

from

culture beside itself
as a part of issue #11



Newsletter

Reading Room

#4
November 2019

It is Time...
<http://terracritica.net/readingroom>

Déborah Danowski & Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World* (chs 1, 2 and 3), Polity 2017, pp. 1-27.

Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement. Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (part 2: History), U of Chicago Press 2016, p. 85-116.

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Anthropocene Time" *History and Theory* 57/1 (2018), p. 5-32.

ReadingRoom is a semi-autonomous project at the margins of the academic humanities and art institutions, a collaboration between *Terra Critica* and *Casco Art Institute*. The group might be defined as a porous affective collective, dependent for its continued existence on the generosity of its attendants. Engaging with texts from various disciplines and the arts, each series of the ReadingRoom weaves itself around a theme that it acknowledges as urgent with regard to our living and thinking practices in times when critical engagement and close reading are shadowed by the neoliberal mode of quantifiable productivity and gain. Each session brings together people from different backgrounds to re-imagine the idea of community and practice it by attentively listening, reading, and thinking together.

This session of the ReadingRoom marks the first of the new series titled *It is Time...* Series six stays connected to the previous series *Reading Rosa, pink and other colors*, in which we grappled with the systemic weave of capitalism-patriarchy-colonialism (CPC). *It is Time...* looks more deeply into the question of temporality and its relation to the current ecological crisis that necessitates a re-thinking of human exceptionalism in our understanding of the "future." We read with the concern for the complex threads between CPC and environmental destruction, and we think collectively about the co-habitation of humans and non-humans in these troubled and troubling times. In this fourth session we welcomed Dr. Anirban Das from the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences in Calcutta, and together we thought about extinction and what ending something can mean, and explored explicitly the temporalities of climate change and its uneven and global effects.

Newsletter — from

Reading Room

#4 November 2019

How do we relate to each other in new modes? We are in it, outside no longer exists. We are at the same time moving on the tectonic plates of the earth, so old and slow, and also part of neo-liberal, imperial time.

The end of the world will never happen and has already happened. No “end”—No “eschaton”—because there is no afterwards or outside. Instead, the world is changing and it is changing more for some than for others—combined and uneven Derangement? We don’t matter to the Earth but that does not mean that the Earth does not matter to us, because we are part of the Earth and we are accountable to and for each other, as peoples, societies, species, life forms, flora and fauna, matter. How to convince my dad that there is enough life for everybody – the everyday glum passivity of the individual to those scalar problems.

Scale of the climate crisis is difficult to grasp! Is it a crisis we’ll get through? Need more of a care over “cure” model. Ghosh describes it in literary form, stories of the unthinkable. Danowski + Castro describe it as a rough blast. We are out of time and thinking there’s still time when in fact it is over. We’re over human agency while we still need to act!

That ineffable thing that puts this group around a table to talk about the end of the world...

In order to “move,” are we to imagine a different kind of affect? (different than guilt or despair or fear... or even maybe indifference) How do we think about action (something that also needs to be problematized) without the rhetoric of reproductivity, without the figure of the child – the “next generation(s)”?

On another note, I’m struggling with this notion of “narcissism” in the context of the Anthropocene, or the end of the world. Why is it necessarily bad... then again, I always had a problem with the negativity attached to that word. In the context of the climate crisis, the specificity of human responsibility, power and agency is much more complex—we cannot just say anthropocentrism is bad and be done with it.

After an entire evening of discussion on time scaling time into larger or shorter spans, I was most struck by this paradox of urgency. The climate urgency of now has no quick fix no band aid to cover up the symptoms. We are in it and all accountable all bodies all succumbed to now the need for reparative processes to take effect to move from consumption to nurturing is uncomfortable it is difficult it takes time and it is time that we desperately need to make matter day by day in this ongoing process of living and dying.

How to allow the “unthinkable”—the bigness of the problem, the scale of it—to impinge on us, neither resorting to “nothing is possible then”, nor “we can make it thinkable then act”, but allowing the unthinkable to impinge on the political.

In one of the numerous short episodes of Mahabharat the great Indian epic-history, the god of Justice/Law/Religiosity ‘Dharma’ in disguise of a bird, asks his son Yudhistira, a king - “What is surprising?” The answer - “That men die everyday and yet everyone continues to live as if they will live forever, that is surprising.”

A revitalized concern for radical relationality stands out for me after/ in our discussion. Especially when thinking about that I thought I missed the “p” – critical engagement with patriarchal structure as the first basis + then our discussion so beautifully brought it back into C + C - via futurity as following logic of reproduction! To different relationality via models of progressive futurity.

Past present future are all accountable. Our crisis is in our lack of accountability. Practic[al] decisions need to be made but we do not have strong enough government to do the job.

It is.
It affects.
(So) we must learn to treat each other differently and to relate to opposing, different, differentiating moralities.

Loved the explanation of Chakrabarty’s “paradox” (guest researcher) of long and short timescales... it made me think more about “historical time” and how to address the Anthropocene within the correct periodization of epochs/eras/periods of history...”ontic certainty” is what I will take away and think much more about - which is in fact quite a daunting notion to comprehend as we question our own...and very much part of maybe how we can begin to frame ourselves inside (if we are all destined to leave and not return, then for who’s certainty do we continue to fight?).

How do we get rid of futurity?
How do we account for the fact that this “crisis” will not be solved?
That there is no “after” or “beyond”?
What ways of being/thinking/relating in the world are dying?

What make us keep going?
Not that even we could go, and keep moving in a different way?

What it means to live when the world is already over, (post apocalypse) way over—(so it’s not even about a kind of doom scenario – remember C-P-C)

Perhaps thinking towards active forms of nothingness.

We would say that the idea of sustainability might be a tool on the local level (scale), but is a fiction on larger ones.

Knowledge of climate change is not enough to also change my daily habits of spending, consuming, ignoring. How can my being, body, soul know in a way that would be in line with, resonating with the knowledge my being, body, soul has already stored in thought? Love, learning to love + repair + preserve + refrain from harming - learn different affects...