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# THE WEIRDNESS OF HYPEROBJECTS

## ABSTRACT

Global weirding, a phrase coined by Hunter Lovins and popularised by Thomas Friedman, has garnered a modicum of prominence since its popularisation in the late 2000s. It was coined as a replacement for global warming, with the abnormal effects of climate change foregrounded. When conceiving the concept of the ‘hyperobject’, Timothy Morton uses global warming specifically as one of his key examples. However, as the vernacular for referring to climate change has been updated, it seems prudent to examine the hyperobject again. When writing on the topic of hyperobjects, Morton does describe them as being ‘weird’. This article will determine whether hyperobjects exhibit properties similar to the weird and therefore determine how far hyperobjects can be considered truly weird, in order to evaluate whether it is an apt

description or not. The weird originates from Weird Fiction, an early 20th century pulp genre. One of the most renowned authors of weird fiction was H. P. Lovecraft, whose theories of the weird have influenced other authors and academics, such as Mark Fisher, for decades. In recent years a new wave of the weird, called the New Weird, has emerged and updated theories of the weird once again. This article will use Lovecraft’s and Fisher’s theories and definitions of the weird as well as examples from the weird canon, and compare them to the concept of the hyperobject, evaluating how far the properties of the hyperobject can be considered weird.

**KEY WORDS:** the weird, hyperobject, climate change, global weirding, H. P. Lovecraft

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## INTRODUCTION

The weird, as defined by H. P. Lovecraft, and considered by scholars such as James Machin<sup>2</sup> and S. T. Joshi<sup>3</sup> as the primogenitor of the weird, is “a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of nature.”<sup>4</sup> The late philosopher and cultural theorist Mark Fisher, in his book *The Weird and the Eerie* (2016), expands upon this, suggesting that the weird is “that which does not belong”<sup>5</sup> or notably “the conjoining of two or more things that do not belong together.”<sup>6</sup> The weird is not necessarily horrifying, equated more with a “fascination for the outside, for that which lies beyond standard perception.”<sup>7</sup> Fisher also states that a black hole is more indicative of a black hole than any supernatural entity.<sup>8</sup> Theories of the weird are constantly advancing, especially with the emergence of the New Weird, a literary genre spawned by authors such as Jeff VanderMeer, whose book *Annihilation* (2014) stimulated a new wave of weird criticism. It comes as no surprise therefore that theorists such as Gry Ulstein<sup>9</sup> and Jed Mayer<sup>10</sup> have now started examining ecological topics through the lens of the weird. Furthermore, the weird has permeated the phrases used to refer to climate change, most notably ‘global weirding.’

Global weirding is a neologism created by Hunter Lovins,<sup>11</sup> co-founder of the Rocky Mountains Institute and prominent ecologist, and popularised by Thomas L. Friedman in his articles “The People We Have Been Waiting For” and “Global Weirding is Here,” published in the *New York Times* in 2007 and 2010, respectively. JoAnne L. Dunec, adapting Lovins, defined global weirding as being “the consequences of the rise in average global temperatures, which are expected to amplify the abnormal.”<sup>12</sup> Global weirding is, therefore, the unnerving effect of climate change on people. These could be the flooding of cities, or storms of such magnitude that previously only occurred once in a millennium instead occurring annually. They are abnormal and, therefore, considered weird events. Furthermore, as these events

<sup>2</sup> James Machin, *Weird Fiction in Britain 1880-1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 2.

<sup>3</sup> S. T. Joshi, *Varieties of the Weird Tale* (New York, NY: Hippocampus Press, 2017), 16, 12.

<sup>4</sup> H. P. Lovecraft, “Supernatural Horror in Literature,” *H.P.Lovecraft.com*, October 20, 2009, <https://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/essays/shil.aspx>.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London, UK: Repeater Books, 2016), 10. <https://books.apple.com/gb/book/the-weird-and-the-erie/id1169936019>.

<sup>6</sup> Fisher, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Fisher, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Fisher, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Gry Ulstein, “Brave New Weird: Anthropocene Monsters In Jeff Vandermeer's *The Southern Reach*,” *Concentric* 43, no. 1 (March 2017): 71-96, 79. <https://doi.org/10.6240/concentric.lit.2017.43.1.05>.

<sup>10</sup> Jed Mayer, “The Weird Ecologies of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*,” *Science Fiction Studies* 45, no. 2 (2018): 229-43, <https://doi.org/10.5621/sciefictstud.45.2.0229>.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, “The People We Have Been Waiting For,” *New York Times*, December 2, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/02/opinion/02friedman.html>.

<sup>12</sup> JoAnne L. Dunec, “Global Warming,” *Natural Resources & Environment* 24, no. 1 (2009): 60-61, [www.jstor.org/stable/40925083](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40925083).

increase in frequency, we become more accustomed to them, thus they become more familiar. This does not diminish their weirdness, however, as shall be discussed later. Global weirding can be used as a synonym for global warming. As a synonym, it is more relevant currently owing to the transition from the concept of climate change to the idea of climate crisis<sup>13</sup> when referring to the warming the planet is undergoing and the effect this will have. While Friedman never used the term to its full potential, using it more as a pun than a competitive term to replace climate change or global warming, the concept behind it still has merit.

Global weirding, as an alternative way of referring to climate crisis, can be used to examine the state in which humanity finds itself in. The introduction to the Issue 28 of *Paradoxa*, devoted to global weirding, states that we are living in “postnormal times” and that using global weirding facilitates our acknowledgement of it.<sup>14</sup> However, Gerry Canavan and Andrew Hageman, the authors who wrote this section of the journal, state that referring to climate change as weird suggests the catastrophic change as being “fun” and “quirky.”<sup>15</sup> This seems a little short-sighted. Certainly, the word ‘weird’ can be interpreted as both “fun” and “quirky”, but when considered in reference to weird fiction, “the defeat of the natural order” for instance, the severity of climate change is still emphasised. Furthermore, when examining the possible changes that the planet will undergo—the shrinking of land masses, mass migration and possible extinction of species—to name but a few, climate change seems to be quintessentially weird owing to the unfamiliarity of the world that is left after the change.

Yet, if the environment is becoming weird due to climate change, is this perhaps less of a development and more of an inherent quality? This idea of weirdness being inherent to climate change can be explored through the book *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (2013) by Timothy Morton. The author notes that many environmental components, such as climate change, or specifically global warming,<sup>16</sup> function as hyperobjects. Hyperobjects, as defined by Morton, are “things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans.”<sup>17</sup> He offers as examples black holes, climate change or even the world’s supply of nuclear material. Throughout the book, Morton uses the word weird to describe many facets of the hyperobject. However, he uses it merely as an adjective, irrespective of the links to the existing theories of the weird. By breaking the

<sup>13</sup> ‘Climate crisis’ has been, at the time of writing, adopted for use instead of climate change when referring to the warming of the planet. This could be to highlight the severity of the effect the warming will have on the planet however it must be noted that many alternative ways of referring to it also exist, so the synonyms suggested are by no means exhaustive.

<sup>14</sup> Gerry Canavan and Andrew Hageman, “Introduction: ‘Global Weirding,’” *Paradoxa* 28 (2016): 7-14, 7. <https://paradoxa.com/volume-28-global-weirding/>.

<sup>15</sup> Canavan and Hageman, 8.

<sup>16</sup> While climate change and global warming can be used synonymously, global warming has fallen out of use in the ecological lexis. Climate change or indeed, climate crisis has been adopted instead. Morton uses global warming as opposed to climate change in his book in order to add an air of menace to the changing climate.

<sup>17</sup> Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 1.

hyperobject down into the properties which Morton asserts that they exhibit, the weird cannot be perfectly applied to each constituent element. However, there is enough evidence to show that hyperobjects demonstrate weirdness and therefore can be considered weird. This will allow us to examine hyperobjects, specifically climate change, in order to determine whether the weirdness left after the change is an inherent quality. This will then help us to process the unknown side of climate change with the understanding that it is weird. While the same could be applied to all other hyperobjects, this paper will focus primarily on climate change.

Morton's concept of the hyperobject has become more relevant in recent years, appearing first in the field of ecological thought, and offering a new way of examining climate change. It also grew to prominence when it became associated with object-oriented ontology, a philosophical movement "committed to a unique form of realism and non-anthropocentric thinking."<sup>18</sup> Decentring the human, the hyperobject becomes more noticeable during a period of ecological crisis, such as the one that we are experiencing now, dubbed by Morton "The Age of Asymmetry."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Morton suggests that by adopting the viewpoint which the hyperobject-related thinking bestows, humanity would exhibit a "full engagement with our ecological coexistence here on Earth."<sup>20</sup> In order to be regarded as a hyperobject, Morton lists several properties that the object in question must demonstrate: viscosity, nonlocality, temporal undulation, phasing and interobjectivity.<sup>21</sup>

In *The Ecological Thought* (2010), Morton first introduces the notion of hyperobjects, noting that they "confound our limited, fixated, self-oriented frameworks,"<sup>22</sup> and are intrinsically linked to ecological thought. That is to say that ecological thought denotes the interconnectedness of the world, and hyperobjects are a way to facilitate this understanding. Overall, they raise a level of ecological awareness that can inspire new ways of thinking, new art and new societies.<sup>23</sup> When examining ecological awareness, however, Morton describes it simply as "weird,"<sup>24</sup> suggesting that, through the process he refers to as "ecognosis,"<sup>25</sup> all ecological thinking operates on a loop. The cyclical nature of ecognosis creates a connection between the weird and ecological thinking because it engages with what is beyond human perception, beyond what we know or what we think we know.

However, if hyperobjects are intrinsic to ecological thinking, and ecological thinking is weird, how weird are hyperobjects specifically? This article will engage with the properties of hyperobjects as suggested by Morton and the theory

<sup>18</sup> Morton, 2013, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Morton, 2013, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Morton, 2013, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Morton, 2013, 27, 38, 55, 69, 81.

<sup>22</sup> Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 19.

<sup>23</sup> Morton, 2010, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology: for a Logic of Future Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 6.

<sup>25</sup> Morton, 2016, 5.

surrounding each property in detail, and see how applicable each might be to the weird.

The first defining characteristic of a hyperobject is that it demonstrates a degree of viscosity.<sup>26</sup> Morton suggests that hyperobjects are ever-present. No matter how much you try to distance yourself from a hyperobject, human cognition causes it to stick to you. Furthermore, due to this viscosity, hyperobjects can never be dissolved or exhausted. Morton uses the example of radiation to explain this point.<sup>27</sup> A radioactive source emits alpha, beta and gamma rays, each becoming more penetrative but less deadly as we go down the list. If a person is hit by gamma radiation, for example, the mutations their body undergoes, even on a molecular level, are retained by that person. This persists no matter how far away from the source they move. Other hyperobjects can be examined in the same light. When we fill up a car with petrol, we are interacting with the global oil reserves of the world, although now in a fractionally distilled state. We are not directly interacting with the source of the oil, but we are still linked to it through viscosity even though we may not be aware of it.<sup>28</sup> Morton also mentions that hyperobjects “straddle worlds and times,”<sup>29</sup> using a scene from David Lynch’s *Twin Peaks* (1990) to emphasise his point.

In the scene, the protagonist Dale Cooper is offered a cup of coffee, a beverage that commonly is used in reference to time, as Morton points out, as a “morning coffee or coffee break.”<sup>30</sup> When Cooper tries to drink it, he finds it a solid lump one moment. Sometime later, it becomes a viscous gel before finally returning to normal when he tries to pour it away. Morton goes on to suggest that “time emanates from objects”<sup>31</sup> due to their viscosity; it slows or even stops when not being directly interacted with.<sup>32</sup> The weird demonstrates a similar level of viscosity. Using *Twin Peaks* as an example of viscosity also draws parallels to the weird in art, and Fisher refers to it too as a key example when examining the weird in modern media. The series of *Twin Peaks* frequently involves the crossing of thresholds, a key feature of how Fisher interprets the weird. The thresholds vary from the transition from the real world to the malign realm of the Black Lodge, to the crossing of social norms in small town America, delving into criminal underworlds and even the occult.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the series is underpinned by the idea that there is always an ever-present veil of secrecy that is

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<sup>26</sup> Morton, 2013, 27.

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that while radiation itself can be considered to be a hyperobject, Morton primarily uses the process of radiation to explain viscosity rather than engaging with it as a hyperobject in this context.

<sup>28</sup> While this is comparable to an interconnected system, some theories would suggest that all bodies in a system exist for the sole purpose to support that system. Hyperobjects do not operate in a system and instead interact with and influence other objects which may be in a system.

<sup>29</sup> Morton, 2013, 29.

<sup>30</sup> Morton, 2013, 32.

<sup>31</sup> Morton, 2013, 33.

<sup>32</sup> Morton, 2013, 32.

<sup>33</sup> Fisher, 88.

draped over or stuck to the town, and the overarching narrative about the life and death of Laura Palmer is at the core of that secrecy.

Ever-presence, or indeed attachment in a viscous manner, is also considered to be a key feature of the weird, appearing in narratives sporadically but with the connotation that it has been present throughout the entire text. When Fisher examines the weird, he suggests that it can break through time and space to breach the limits of the known and the unknown.<sup>34</sup> Fisher notes that the weird “frequently involve[s] a catastrophic integration of the outside into an interior that is retrospectively revealed to be a delusive envelope, a sham.”<sup>35</sup> The outside is described as another world that is constantly brushing against the known world, occasionally irrupting through it. In weird fiction, it is used to show that there is another, often disturbing, reality underpinning our own but always linked to it.

When considering the unimaginable, hyperobjects are a useful paradigm. Referring to how someone might fathom one, Morton adds that “thinking [hyperobjects] is intrinsically tricky”<sup>36</sup> and at the same time “one only sees pieces of a hyperobject at any one moment.”<sup>37</sup> However, we accept that despite not being able to visualise the hyperobject, it is present, having attached itself to whoever is perceiving it. Being unable to think or picture a hyperobject is evocative of the “unvisualisable”<sup>38</sup> nature of the weird. For Fisher, the weird is, fundamentally, “the presence of that which does not belong.”<sup>39</sup> Owing to the term “presence” rather than a noted “absence,” the weird links to the ability for human cognition to only process a hyperobject for short periods. Something that is “intrinsically tricky” to visualise becomes “that which does not belong” because of the almost aberrational way in which it enters human cognition. Fisher, when comparing the weird and the eerie, says that the eerie is “a failure of absence” or “a failure of presence.”<sup>40</sup> Both terms suggest a disjointed view of the known. However, when referring to hyperobjects, it is clear that they are present if only for “any one moment.” This momentary presence can be examined using the hyperobject of climate change as it makes bulbs flower in the winter. As a hyperobject, climate change is affecting us in a viscous manner by being present throughout the year and affecting seasonal changes such as the temperatures in different seasons. Through climate change, the onset of colder temperatures in winter is delayed, and so plants that flower in the summer will still flower in the winter. The weirdness of this event is present in the unexpected presence of these flowers. The hyperobject of climate change interacts with the world around us, albeit briefly, and the result is an interaction with the weird. Therefore, a hyperobject exhibits qualities such as viscosity, which make it weird.

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<sup>34</sup> Fisher, 129.

<sup>35</sup> Fisher, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Morton, 2013, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Morton, 2013, 4.

<sup>38</sup> Fisher, 35.

<sup>39</sup> Fisher, 102.

<sup>40</sup> Fisher, 102.

All hyperobjects must exhibit a form of nonlocality,<sup>41</sup> that is to say, they must influence another object at a distance. In regard to nonlocality, in hyperobjects “the general is compromised by the particular”<sup>42</sup> or an object is proven or manifested primarily by its effects. Morton uses several examples to demonstrate this, often delving into quantum mechanics and specialised areas of physics, such as Bose-Einstein condensates. The most straightforward example to understand is Morton’s recurring example of global warming. Morton states that “when you feel raindrops, you are experiencing climate.”<sup>43</sup> Specifically, “you are experiencing the climate change known as global warming.”<sup>44</sup> However, even though you are feeling the raindrops fall, you are “never directly experiencing global warming.”<sup>45</sup> This does not mean that climate change or even the climate crisis, to use a more modern term, is not real. Far from it. Morton, who argues that global warming is humanity’s ultimate fate, states that raindrops are “a manifestation of global warming”<sup>46</sup> because the hyperobject of global warming is “massively distributed in time and space.”<sup>47</sup> All hyperobjects are subject to a similar distribution, and still manifest objects that humans can experience. This manifestation is proof of nonlocality.

An object being influenced by another object without any direct connection parallels the way in which characters or readers of weird fiction undergo changes by reading the weird. Fisher’s concept of the outside is an amalgam of the unknown where beings beyond our imagination manifest. He suggests that the weird appears in a text when crossing a threshold. This threshold must be passed over in order for any interaction with the weird to occur.<sup>48</sup>

Hyperobjects follow a similar line of thinking. They are vast, and we can only perceive small sub-sections of a hyperobject, a flooded area caused by climate change, for example. When examining nonlocality, hyperobjects can be interpreted as being examples of the eerie instead of the weird. Fisher uses the examples of the stones on Easter Island and Stonehenge as eerie. We can make speculations as to the history of these objects, but the cultural source of these creations will never be present.<sup>49</sup> There is a dislocation between the source of an object and its effects, much like nonlocality. The dislocation would suggest that hyperobjects are examples of the eerie, as they operate through the manifestation of objects, rather than a direct connection with the hyperobject. However, Fisher also notes how, once what is unknown becomes known, “the eerie disappears.”<sup>50</sup> A hyperobject, when known, is something so vast, it seems unknowable, and yet continues to exist despite its unknowable vastness. The

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<sup>41</sup> Morton, 2013, 38.

<sup>42</sup> Morton, 2013, 54.

<sup>43</sup> Morton, 2013, 48.

<sup>44</sup> Morton, 2013, 48.

<sup>45</sup> Morton, 2013, 48.

<sup>46</sup> Morton, 2013, 48.

<sup>47</sup> Morton, 2013, 48.

<sup>48</sup> Fisher, 2014, 43.

<sup>49</sup> Fisher, 81.

<sup>50</sup> Fisher, 103.

hyperobject becomes “that which does not belong,”<sup>51</sup> a property of the weird. Therefore, although nonlocality does demonstrate qualities of both the weird and the eerie, it suits more the weird.

Featured in Morton’s book *Dark Ecology for a Logic of Future Coexistence* (2016), is the statement of how nearness to something, and therefore an increased familiarity with it, promotes a sense of the uncanny.<sup>52</sup> Freud’s “uncanny”, or rather the *unheimlich*, is used to describe that which is strange and unfamiliar, literally, the un-homely.<sup>53</sup> Freud summarises the dichotomy of *heimlich* and *unheimlich* as follows, “on the one hand, it means that which is familiar and comfortable, and on the other, that which is concealed and kept hidden.”<sup>54</sup> Morton mentions how this can apply to location, the “uncanny” being present when reaching a destination<sup>55</sup> for example, but also when referring to hyperobjects such as the human race. Morton writes: “We vaguely sense them out of the corner of our eye while seeing the data in the centre of our vision.”<sup>56</sup> By thinking about a hyperobject, they become more familiar or more local, but “the local is in fact the uncanny”<sup>57</sup> and by extension, the nonlocal is not. Although the point is a little contradictory, hyperobjects can become local but must also exhibit nonlocality to function as hyperobjects. Therefore, by exhibiting nonlocality, the hyperobject is not uncanny and, following Fisher, not weird.

Fisher introduces the weird by directly comparing it to the “uncanny” and appropriating terms used for the “uncanny,” suggesting that both are “the strangely familiar and the familiar as strange.”<sup>58</sup> He also notes how the “uncanny,” at its core, focuses on “repetition and doubling”<sup>59</sup>, drawing on Freud’s original essay on the subject. When examining hyperobjects, it should be noted that Morton only refers to the “local” as being “uncanny.”<sup>60</sup> With regard to hyperobjects, due to their nonlocality, the local only applies to the objects that are being interacted with. These local objects can be droughts that manifest because of the hyperobject of global warming. These objects are examples of repetition as they can be manifested multiple times. However, each hyperobject remains a singular entity and therefore is not “uncanny.” The nonlocality of hyperobjects, therefore, defies some comparison to the weird. This is further bolstered when Morton states that “the human hyperobject (the human as a geophysical species) became a machine for the generation of hyperobjects.”<sup>61</sup> As hyperobjects stem from a “logarithmic increase in the actions of

<sup>51</sup> Fisher, 102.

<sup>52</sup> Morton, 2016, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (London: Penguin, 2003), 300, <https://books.apple.com/gb/book/the-uncanny/id374847357>.

<sup>54</sup> Freud, 314.

<sup>55</sup> Morton, 2016, 11.

<sup>56</sup> Morton, 2016, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Morton, 2016, 11.

<sup>58</sup> Fisher, 11.

<sup>59</sup> Fisher, 11.

<sup>60</sup> Morton, 2016, 11.

<sup>61</sup> Morton, 2016, 45.



humans as a geophysical force,”<sup>62</sup> the creation of a hyperobject is a familiar process, and humanity imprints the familiar onto hyperobjects when it creates them. This further nullifies any comparison to the weird in this example.

Returning to the concept of a black hole, referred to as a hyperobject by Morton and used as an example of the weird by Fisher, the weirdness of nonlocality is again up for debate. A black hole demonstrates nonlocality by the pull it has on other celestial bodies, notably the one at the heart of our galaxy.<sup>63</sup> As mentioned previously, Fisher notes how a black hole is weird when examining its ability to “[bend] space and time” despite being a part of the natural world.<sup>64</sup> In considering the black hole as being weird and affecting other objects nonlocally, the comparison with the weird returns. A hyperobject affecting other objects through nonlocality is weird. We notice the hyperobject’s presence, something strange and unfamiliar, by seeing the objects it has affected. However, the process of nonlocality requires the hyperobject to be absent, making it more eerie. It could therefore be said that nonlocality as a concept is weird but as a process it is eerie. When we link a flood to the hyperobject of climate change, we notice the weirdness of the world around us. However, before that link is made, we simply see the eeriness of the unnatural weather patterns.

Another property of the hyperobject is its ability to function seemingly outside of time. Morton calls this temporal undulation, the fluctuation of time as if it were a wave on the ocean. He writes: “hyperobjects seem to beckon us further into themselves, making us realise we’re already lost inside them,”<sup>65</sup> where ‘lost’ can have both spatial and temporal connotations. This can be further examined by analysing the hyperobject of global warming again.

Members of the scientific community, such as Nerilie J. Abram, believe that the effects of global warming began around 1830<sup>66</sup> though the phrase “global warming” was not coined until 1975 by Wallace S. Broecker.<sup>67</sup> However, when the hyperobject of global warming is examined, it is impossible to tell how far into the climate crisis we have progressed. Decades have passed since anthropogenic climate change first began, but we cannot say when it will end.<sup>68</sup> Spatially, global warming affects the entire planet, but the popular image conjured by the phrase “global warming” is the

<sup>62</sup> Morton, 2013, 7.

<sup>63</sup> Morton, 2013, 27.

<sup>64</sup> Fisher, 10.

<sup>65</sup> Morton, 2013, 55.

<sup>66</sup> Nerilie J. Abram et al., “Erratum: Corrigendum: Early Onset of Industrial-Era Warming across the Oceans and Continents,” *Nature* 545, no. 7653 (May 11, 2017): 411-17, 412. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature22349>.

<sup>67</sup> W. S. Broecker, “Climatic Change: Are We on the Brink of a Pronounced Global Warming?,” *Science* 189, no. 4201 (August 1975): 460-63, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.189.4201.460>.

<sup>68</sup> Significant evidence shows impacts that have been detected and attributed to anthropogenic climate change since the 1990s. The trajectory of future warming will depend upon actions taken now. However, even with strong mitigation some impacts from recent warming will persist for decades to come. For example, sea levels will continue to rise as a result of observed warming on geological rather human time scales.

melting of the polar ice caps leading to a rise in sea levels. However, the actual increase in sea levels occurs over such a vast range of space and time that it becomes unfathomable. Morton suggests that hyperobjects allow for a “shift”<sup>69</sup> in our understanding of space and time.

Hyperobjects allow for the conceptualisation of time and space being “effects of objects rather than as absolute containers.”<sup>70</sup> Morton uses the example of time dilation when in low gravity to explain this, further noting that hyperobjects are immune to this effect, existing as a constant in both space and time. They are objects that can be examined within a human lifetime and are thus affected by the time in which they are considered. However, they will continue to exist beyond that time. The hyperobject of oil is a good example of this; it can be envisioned and examined in smaller forms, a droplet, a tankful or even a reservoir beneath a desert for a human lifetime. However, it will continue to exist beyond that lifetime.

Temporal undulation is similarly examined in the weird, both in fiction and in the analysis of the weird itself. Writers of weird fiction, such as Clark Ashton Smith and H. P. Lovecraft often use the phrase “out of time”<sup>71</sup> in their fiction. Not only does this create the atmosphere of something dredged up from another time, but it also carries a suggestion of something removed; “out of” giving the “suggestion of something removed, cut out.”<sup>72</sup> It could also be interpreted as something that has advanced past what is currently known.<sup>73</sup>

Alternatively, if both interpretations are combined, it becomes an advancement through isolation. In this case, an isolation from time itself. This has parallels with the non-Newtonian properties of the Morton-esque hyperobject. When considering both Newtonian and non-Newtonian time, let us examine the theory by Isaac Newton in the 17th century. He suggests that time progresses independently of whoever is perceiving it, and this is known as Newtonian time. Following this theory, time is a separate force, external to space. Non-Newtonian time, as a concept appropriated by Morton in regard to time, implies that objects can exist outside of time and space. Morton states that humanity is still predominantly Newtonian,<sup>74</sup> stating that we are “still in awe of infinite space and behind that in awe of the infinite God of infinite space.”<sup>75</sup> Being “in awe of the infinite God of infinite space” is perhaps hyperbolic on Morton’s part and suggests humanity is wholly theistic. The underlying idea that humanity is still predominantly unlikely to consider the notion of objects being outside of time is valid, however. Hyperobjects diverge from the Newtonian view and instead “space and time float in front of objects,” isolated from these objects and other hyperobjects, where they can exist independently of space and time.

<sup>69</sup> Morton, 2013, 63.

<sup>70</sup> Morton, 2013, 65.

<sup>71</sup> Clark Ashton Smith, *Out of Space and Time* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

<sup>72</sup> Fisher, 31.

<sup>73</sup> Fisher, 32.

<sup>74</sup> Morton, 2013, 63.

<sup>75</sup> Morton, 2013, 63.

However, Morton also expresses his view that the current age of man is no longer advancing.

Morton refers to the current epoch of man as the “Age of Asymmetry”<sup>76</sup> rather than the Anthropocene, the Human Age, or any other popular critical term in current usage. He uses “Asymmetry” specifically to point out that humanity is no longer progressing: “We know more than ever before what things are, how they work, how to manipulate them. Yet for this very reason, things become more, rather than less strange.”<sup>77</sup> Scientific breakthroughs no longer “demystify”<sup>78</sup> the world around us and as such, Morton suggests that this creates a stronger feeling of the “uncanny.”<sup>79</sup> Without using hyperobjects as a way of thinking about the world, this asymmetrical view would not be as noticeable as an alternative, since a more anthropocentric viewpoint would mire the asymmetry in the human. Fisher notes how the weird replaces “the standard empirical world of common sense and Euclidian geometries”<sup>80</sup> with a form of “hypernaturalism.”<sup>81</sup> Euclidian geometry is a mathematical theory operating with only two dimensions. Non-Euclidian geometry, therefore, is concerned with multiple dimensions or curves as opposed to flat surfaces. The weird dismantles the Euclidian view by providing an escalated view of what makes up the cosmos, or the process that Fisher calls hypernaturalism.

Hypernaturalism in the work of H. P. Lovecraft often displaces the familiar concept of “gods”<sup>82</sup> with much less familiar “alien entities.”<sup>83</sup> Morton notes that the temporal undulation of hyperobjects removes the “awe of the infinite God.” Fisher parallels this when critiquing Lovecraft’s atheistic view. He states that attributing space and time to a God-like entity are “ultimately absurd efforts to impose meaning and sense on to the “real externality” of the cosmos.”<sup>84</sup> Hyperobjects separating space and time from objects suggests a similar need to convey the “real externality of the cosmos.”<sup>85</sup> Temporal undulation in hyperobjects also creates the “elsewhere elsewhere” or the “future future,”<sup>86</sup> defined by Morton as “a time that is beyond predictability, timing or any ethical or political calculation.”<sup>87</sup>

Using a time that is beyond ethical and political influence, such as the one Morton mentions above, especially in regard to climate change, denotes the sheer non-anthropocentric nature of climate change. Climate change operates devoid of political and ethical consideration as all hyperobjects do. By removing the human aspect from the operation of a hyperobject, the weirdness of the hyperobject,

<sup>76</sup> Morton, 2013, 2.

<sup>77</sup> Morton, 2013, 160.

<sup>78</sup> Morton, 2013, 161.

<sup>79</sup> Morton, 2013, 160.

<sup>80</sup> Fisher, 27.

<sup>81</sup> Fisher, 27.

<sup>82</sup> Fisher, 26.

<sup>83</sup> Fisher, 26.

<sup>84</sup> Fisher, 26.

<sup>85</sup> Fisher, 26.

<sup>86</sup> Morton, 2013, 67.

<sup>87</sup> Morton, 2013, 67.

particularly with reference to climate change, becomes more noticeable. Climate change as a weird hyperobject shows that it is beyond our control and by engaging with some form of hypernaturalism in regard to climate change, we can instead look to beyond the human.

We have already established that due to their vast size, hyperobjects are difficult to imagine. Furthermore, “we can only see pieces of hyperobjects at a time”<sup>88</sup> due to what Morton refers to as “phasing.”<sup>89</sup> Morton describes phasing as following the outline of a Lorenz Attractor.<sup>90</sup> The hyperobject, which exists as a constant and in this example is one half of the figure 8, will occasionally overlap with the awareness of another object, the other half of the figure 8. Where the two halves of the figure 8 meet, is where they are in phase. While this is a perfectly suitable way of thinking about phasing, it is difficult to imagine unless adequately explained, and the simplified version removes the continual cycle of moving in and out of phase that hyperobjects undergo.

Another way of examining phase would be to imagine two metronomes, each ticking at a different time signature. On some occasions the ticks will overlap with each other and may continue to do so for a period afterwards—this would be them operating in phase. They may then go out of phase, or out of synchronicity, again and tick independently. The minute and hour hands of a clock function likewise. At exactly midnight, the two hands are together or in phase. When a minute has progressed, the two hands no longer touch and are therefore out of phase. If we then imagine the clock to be at noon, the hands will have been in phase with each other ten times.

Phasing is not necessarily a weird concept. Iterations of phasing in nature are familiar to most people. For millennia, mankind has viewed the phases of the moon and even constructed abstract concepts like calendars based upon that phasing process. However, when phasing is considered in the light of Fisher’s idea of a threshold to the outside, certain aspects of the weird become more apparent.

The “between” is the threshold bisecting the known from the unknown, our reality from the outside. It has been regarded as a notion “crucial to the weird.”<sup>91</sup> When the barrier that blocks the threshold opens, the weird may enter our world or we may enter the outside. When the doorway between the two worlds is closed, the two are out of phase. However, when they are in phase, the threshold can be breached. Lovecraft’s *The Call of Cthulhu* features a line “When the stars were right, They could plunge from world to world through the sky; but when the stars were wrong, They could not live.”<sup>92</sup> The idea of stars being right, denotes a level of phasing on an

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<sup>88</sup> Morton, 2013, 70.

<sup>89</sup> Morton, 2013, 69.

<sup>90</sup> Morton, 2013, 71. This is described as being figure 8 that has been folded at the point connecting each circle.

<sup>91</sup> Fisher, 45.

<sup>92</sup> Lovecraft, *Necronomicon: The Best Weird Tales of H. P. Lovecraft* (London, UK: Gollancz, 2008), 214.

astronomical level. However, that is not to say that phasing is weird, but rather that the weird can operate using phasing.

Morton mentions that “a phasing object is a rupture at the heart of being.”<sup>93</sup> The rupture “is not a physically definable place,”<sup>94</sup> although Morton does refer to it as “the Rift.”<sup>95</sup> Morton also notes that “hyperobjects are big enough relative to us that they cause us to become aware of this rupture.”<sup>96</sup> The idea of the Rift as being something that we, as humans, cannot gain access to or have any knowledge of without external force is similar to Fisher’s concept of the outside. Fisher notes how “the weird de-naturalises all worlds, by exposing their instability, their openness to the outside.”<sup>97</sup> The idea of a hyperobject making humanity aware of the Rift is similar to this idea of exposing instability. In the case of humanity, it exposes us to the Rift and therefore to objects becoming in phase. To use the example of climate change, we only notice that the climate has changed around us when we experience heatwaves, droughts or flooding. However, the climate is changing around us, we are just not in phase with it. The process of hyperobjects becoming in phase with other objects does, therefore, carry links to the weird.

It is difficult to define or even visualise hyperobjects without using other objects by way of comparison. Due to this, hyperobjects exhibit interobjectivity, the idea that experience is shared between objects. This is similar to when we refer to the nonlocality of hyperobjects but rather than looking at specific objects that are interacting with each other, we can examine hyperobjects in a larger interwoven array of objects, what Morton refers to as “the mesh.”<sup>98</sup> Morton compares interobjectivity to humanity examining the footprints of dinosaurs. As the observer, we can see the footprints and the mud in which they are pressed, but we cannot see the dinosaur itself.<sup>99</sup> However, we know that it was there despite the dinosaur having been extinct for millennia. When examining archaeology and historical practices, Fisher notes that they carry an inherent eerie quality. This eeriness is present in the unknowable nature of what is absent, exemplified by Stonehenge or Easter Island.<sup>100</sup> This phenomenon could also be thought of as the moment you return home and discover you have been robbed. You can see your house and you know where some of your furniture is. However, your possessions and the burglar are long since gone. Hyperobjects can be thought of in the same way, notably due to their vast size. It is impossible to view a hyperobject in entirety. Instead, we must examine the objects they interact with. Owing to the examples above, the interobjectivity of hyperobjects can easily be considered eerie, as opposed to weird. However, in order to exhibit

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<sup>93</sup> Morton, 2013, 78.

<sup>94</sup> Morton, 2013, 78.

<sup>95</sup> Morton, 2013, 78.

<sup>96</sup> Morton, 2013, 78.

<sup>97</sup> Fisher, 45.

<sup>98</sup> Morton 2013, 83.

<sup>99</sup> Morton 2013, 86.

<sup>100</sup> Fisher, 32.

interobjectivity and be noted to do so, we must already know which objects are interacting with one another. When considering archaeology, we know that something is absent and thus it is eerie as we try to imagine what it is. With a hyperobject, we know which objects are interacting and thus while the examples can be considered eerie, interobjectivity itself is not.

Morton also notes that by having hyperobjects exhibit interobjectivity, this removes the teleology that comes with examining hyperobjects themselves. The endpoint of certain hyperobjects could be the end of the world. By instead investigating them through interobjectivity, the focus is drawn back to the hyperobject. This allows for more interaction and study of the hyperobject, spending more time in the company of the “strange stranger,”<sup>101</sup> as Morton puts it.

When studying the weird, interobjectivity, or a form of it at least, is also noticeable. Fisher notes how in weird fiction, a citation is often used to make entities, characters, or even books in text seem more real. Vague references to the location of the *Necronomicon*, the compendium of all things weird and arcane, at sites around the globe, have convinced readers to believe it is a real book.<sup>102</sup> The interobjectivity of the *Necronomicon*, the text, the characters reading about it and the reader themselves allows for the conjuration of this weird narrative. This is similar to how floods, droughts or even hurricanes<sup>103</sup> can conjure the hyperobject of global warming as they are reference to the hyperobject without specifically mentioning it. A further example of this would be to consider the migration of species. Climate change affects the migration of certain species by either delaying it or forcing it to happen sooner. This could be due to a number of reasons but fundamentally it is influenced by interobjectivity. Certain species will not migrate if there is an abundance of food where they are, others may migrate sooner due to a lack of it. They are being affected by the weird hyperobject of climate change. Food may not be available because of an increase in temperature or a decrease in suitable habitats. Migration is something we are familiar with, it can be observed throughout the year, but any change to it allows us to notice the weirdness at its heart. Furthermore, the vast, unvisualisable nature of hyperobjects, which only appear to the human consciousness through a fragmented invasion, reinforces the aspects of the weird that can be noticed in hyperobjects.

## CONCLUSION

This article opened with a comparison to research found in the Issue 28 of *Paradoxa*, referring to the use of global weirding to denote how we are living in “post-normal” times. The exact definition of normal is constantly debated and with the phrase “new normal” overtaking it, it is likely that we will never truly know what normal is. However, weirdness, this idea of the familiar becoming strange and the strange

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<sup>101</sup> Morton, 2013, 95.

<sup>102</sup> Fisher, 38.

<sup>103</sup> Morton, 2013, 71.

becoming familiar, is constant. While global weirding never really gained the necessary support it required to be a replacement for climate change or the newer climate crisis, as the crisis continues, weird is the most apt adjective to describe it. Morton mentions that he prefers to use “global warming” as opposed to climate change in his book in order to decrease climate change denialism and raise the levels of concern over climate change.<sup>104</sup>

However, when referring to hyperobjects, Morton also describes them as being weird, although he uses weird simply as an adjective. He does reference Lovecraft’s Cthulhu when examining temporal undulation. However, this is only a passing mention, rather than any direct comparison to the weird. Writing of what he names “ecological thought,” however, Morton outlines how a certain degree of weirdness is inherent to any ecological thinking.<sup>105</sup> Concepts that become strange must become familiar, and in the same instant, the familiar will become weird. This cyclical nature of the weird underpins ecological thought. If we are to think ecologically, then we must reconsider what we think of as strange because the planet is changing around us. Yes, this could be referred to as climate change, climate crisis, global warming or global weirding. But no matter how we name it, the process of even considering it is weird.

Current ecological thought is highly anthropocentric and thus tied fundamentally to the human. To embrace what Morton labels as ecological thought, we must start thinking outside the bounds of the human. We have established that hyperobjects are ever-present and by engaging with the weird, less human-centric studies on climate change can emerge at the intersection of natural sciences and the humanities. Furthermore, by using the weird in conjunction with hyperobjects, our understanding of climate change can take on a more hypernaturalistic stance, devoid of political or ethical influences and instead looking at climate change on a global scale. Climate change as a phrase is devoid of reference to humanity, instead focusing on the planet. However, discourses on climate change frequently refer to political and ethical issues in conjunction with it. This is not a negative trait but does at times mask the underlying ecological threat. By examining hyperobjects through the lens of the weird and creating a more hypernaturalistic view of climate change, the unknown aspects of climate change and the weirdness the planet will undergo become more prominent and thus can be addressed or contemplated more readily.

The hyperobject is a key piece of ecological thinking and by comparing it to theories of the weird and the weird canon, it can also be understood as weird. Furthermore, as we plunge further into the Age of Asymmetry, the hyperobject will become more relevant to current thinking about ecological crisis.<sup>106</sup> As a result, Morton predicts that thinking about the hyperobject will have to expand to account for the changing ecological state of the planet. If we are truly entering an era of hyperobjectivity, we may therefore also be set to encounter a phase of global weirdness. ▣

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<sup>104</sup> Morton, 2013, 7.

<sup>105</sup> Morton, 2016, 6.

<sup>106</sup> Morton, 2013, 2.

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