions that often display disturbing emotional and somatic irruptions of one kind or another. Jacques Lacan qualifies this scenario, adding the premise that our relation to the world is always filtered through a fantastical, idealized version of ourselves, which is part and parcel of an overarching "Symbolic Order" constituting

the stuff of everyday life itself. The Symbolic Order polices the boundaries of the acceptable and the possible, providing "magical solutions" to the looming presence of the Real by directing the self's libidinal investments towards particular ends, in tightly scripted ways. This helps shore up the fantasy version of the self, but at the cost of projecting the world as completed and essentially unchangeable. Quests for "authentic" and fulfilling relations with the world are always frustrated, hemmed in by the authoritative voice of the Symbolic Order and the narcissistic and monadistic ego-ideal it promotes.

The twist in the tale is something the Lacanian Left brings to the table: that the effective functioning of capitalism itself actually *depends* on the perennial dissatisfaction of the subject, the impossibility of finding and sustaining rich and fulfilling life-experiences, hence on the *absence* of libidinal enjoyment, which is forever (and necessarily) deferred. Our deep psychic investment in the false promise of satisfaction entails our unconscious (or at least disavowed) submission to the very rudiments of capitalist accumulative logic itself. Indeed, we derive perverse satisfaction from habitually repeating unfulfilling activities of failure and loss, consistently denying ourselves that which we ostensibly desire (see McGowan, 2016). But although the Symbolic Order and the fantastical constructions it upholds enables us to avoid a reckoning with the "Real," this cannot be sustained indefinitely, because the former can never successfully contain the unruly nature of the latter. At some level, we realize that perpetual disillusionment, forever waiting without real expectation, eventually manifests as boredom, what Antonello Correale (2018, p. 5) describes as "an acute perception of a fundamental lack in the human subject." Again, for Left interpreters of Lacan the Real is a specifically *capitalist* phenomenon, constituted by systemic societal conflicts and incongruities that always disturb fragile psychic equilibria in *sub rosa* fashion – or to be more precise, this Real is equally the *petro-capitalist* unconscious, which means it is necessarily linked to the hyperobjective "uncanny" of the Anthropocene and the climate apocalypse it intimates (see Bould, 2021). As such, boredom here might not simply inure us fatalistically to catastrophic outcomes, but suggest ways to "traverse the fantasy," of "put[ting] us into relation with the real" (Coreale, 2018, p. 7). As there is nothing "realer" than climate change, this can force us to consider alternate possibilities going forward, rather than simply fall back on endless "repair work" with respect to the original fantasy constructions and the narcissistic dead-ends and perverse repetitions they foster. Indeed, as Samo Tomšič (2015, p. 228) notes, without the recurring suspension of libidinal investment that boredom provides, that is to say if undiluted and uninterrupted *jouissance* through the compulsions of hyper-productivism and consumption really were possible, it would "inaugurate a new, more radical and invisible form of exploitation."

To conclude this section, it is worth noting that that Left psychoanalytical readings of disavowal and boredom, at least in some ways, dovetail with German Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch's critique of Freud. For Bloch (1986), the human imaginarium is not simply, or even primarily, an artefact of past experiences, whether individual or societal (intra-familial childhood traumas, the "primal horde"), but rather *anticipatory*, wherein human desires, specifically the drive to overcome existential "lack," is aligned with the immense gravitational pull of *future* possibilities, whether positive or negative. Whereas the Freudian model is inherently conservative (we are unavoidably the product of past circumstances, with only a garden-variety,

everyday unhappiness to look forward to), Bloch's perspective is fundamentally open-ended, and hence liberatory, because premised on the "principle of hope" and the "not-yet" it embodies. Specific utopian visions aside – and here Bloch is much more concerned with the transformational *function* of utopian dreaming than the *content* of any utopia – even an attunement to potentially dystopian futures can encourage action in the here-and-now to avoid worst-case outcomes. "If modernity dreamed of the future," as Nils Burbandt (2017, p. 137) suggests, "the Anthropocene dreams of the present as seen from the future, a perspectival shift that makes our necropolitics apparent to ourselves in the starkest of lights." We will return to this question in our concluding remarks, but for time being let us turn to more specific examples of the connection between climate change and boredom.

3. Climate as "Uncanny" Hyperobject

A common rhetorical trope in the literature about climate change is to catalogue in detail the viscerally horrific nature of the eco-catastrophes that we face, and that, by most accounts, will only intensify in the years to come. We shall refrain from this exercise here, as it can be safely assumed that any potential reader is already well-apprised of this reality (and also because it has become a deadening, and often quite boring gesture). However, in line with our earlier comments on how the unfolding climate emergency profoundly disorients and threatens our increasingly fragile sense of "ontological security" and well-being, it is worth mentioning James Bridle's (2018) argument that, whereas earth's biophysical systems have exhibited a relatively high degree of stability and consistency over the course of the geological era that is now effectively behind us – namely, the Holocene – we are entering a world of such rapid change that pretty much all our past experiences and the practical wisdoms and knowledges that accompany them, painstakingly accumulated over millennia by our entire species and archived for future prognostic use, has become largely redundant. Indeed, denotative language itself starts to bleed referential sense – for example, the word "permafrost" - as we acquire an entirely new lexicon of unfamiliar phrases like "heat domes," "polar vortexes" or "atmospheric rivers" to describe the terrifying effects of a global climate out of kilter. There are many such ironies at play here, as exemplified by Bridle's (2018, pp. 73–74) somewhat offhand remark that rising CO2 levels in the atmosphere significantly degrades human cognitive capacity – in other words, if humans are too damn stupid to effectively address climate change *now*, what will happen in successive decades when this species-level intellectual deterioration *really* kicks in?

The key point is that an exponential increase in the overarching complexity and random perturbations of planetary-wide systems neatly exemplifies Morton's aforementioned hyperobject. First mooted in his *The Ecological Thought* (2010), this is a class of phenomenon lacking clearly-delineated properties or comportments, and exists in a nebulous realm that cannot be easily fathomed by human observation, intellect, or imagination. This opacity occurs because of a "transcendental gap" existing between the thing itself and any comprehensible data we can accrue and analyze about it, which means the latter can only proffer tiny slivers of insight into the workings of any hyperobject. Focussing specifically on the climate issue, Morton echoes Bridle in suggesting that, because there is no longer any "base" horizon on which human thoughts, perceptions, and actions can be reliably premised, the world we have come to know

and inhabit over the course of the Holocene *is already dead*. In a post-Holocene world, we must reimagine our place in relation to the shifting sands of this unprecedented ontological transformation, and forge radically new, less "Promethean" relations with non-human biologies and inorganic powers. As a way of making this more tangible, Morton (2010, p. 28) suggests that weather used to be something we could witness directly and comprehend, and hence reasonably construe as a mere backdrop for human affairs, despite occasional extreme events. But when our weather effectively becomes *climate*, in full breakdown mode, everything changes.

We might, on a wholly rational level, "understand" that this new reality upends older notions of a strict culture/nature divide, and also makes us dimly aware of our enmeshment in a "deep time" unfolding in a manner that is, by human standards, relatively incognizable. Yet, what does it actually mean to say that our carbon output *right now* will have consequential effects on the global climate for the next 100,000 years? One common response might be: who knows, or more to the point, who cares? As it is not a meaningful question in human terms by reference to our usual analogies, perceptions, and metrics, and essentially impossible to grasp in any totalizing sense, it is, dare it be said, boring. There are ostensibly more interesting pursuits, like gambling on cryptocurrencies or watching cat videos on YouTube. This not meant facetiously or intended to evoke, say, class snobbery, because it is not strictly a matter of intelligence, educational background, or due diligence. Morton repeatedly underscores the point that we can think long and hard about hyperobjects, but it does not necessarily bring any clarity to the proceedings. Unlike with regard to sociocultural phenomena (or so social scientists tell themselves), we cannot deploy our "hermeneutics of suspicion" to peel back the layers of illusion enveloping the hyperobject, thereby revealing the essential "truth" hidden inside. Rather, all we can do here is partially and indirectly intuit scattered "figments and fragments of doom" (Morton, 2013, p. 153) that relate obliquely to an entity fabricated, figuratively speaking, out of smoke and mirrors.

Morton's argument that the hyperobject of climate breakdown should (but usually fails to) prompt sweeping changes in our collective thought patterns, deeply-held cultural assumptions, and arrogant techno-utopian pretentions finds considerable support in philosopher Thomas Nail's (2021) *Theory of the Earth*. For Nail, Western modes of thinking are mired in assumptions about the "eternal" qualities of natural phenomena, understood as self-sufficient, bounded forms with inbuilt tendencies toward static states – which are mere props with respect to the *real* story, the historical drama of human endeavour (see also Chakrabarty, 2009). Developments in the biological sciences in particular over the last fifty-odd years have overturned some of these presumptions, but, for Nail, the sciences as a whole, and the wider cultural discourses that accompany them, have not fully come to terms with the kinematic qualities of the full spectrum of natural forces. This inherent dynamism encompasses not just the biological (say, the Cambrian-Ordovician extinction event), but what Nail (2021, p. 2) describes as all the "geological, atmospheric, and hydrological agents entangled in all the earth's processes" - stretching from the quantum level up to and including the vast sweep of the cosmos - and how each of these nestled domains complexly interact. Although constitutively energetic, such interconnecting processes can attain conditions of relative metastability over vast stretches of geological time. However, these equilibria can unravel in surprisingly short order, and Nail warns us that the most recent such metastability (the Holocene) is now being undermined by

human activity - or, more specifically, untrammeled capital accumulation premised on the ever-intensifying burning of fossil fuels - which degrades the planet's ability to absorb and discharge safely unimaginably large concentrations of excess energy. All this has profound and far-reaching implications which cannot be addressed here, except to note that the conceit maintained by those promoting strategies like solar geoengineering, which assumes we can continue to service the "carbon-combustion complex" while holding atmospheric temperatures to a "tolerable" level, is a strategy of criminal insanity. "The idea that humans can geo-engineer the earth, as a new capitalist frontier," Nail cautions (2021, p. 47), "is based on an outrageous ignorance of the deeper history of the earth and its entangled planetary field of circulation." To repurpose Max Horkheimer's famous witticism, those who are silent about capitalism should probably shut up about climate change.

Nail's reflections here usefully supplement Morton's concept of the hyperobject, not least because they remind us of the essential dynamism and complexity of planetary and cosmic forces, and that "nature" (in the broadest sense) is not some inherently stable and coherent entity that, because of its tendency towards self-sustaining organicity and equipoise, generously and benignly supports the flourishing of humanity. These are assumptions that are the hallmark of what Erik Swyngedouw (2022) refers to as "climate populism," erroneous because in fact the natural world is inherently prone to rupture, chaos, and dramatic shifts in metastability, and hence utterly indifferent to the continuity of human life. Indeed, the Holocene era is looking more and more like a strange anomaly, a blip of relative climactic placidity amidst a turbulent sea of constant biophysical change, and may well be turn out to be a brief interglacial period before a return to (with exquisite cosmic irony) an intensification of global cooling, due apparently to eccentricities in the Earth's orbit and other factors (see Pyne, 2022). At any rate, the deep-rooted existential anxiety all the aforementioned might provoke - not unlike Sartrean "nausea," as Morton (2013, p. 180) himself notes in passing – can mutate into boredom understood as a kind of affective and libidinal disengagement protecting the psyche from the vertiginous effects of cognitive overreach and emotional dissonance, especially when faced with the hyperobject's sublime immensity of scale. As discussed in the conclusion, this situation should not give us licence to embrace fatalistic quiescence, which might be an understandable, if self-defeating response. But it drives home the realization that our habitual reliance on business-as-usual notions of human exceptionalism or modernist hubris are hopelessly antiquated and ill-suited to the prodigious demands the post-Holocene world imposes on us.

4. Apocalyptic Boredom

Climate scientists have amassed a staggering amount of data as regards global warming, and their modeling techniques are being refined all the time, to the point where (for example) they can say with great confidence that any given mega-typhoon or firestorm is, in causal terms, the direct result of rising CO2 emissions, rather than the earlier sort of claim that the latter generates a "stochastic" environment in which the general likelihood of such events are statistically higher than "normal" (by which is meant the Holocene baseline). According to climate scientist turned activist Michael E. Mann (2021), the scientific debate has therefore been effectively settled: apart from increasingly marginalized fringe elements, it is generally accepted that massive and rapid

changes in the world's climate have clear anthropogenic (or sociogenic, or even better, *capital*ogenic) causes. Even the far right has increasingly embraced an "eco-ethno-nationalism," albeit in opportunistic and inconsistent ways (see Malm et al., 2021). Furthermore, the effects of global warming can be ascertained experientially by pretty much anyone anywhere on the planet – and given unprecedented fires recently engulfing Scandinavia's boreal forests even in Winter, or record snow and cold in Texas, there are no "safe havens." (Although, of course, the richer nations will literally and figuratively "weather the storm" better than poorer, less technologically-advanced ones located predominantly in the Global South.) Hence, it would seem climate change is no longer some nebulous abstraction, something for succeeding generations to worry about, in some hazily distant future. The extant discourse *has* largely shifted to questions of carbon mitigation or infrastructural adaptation rather than the putative reality of climate change itself, although rarely countenancing the need for a completely transfigured polis, culture, and economic system so as to maintain the Earth's climate regime within tolerable limits, leavened (hopefully) with a modicum of social justice.

But, as we have taken pains to argue here, these sorts of arguments, however data-rich, precise, and compelling – or even experientially palpable – mostly fall on deaf (or bored) ears. Fundamentally, we are faced here with the obduracy of what the late Mark Fisher (2009) termed "capitalist realism." For Fisher, the hegemonic domination of neoliberal capitalism since the 1980s, and the collapse of what used to be called "actually existing socialism," has made it difficult to envisage alternatives to the status quo. We are therefore caught on the horns of a dilemma – again, we "know" things are bad and have to change, but we also cannot imagine any viable "line of flight" out of the present conjuncture, and so we carry on as usual, albeit burdened with the "sad wisdom" of an ecological melancholy in our hearts. If capitalist realism fundamentally means a hollowing out of the social imaginary, and a debilitating loss of confidence in our collective ability to remake the world, this has significant repercussions for our discussion of boredom as it relates to climate change. Specifically, this blockage of the will manifests itself in the upsurge of apocalyptic visions as a way to sustain some illusion of meaningfulness, or at least explain why a widespread desire for some sort of reasonable post-carbon quality of life is stymied. Fredric Jameson's (1998, p. 50) viral quip that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of [fossil] capitalism" here takes on literal form. Such "morbid symptoms" are, in another evocation of Jameson, something of a "poor man's cognitive map" – and also, in distinctive fashion, inculcates mass boredom.

As touched on above, there are different ways of discharging the existential anxiety generated by the threat of ecological devastation. One is to engage in what Adrian Parr (2012) in *The Wrath of Capital* calls "displacement activities" – pursuing a commodified "lifestyle environmentalism" in which, for instance, cardboard, plastics, and glass are dutifully recycled, or "carbon-offset" products purchased, thereby enacting various ritualized forms of penitence. Obviously, we are at least latently aware that the revolution is not, in fact, but a T-shirt away, and that (for instance) most "recycled" plastic ends up in landfill to poison groundwater and cause birth defects, but, as per Žižek's "fetishistic disavowal," or Norgaard's "double reality," we do it anyway. This is because we must tell ourselves we are "doing something," maintaining the false impression that by these individual actions, we are helping to preserve the illusion of

some mythically pristine nature "out there." But what is really being performed is the affective labour necessary to shore up the boundaries of the neoliberal subject, and the "phantom" public sphere that is its corollary, thereby converting "the collectivist impulse at the core of political action into mere narcissism" (Parr, 2012, p. 19). Such displacement activities as regards the climate issue are destined to fail, because they do not go beyond the confines of our privatized and commodified life experience, and boil down to limited, basically false choices wholly circumscribed by market logic. They are the purview of capitalism's Symbolic Order, actions that are by turns palliative, accommodating, or frustrated, evincing only a mystified understanding of how capitalist realism induces the relentless homogenization, quantification, and profitable ravaging of our world. Perpetual injunctions to change one's collective way of being as a response to the environmental crisis constitute potential injuries to this narcissistic self. As such threats cannot be confronted indefinitely, they are instead deflected or discharged via ineffective and empty rituals of consumption of a repetitive, fetishistic, and hence boring nature.

Apocalypticism, to return to the central theme of this section, has a long history. As regards the millennia-old Judaeo-Christian tradition, for instance, only a catastrophic transformation of a degraded secular world could reverse humanity's fall from a prelapsidarian state of grace, and reunite a fractured and tragically flawed cosmos. In more recent times, the messianic figure that triggers catastrophe has taken on a more secular hue – the reality of emerging climate disaster is, after all, backed up by decades of hard science. Not surprisingly, this dire situation has encouraged a massive uptick in apocalyptic thinking – as seen in "cli-sci-fi" (climate science fiction), TV and film content, innumerable blog posts and Reddit fora, and the climate trauma mental health professionals have been tracking for some time. Nevertheless, a narrative of redemption through the proverbial "baptism of fire" (here literalized in the "pyrocene") remains largely intact. What is curious about this brand of apocalypticism is that it does indeed provide, in Jameson's terms, a "cognitive map," poor man's or not, tracing the liniments of end-times, so as to desperately make sense out of a chaotic and deeply unpredictable (near) future. Much dystopian imagery in film or fiction on offer today disturbs, not because it is so alienatingly remote or bizarrely defamiliarizing, but because it is only a slight recalibration of present-day realities. On the other hand, this semblance of knowledgeability is undermined by the eschatological gesture itself, because it demands the abandonment of human agency and collective will to an inescapable fate. As Žižek (2010, p. xii) reminds us, modern apocalypticism both heightens mass anxiety around the possibility of end-times, and simultaneously discharges this unease because it "normalizes" the very prospect of catastrophe itself. If we can visualize the cataclysm, even produce big-budget Hollywood films or Netflix series about it, we will not be unduly surprised if or when it transpires. Indeed, it can be viewed as a rip-roaring business opportunity, as befits the phrase "disaster capitalism" (Loewenstein, 2017). An example Žižek gives is that melting ice caps might well amplify cascading, uncontrollable climate breakdown. Yet this also opens up the polar regions to ever-more rampant forms of extractivism *vis-à-vis* oil and gas reserves that, when consumed, can only further intensify the crisis. (Not for nothing did former US President Donald Trump wish to buy, with some degree of seriousness, the entire landmass of Greenland, despite his ostensible dismissal of global warming as exaggerated or conspiracy-mongering.) The climate eschaton no longer shocks by its very unknowability.

Rather, the ideological construction presented here is that the ecological crisis can be understood and managed through existing mechanisms of governance and oversight, or else we can somehow "adapt," when it should prompt us to entertain and pursue more genuinely transformative possibilities.

We are back in the land of Fisher's "capitalist realism" here, and it is a grim and featureless place. As Blake Stewart (2021) suggests, the tropes of civilizational and ecosystemic "collapse" or "exhaustion," long the purview of certain tendencies of the Left, have more recently been mobilized by the billionaire class and its apologists to suggest that, as the current omni-crisis is terminal, it's far too late for political solutions (particularly if they involve non-starters like wealth redistribution, social reorganization, or any constraints on capital accumulation). As it will only get worse before it gets worse, the only realistic options are passive and cynical resignation or well-armed defence of one's turf. This sort of apocalypticism induces boredom because it is always more of the same, but, alternatively, imagines a singular moment of redemption providing a "magical solution" to the crisis. Whatever their narrative or stylistic differences, post-apocalyptic novels and films, notes Aris Mousoutzanis (2014, p. 28), typically evince a palpable sense of relief. Although whatever vestiges of society that persist "post-event" must cope with difficult and primitive conditions, in a sense humanity's ethical balance-sheet has been "wiped clean," the sins of our modern technological civilization expiated. Again, this represents the normalization of apocalypse and an expunging of human agency – it is the eschaton itself that done all the relevant "work" and even the judging. To paraphrase French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1994, p. 160), if the apocalypse is overrated, in part that is because it is tedious and moralistic.

Interestingly, Baudrillard seems to be riffing here on Maurice Blanchot's short essay "The Apocalypse is Disappointing," published in 1964 at the height of the Cold War nuclear standoff. Blanchot's text, which has generated an interesting set of commentaries in recent years, updating the theme of apocalypse for the climate era (see Düttmann, 2021; Zupančič, 2018), argues that the "world" can only make an appearance after the invention of the atom bomb, not as "positive" totality but only negatively, in the shadow of annihilation. Paradoxically, he says, the nuclear scenario is "enormously empty," because if it really were to occur, it would mean only non-existence for humanity, although the universe itself would persist, unperturbed. As such, the power of apocalypse lies only in the imagined threat itself, not in its actualization, which means that it is an ultimately banal, even boring phenomenon (Blanchot, 1997, p. 104). So rather than wallow in apathy and depression in the form of "commonplace nihilism," as we have literally nothing to lose facing the prospect of extermination should jolt us into a contemplation of radical possibility, of different, more solidaristic ways of organizing human societies, rather than fall back on a defence of the liberal status quo, which is itself already a dead-end. The essential difference between the threat of nuclear holocaust and the climate catastrophe, however, is that whereas the former is *imminent* (with of course the exception of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and by extension Chernobyl and Fukushima, the devastated island test sites of the South Pacific, and so on), the latter is *immanent*, as we are already soaking in it. So much CO2 has already been pumped into the atmosphere that there will be, are now, cataclysmic effects whatever transpires. Even if highly ambitious and short-term carbon mitigation targets are met, and/or some of the

more benign forms of carbon capture can be scaled up massively (insofar as the top-down, technocratic "solutions" supposedly on offer are either wholly unproven and possibly unworkable, such as the "Direct Air Capture" of carbon sequestration, or threaten to further destabilize the climate even more, like solar geoengineering, as Nail points out). Put differently, the Enlightenment conceit of the inexorable march of linear progress has been replaced by an awareness we might well have inadvertently engineered our own demise, and are to some extent locked into a future radically shaped, if not wholly predetermined, by our past and present actions. At the very least our options for avoiding disaster are tightly circumscribed, and, needless to say, "time sensitive." Regardless, as Blanchot counsels, we need to work through this "pure negativity" before we can envisage a fundamentally different future, as there is no "Archimedean point" outside the apocalyptic process where we can disinterestedly reflect on our current situation. As the apocalypse *is* a hyperobject, it cannot be wholly cognized or mastered as a totality – we will only "know" it in the very moment of annihilation itself (Düttmann, 2021, p. 3). With the climate catastrophe, however, there is no unique singularity of absolute rupture, as there would presumably be in a full-blown nuclear exchange, and so we are able to develop partial, non-totalizing, and affectively-modulated ways of knowing and feeling.

5. Conclusion

In investigating the relation between boredom and climate change, a curious duality is revealed. First, following the logic of psychoanalytic theory in particular, boredom can be read symptomatically as a psychic mechanism of distancing, denial, or obfuscation, upheld by routine, collusional sociocultural practices, through which our self-idealizations (and the dominant valuational schema, or Symbolic Order, they generally conform to) are preserved in the face of an "existential threat," albeit not without myriad consequences. At the same time, the climate crisis also seems to present itself as "objectively" boring, through banal popular culture scenarios of disaster and redemption, the trivialization effected by mainstream news sources, or the pallid exchange-values of social media. Either way, boredom is one of a number of different strategies for coping with the perhaps unsurmountable odds of the climate threat, the opaque and uncanny nature of the climate hyperobject itself, and the unraveling of many of our most cherished ideological and ontological assumptions about what the world is, and how it should work. "In boredom," writes Ben Anderson (2023, p. 5), "the future event stops being an event." And yet, it ceased being a "future event" long ago, since, as mentioned, we are already well in the thick of it. Anderson also argues that boredom is quite different than denialism per se or delayism (actively accepting the reality of climate change, but advocating putting off the necessary socioeconomic transition indefinitely), because whereas the latter are affectively-charged, boredom is about absence or lack, and hence bereft of intensity. To a considerable extent, this is true. Yet, what the research on boredom in recent years has demonstrated it that it is a fundamentally complex, dynamic, and ambivalent phenomenon, incorporating a spectrum of often contradictory experiences, subjective intensities and possibilities. For Patrice Petro (1996, p. 158), this can be explained by boredom's ambiguous status as "an empty and an overflowing conceptual category – empty because it has no ultimate, transcendent meaning, overflowing and excessive because even when it appears fixed it still contains within it definitions that are denied

or suppressed." As regards the climate issue, boredom can certainly encourage psychic avoidance or mystification in the service of fossil capital's interests, but, what Benjamin Bratton (2021) calls the "revenge of the real" can also lead to gnawing doubt and anxiety, whereby the reassuringly familiar ordinariness of daily life are overwhelmed by the pressure of wider events and developments that unsettle and vex and demand a less evasive response. In more Lacanian terms, then, climate boredom can be understood, at least in some instances, as a "disturbing symptom" of the implacable nature of the Real that can encourage us to "traverse the fantasy," prompting a more accurate and realistic (if likely more angst-ridden) understanding of the relationship between self, society, and world.

An extended discussion of the wider implications of this insight is beyond the scope of this article. However, several themes present themselves as possibilities, mindful of the pitfalls of facile solutionism or the suggestion we can simply "will" ourselves out of boredom. The first is that boredom is, to a considerable extent, a mode of inurement or fatalism that affirms our *de facto* alienation as collective subjects from the vicissitudes of historical change. Boredom, as Thomas Dumm suggests (1999, 1, 14), is "connected to [a] feeling [of being] left out, existing on the margins of events that powerful people represent as central to what matters in the world" – or, equally, an "unsought inclusion" in triumphalist narratives like the rise and rise of petro-modernity. Of course, the present conjuncture comes with an awareness that human history is now hopelessly entangled with geo- and cosmo-history (as Morton, Bridle, and Nail, amongst many others, remind us), and that there is no going back to a presumptively safer, more predictable shores. However, we can still strive to realign the hyperobject with the experiences and practices of daily life, bring the collective subject back into focus – not in a hubristic or narcissistic way, but in a manner that "cognitively maps" the field via emergent forms of historically- and socially-modulated action. For Brent Ryan Bellamy (2022), the problem with Morton's version of the hyperobject it that it allows for no meaningful human mediation at all, which makes it very difficult to connect practical thought and action to climate phenomena, not least because of the very the scale of abstraction proposed. In Morton's scenario, echoed in the work of French sociologist Bruno Latour (2018), all the agency accrues to the hyperobject, whereas the collective subject of humanity is reduced to something of a bit player.

Andreas Malm takes Bellamy's argument further, arguing that the fact we as a species have developed a generalized awareness that our purposive activity has dramatically altered the planet's biophysical systems doesn't require us to embrace a Mortonian- or Latourian-style post-humanism, and remain essentially helpless in the face of the hyperobject, which are also fatalisms. "The fact that humans act within the carbon cycle and other circuits of nature, says Malm (2018, p. 97), "does not in any way diminish our agency. It amplifies it." This suggests there are certain "emergent" properties inherent in human societies and their developmental tendencies, including our technical and cultural systems, which are open to new initiatives and configurations in light of changing conditions. For his part, Malm seeks inspiration in the "war communism" period of the early Soviet period, circa 1918-21. War communism, as opposed to the intra-capitalist wars of the twentieth century, provides the template for a "just war" of both human liberation and ecological sanity providing us with the overarching cause, necessary motivation, and inherent meaningfulness in struggle required for mass mobilization against, in

this case, the existential threat of climate breakdown. If mass boredom and the paralysis of affective response that follows in the wake of the climate crisis is at least partly the result of this blockage of humanity's collective will and agency, something like Malm's call to arms might help mitigate its more deleterious effects (see also Schleuning, 2021, p. 67).

Malm's stirring advocacy of "climate Bolshevism" as a response to cynicism and defeatism might appear to be the opposite of boring, but there are perhaps less dramatic ways to bring everyday life and the climate catastrophe into closer correspondence, a good example being Min Hyoung Song's (2022) recent book *Climate Lyricism*. For Song, the disjuncture between highly specialized discourses of climate change, and the rhythms, moods, and textures of the mundane social world, can best be broached by interpreting our situatedness *vis-à-vis* the Anthropocene as a project for everyday living. This requires a certain focus and disciplined attentiveness that boredom, with its detachment and emotional flatness, generally undercuts. Examining the minutiae of your life (and lifestyle) critically in this fashion is a difficult and demanding practice for anybody, yet the intimately local can be linked to the planetary through techniques of close description and defamiliarization, a process of de-anthropocentrism. Hence, the "presentism" and particularistic nature associated with everyday life as such is not necessarily a disadvantage here, because it raises the possibility of "democratizing" human agency as regards the understanding and mitigation of global warming. This brings things down to the human scale, but it remains especially challenging because, as outlined above, we now have to learn how to act in a way without having past experiences and knowledges to fall back on, but it also means we have no "predetermined future" in store for us. We now live in a "state of exception" without tangible end, in which both the "fixed self and the static earth" (Marland, 2021, p. 294) are permanently unmoored. Acting here is something of a Pascalian wager, but without any of the theological certitudes.

But since whatever we do individually or collectively it may well not be enough to stave off some truly catastrophic climate effects, this brings us full circle back to the thorny issue of "apocalypse." To wit: if voiding the real in bowdlerized versions of apocalypse normalizes the status quo as a perennial (if profitable, at least in the shorter term) state of disaster, and hence remains mired in the fantasy, we arguably need a different relationship to the apocalyptic imaginary. For Croatian writer Srećko Horvat (2021), apocalyptic rhetoric can be appropriated differently so as to open up our thinking to unanticipated post-Holocene alternatives. But this can only have a chance of succeeding only if we envisage "apocalypse" not as putative end-times, as a rupture that normalizes the status quo through some moment of cathartic if magical resolution, but, as indicated, a meditation on how to exist together in an era of ongoing precarity, turmoil, and crisis – what Anna Tsing (2015) calls, poetically, "living after the end of the world." In grasping the immanence of the climate apocalypse, it appears as something that must be experienced and lived through together with an ethos of mutual care and solidarity with others, human and non-human alike. If the climate regime is a hyperobject, for Pippa Marland (2021, p. 291) our current situation equally indicates the possibility of an inclusive "hypersubject," including both human and non-human entities, which is a useful way to redressing Morton's insinuation that agency in the era of climate change is all object, and no subject, and hence potentially boring. What this implies is the post-Holocene era is not inevitably any one thing;

rather, it represents the uneven and differentiated outcome of manifold institutions, agencies, and natural forces, together generating multitemporal trajectories, gesturing towards a number of possible futures, as Ernst Bloch (1991) anticipated in his idea of "non-synchronicity." These exist virtually on a spectrum ranging from the utopian to the decidedly dystopian and many points in-between, but all of them necessarily involve reimagining the very liniments of social life itself through the medium of collective human agency, akin to the "weak messianism" of thinkers like Walter Benjamin. If boredom is, in many respects, a diminishment of affective engagement, perhaps a specifically climate boredom can be redeployed to allow us to reinvest our libidinal energies in the world in reciprocal and mutually-enriching ways, to allow us to better care about and for things. Reversing the deep-rooted entropic decline, the *boredom* fostered by the Capitalocene, must therefore involve the cultivation of a "therapeutic" form of world attunement, one that turns away from the "blocked horizon" marking the present-day towards something like enhanced complexity, creativity, and inter- and intra-species vitality (see Steigler, 2017).

References

Anderson, B. (2023). Boredom and the Politics of Climate Change. *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1080/14702541.2023.2197869

Bataille, G. (2004). *Unfinished System of Non-knowledge*. University of Minnesota Press.

Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press.

Bellamy, B. R. (2022). Ecology with Totality: The Case of Morton's Hyperobjects and Klein's *This Changes Everything*'. In K. Floyd et al. (Eds.), *Totality inside Out: Rethinking Crisis and Conflict Under Capital* (pp. 211–235). Fordham University Press.

Billig, M. (1999). Commodity Fetishism and Repression: Reflections on Marx, Freud and the Psychology of Consumer Capitalism. *Theory and Psychology, 9*(3), 313–329. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354399093003

Bloch, E. (1986). *The Principle of Hope*. MIT Press.

Bloch, E. (1991). *Heritage of Our Times*. MIT Press.

Blanchot, M. (1997). The Apocalypse Is Disappointing. In *Friendship* (pp. 101–108). Stanford University Press.

Bould, M. (2021). *The Anthropocene Unconscious: Climate Catastrophe Culture*. Verso.

Bratton, B. (2021). *The Revenge of the Real: Politics for a Post-pandemic World*. Verso.

Bridle, J. (2018). *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future*. Verso.

Bubandt, N. (2017). Haunted Geologies: Spirits, Stones, and the Necropolitics of the Anthropocene. In A. Tsing et al. (Eds.), *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene* (pp. 121–141). University of Minnesota Press.

Chakrabarty, D. (2009). The Climate of History: Four Theses. *Critical Inquiry, 35*(2), 97–122. https://doi.org/10.1086/596640

Correale, A. (2018). Boredom: An Uncanny Guide to Something Unknown. *The European Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 5(2).

Cubitt, S. (2017). *Finite Media: Environmental Implications of Digital Technologies*. Duke University Press.

Daggett, C. (2018). Petro-masculinity: Fossil Fuels and Authoritarian Desire. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, *47*(1), 25–44. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829818775817

Dumm, T. (1999) *A Politics of the Ordinary*. New York University Press.

Düttmann, A. C. (2021). Must the Apocalypse Disappoint? Philosophers in the Midst of Climate Change and Before. *Humanities*, *10*(127), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.3390/h10040127

Finkielsztein, M. (2021). *Boredom and Academic Work*. Routledge.

Fisher, M. (2009). *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Zero.

Flam, F. (2014, 28 May). Global Warming vs. Climate Change. Study Shows People Care about One of These. *Knight Science Journalism*. Available at: https://ksj.mit.edu/tracker-archive/global-warming-vs-climate-change-study-s/

Han, B.-C. (2021). *Capitalism and the Death Drive*. Polity.

Heller, A. (1984). *Everyday Life*. Routledge.

Horvat, S. (2021). *After the Apocalypse*. Polity.

Jameson, F. (1998). *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983-1998*. Verso.

Jameson, F. (2008). *The Ideologies of Theory*. Verso.

Jones, O. (2015, 15 November). Melting Glacier? Yawn. *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/nov/13/climate-change-melting-greenland-glacier-warning

Kaplan, E. A. (2015). *Climate Trauma: Foreseeing the Future in Dystopian Film and Fiction*. Rutgers University Press.

Latour, B. (2018). *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*. Polity.

Loewenstein, A. (2017). *Disaster Capitalism: Making a Killing Out of Catastrophe*. Verso.

Malm, A. (2016). *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming*. Verso.

Malm, A. (2018). *The Progress of this Storm: On Society and Nature in a Warming World*. Verso.

Malm, A., and the Zetkin Collective. (2021). *White Skin, Black Fuel: On the Danger of Fossil Fascis*m. Verso.

Mann, M. E. (2021). *The New Climate War: The Fight to Take Back Our Planet*. PublicAffairs.

Markley, S. (2023). *The Deluge*. Simon and Schuster.

Marland, P. (2021). Deep Time Visible. In J. Parham (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Anthropocene* (pp. 289–303). Cambridge University Press.

McGowan, T. (2016). *Capitalism and Desire: The Psychic Cost of Free Markets*. Columbia University Press.

Morton, T. (2010). *The Ecological Thought*. Harvard University Press.

Morton, T. (2013). *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. University of Minnesota Press.

Mousoutzanis, A. (2014). *Fin-de-Siècle Fictions, 1890s/1990s: Apocalypse, Technoscience, Empire*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Nail, T. (2021). *Theory of the Earth*. Stanford University Press.

Norgaard, K. M. (2011). *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life*. The MIT Press.

Olson, R. (2013). Climate Change Is Bo-ho-horing. *Spiegel.* Available at: https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/filmmaker-randy-olson-climate-change-is-becoming-boring-a-940061.html

Parr, A. (2012). *The Wrath of Capital: Neoliberalism and Climate Change*. Columbia University Press.

Petro, P. (1996). Historical Ennui, Feminist Boredom. In V. Sobchack (Ed.), *The Persistence of History: Cinema, History, and the Modern Event* (pp. 187–199). Routledge.

Pyne, S. J. (2022). *The Pyrocene: How We Created an Age of Fire, and What Happens Next*. University of California Press.

Schleuning, N. (2021). *Climate Chaos: Making Art and Politics on a Dying Planet*. Minor Compositions.

Sloterdijk, P. (1987). *Critique of Cynical Reason*. Verso.

Song, M. H. (2022). *Climate Lyricism*. Duke University Press.

Stewart, B. (2021). Notes on Exhaustionism, the Latest Moment of the Global Organic Crisis. *Race and Class*, *63*(3), 22–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/03063968211054857

Stiegler, B. (2017). What Is Called Caring? Beyond the Anthropocene. *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology*, *21*(2–3), 386–404. https://doi.org/10.5840/techne201712479

Swyngedouw, E. (2022). The Unbearable Lightness of Climate Populism. *Environmental Politics*, *31*(5), 904–925. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2022.2090636

Tomšič, S. (2015). *The Capitalist Unconscious*. Verso.

Tsing, A. L. (2015). *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton University Press.

Žižek, S. (1989). *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Verso.

Žižek, S. (2010). *Living in End Times*. Verso.

Žižek, S. (2023). The “Great Reset”? Yes, Please – But a Real One! In A. Parr and S. Zabala (Eds.), *Outspoken: A Manifesto for the Twenty-first Century* (pp. 168–177). McGill-Queens University Press.

Zupančič, A. (2018). The Apocalypse Is (Still) Disappointing. *Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique*, *11*, 16–30.