AT HOME IN AN UNHOMELY WORLD: ON LIVING WITH WASTE

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ABSTRACT

Modern-day waste, such as the microplastics in the water, particulate matter in the air and chemical waste in the soil, distorts notions of inner and outer, of familiarity and strangeness, of own and other, and turns our world into an unhomely (uncanny) place. This paper explores what it means to live with waste instead of trying to make it go away. When we explore the ontology of waste, we find that waste is never unambiguously (in the) present and invites us to take "being" as haunted and explore a "hauntology" (Jaques Derrida) of waste. This hauntology refers to being as ecological being or "being ecological" (Timothy Morton) and invites us to inquire after the "eco" in ecology: the Greeks *oikos* (home). When, as this paper suggests, we take cohabitation as a starting point, it becomes unclear who is the host and who has come to visit. Whose home takes central stage? And whose world? This paper argues we need to let go of an overarching concept of "world" and instead become familiar with (our) "habitat" and in so doing open it up to the non-humans we share our home with. Sticking with the metaphor of (un)home(liness) this paper argues that our house is a haunted house and explores ways in which we can become hospitable with these (unwelcome) guests.

Long ago, this violent planet of radioactive rock had learned to become home.
Atlas had loved the earth; the crumble of the soil between his fingers, the budding of spring, the slow fruit of autumn. Change.
Now the earth changed as Atlas had stayed still, feeling the tilted axis rotate against his shoulder blades. All his strength was focused into holding up the world. He hardly knew what movement was any more. No matter that he shifted slightly for comfort. The monstreous weight decided on everything.
Why?
Why not just put it down?

Jeannette Winterson in Weight (2005)

1. INTRODUCTION

"This is where we should start feeling at home," philosopher Slavoj Žižek remarks as he walks around a quite unremarkable garbage dump in the documentary *Examined Life* (2008). The porn magazine he finds there, the broken-down refrigerator with the orange juice carton in it, according to Žižek these are all things we should not disavow or try to simply make go "away", but feel at home with. This approach to waste is very different from the dominant discourse nowadays, in which waste is identified in terms of waste management and framed as an object of manageable sustainability (Valenzuela and Böhm, 2017). As manageable material waste is either taken as something to be treated technologically and be incinerated, landfilled or anaerobically digested, or as something to be re-used, recycled and become a resource once again (Gregson and Crang, 2010). But waste is unruly, it defies managerial control and "bites back" (Reno, 2015, 564) and in so doing reminds us that we are never fully in control. The microplastics that are roaming the earth these days are a constant reminder of this — we did not intend that material to be where it is (moreover, we did not intend that material to be in the first place) and they altogether escape our managerial grasp. In so doing they remind us of our "being ecological" (Morton, 2018). Or as Josh Reno puts it: 'as they circulate and deform, wastes mix with people and places, with which they mutually transform or become together' (2015, 561). When Žižek urges us to feel at home with waste, he urges us to explore the possibility of this being-with or living-with waste. Instead of trying to keep the bad things out, we should try and find a way of living with them.

In this paper I will explore what this living-with might entail. First, I will inquire into the ontology of waste and ask what it is and how it is. I will show that waste muddies our sense of being and of being present and in doing so invites us to explore a hauntology of waste, that is, to conceive of

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"being" as haunted. I will then argue that hauntology refers to being as ecological being or "being ecological" (Morton, 2013, 2017 and 2018) and urges us to inquire after the "eco" in ecology: the Greeks *oikos* (home). When we take cohabitation as a starting point, it becomes unclear who is the host and who has come to visit. Whose home takes central stage? And whose world? I will subsequently argue that we need to let go of an overarching concept of "world" and instead become familiar with (our) "habitat". In so doing we open up our world/habitat/home to the non-humans we are cohabiting with and try and find ways to become hospitable with these (unwelcome) guests.

2. THE ONTOLOGY OF WASTE

What is this thing called waste that we have to learn to live with? As the scholarship in waste grows, so does the variety of answers to the question "what is waste?" We should also keep in mind that the conceptualization of waste is predominantly based in and on Global North contexts (Bell, 2018) in which waste is usually taken and kept "out of sight", whereas in the Global South waste is very much "in sight" (Davies, 2019) and people are used (and forced) to living with waste, which leads to different conceptualisations (Millington and Lawhon, 2018). There seems, however, to be an agreement on the fact that the answer depends on why the question is asked (Moore, 2012) and who's doing the asking (Reno, 2015). There also seems to be an agreement on the fact that what we define as waste varies between societies, places and times (Divoudi, 2009).

When we ask what waste is, we're inquiring into the ontology of waste. Although we can easily affirm that there is such a thing as waste — the ontological question — it is less easy to determine how things become waste and how we should distinguish waste from non-waste. Waste comes to be by having been something else (Viney, 2014) and comes to be in and through our relating to it — there is nothing essential to these things we call waste (Kennedy, 2007). As I've argued in more detail elsewhere, when we inquire into the ontology of waste we find that waste muddies our sense of being and of being present and invites us to explore a "hauntology" of waste. I take the concept of hauntology from Jacques Derrida (2010 [1993]) who uses the figure of the specter to problematize the assumption that things are unambiguous spatially or temporally present and develops an ambiguous ontology, a paradoxical state of being and non-being, that is, a hauntology. This hauntology allows us to think of being as haunted (Doeland, 2019).

Where does this take us in relation to waste? For a long time, waste has been taken as something to be disposed off. Whereas in pre-industrial times everything was remade and used again, with the rise of consumer culture we needed to learn to waste (Strasser, 1999) and came in need of what Philip Slater (1970 [1990]) discerned as the "toilet assumption." He defines this assumption as the implicit belief that waste can be simply "flushed away" and that 'unwanted matter, unwanted difficulties and unwanted complexities, and undesirable obstacles will disappear if

they are removed from our immediate field of vision.' (Slater 1990, 19). Out of sight, out of mind. More recently Timothy Morton has come up with a similar metaphor: the "ontological u-band" (2013). He remarks that when we flush the toilet, we imagine the U-bend taking away our waste into some "ontologically alien realm". We are, however, increasingly bedoming aware of the fact that there are no such things as ontological u-bands and that all these things we try and make go away come back to haunt us, either now or in the future. When we act as if an oil spill is no big deal, assuming the ocean is so big it will water it down and clean it up for us, as if the 99% of the plastic produced that we cannot account for (Cózer et al., 2014) is really gone, as if the nuclear waste and highly toxic waste that remains from the waste-to-energy process is savely tucked under ground, we assume an "away" or a "beyond", a spatially and/or temporally ontologically alien realm that will take care of it.

When we inquire into the ontology of waste we are, then, refered to ecology — the relationship between people, plants, animals and minerals that teaches us that there is no "away" and that everything goes somewhere. Or as Morton puts it: 'thinking ecologically 'isn't simply pushing preformatted pieces around, thought meets specters, which is to say, beings whose ontological status is profoundly and irreducibly ambiguous. To encounter an ecological entity is to be *haunted*. Something is already there, before I think it' (2017, 64, emphasis in original) to which he adds later on that 'the specter is an *ontological* aspect of the structure of how things are' (2017, 96, emphasis in original). To be is to haunt and to be haunted.

Although in the past few decades the emphasis has moved away from waste as something that is to be disposed of and towards waste as a potential resource (Divoudi 2009, 131) we are still a long way from an ecological approach to waste. We might have become aware of our being "ecological beings" and that in taking out the trash of our respective homes we are dirtying and polluting that other home — our environment — but that hasn't changed much yet. Notwithstanding the (Western) mantra of "reduce, re-use, recycle", the global waste production is continuously increasing and could grow with 70% by 2015 as the World Economic Forum warned in 2018. And maybe that should't come as a big surprise. The current (European) discourse of "zero-waste circular economy" (Valenzuela and Böhm 2017, 26) underpins the logic of sustainable growth. It normalizes "green growth" and "sustainable growth" and purifies the connection between waste and unsustainability from all traces of ambivalence (Valenzuala and Böhm, 2017) and in doing so strips waste of its critical potential. When waste is taken as a resource, a manageable material and not as the necessary by-product of a system that thrives on wasting, or put differently, as a specter that reminds us of our ecological being, we will be haunted even more fervently. As research shows, when the stain of wastefulness is removed, we start to consume even more (Catlin and Wang, 2013). Trying to remove this stain is just another way of trying to make waste go "away". Instead, we should try and listen to what it has to say, as is usually the best way to deal with specters — the more one ignores them and tries to keep them out, the scarier the haunting

gets. What if we stop fighting the feeling of unhomeliness and try and be at home in and unhomely world? What if we accept that being has become unhomely, uncanny, *unheimlich*? And how to (co)inhibit this strange place?

3. BEING AT HOME (IN THE UNHOMELY)

Let us therefore return to Žižek urging us to become at home in a world of waste. What does it mean to be "at home" somewhere? When we ask what it means to be at home, we ask what it means to be ecological. The Greek root of "eco" is *oikos*, which refers to "house" or "household". The Indo-European root of "eco" is *woikos*, that in Latin became vicus, a neighborhood or settlement. When we inquire into our (being at) home, we are inquiring into ecology and the way in which we are related to our environment. Or as Moron puts it, oikos is about how the way in which each thing is inevitably inside another thing (Morton, 2013, 17). Just as I am a house for the numerous bacteria that inhabit my microbiome and at the moment also for the child that is developing inside me, — and, I might add, for the microplastics and chemicals that inhabit both me and the fetus (Houlihan, 2005; Wright and Kelly, 2017; Kontrick, 2018) — I myself am part of the house that is my town, my nation, the world. All these houses are increasingly becoming unhomely places — *unheimlich*, uncanny. But what kind of unhomeliness is this?

In his 1919 essay "Das Unheimliche" Sigmund Freud famously explores the notion of das Unheimliche, the uncanny, and argues that it is not so much the unfamiliar that gives rise to the uncanny, but the familiar. We experience something as uncanny when something we know for a moment appears strange to us, or when something unknown appears strangely familiar. The uncanny, in short, refers to the strangely familiar or the familiarly strange. As Anneleen Masschelein points out in her study of the uncanny (2011), in English texts the German unheimlich is not always translated in order to pun on the root Heim (home), which is lost in the common translation: uncanny. Why not translate it as unhomely? As Masschelein argues the concept of the unhomely is used mostly in architecture and postcolonial studies and has evolved to take on a slightly different meaning (2011, 13). I would say, however, that in this case "unhomely" is to be prefered to "uncanny", which is rooted in the Anglo-Saxon ken and refers to "knowledge" and to "understanding". For it is the (un)homeliness of waste that I'm struggling with here, not the (un)knowability of waste.

We experience something as unhomely when something we know for a moment seems strange to us, or when something unknown for a moment seems familiar. The unhomeliness of our modern-day waste-dominated world is, however, not so much about our feeling unhomely because we cannot keep our distance from the wastes that surround us — microplastics in the water, particulate matter in the air, etcetera — but in how these wastes refer to the unhomeliness of being itself, be it human, animal, vegetal or mineral being, that is, to our "being ecological".

If we are ecological beings, how can we clearly distinguish between what is inside and what is outside, between what is own and what is other? The unhomely is all about

the impossibility to clearly distinguish the two, or as Nicholas Royle puts it in his study of the unhomely, about "the crisis of the proper" (2003). The unhomely disturbs what we call "proper" (from the Latin proprius, "own") and in doing so it is also 'a crisis of the natural, touching upon everything that one might have thought as "part of nature": one's own nature, human nature, the nature of the reality of the world.' (Royle, 2003, 1) As Žižek too remarks at the aforementioned garbage dump, in romanticizing "nature" and construing it as a harmonious, balanced totality (that we humans are destroying) we are distancing ourselves from it. Nature is then taken as a biblical place, a garden of Eden, and humans as fallen beings that should try and make things right by finding their roots in it again. If nature is construed as such, it is put at a distance and on a pedestal. If we take nature from its pedestal or, even beter, conceice of an "ecology without nature" (Morton, 2007), we take being to be ecological and allow for the unhomely.

But how much room should the unhomely be given? As Derrida points, if we let in too much, our home is taken over and ceases to be our home (Derrida, 2000). Derrida: 'it is less a question of […] trying to master the *Unheimliche* or the uncanny so that it becomes simply the familiar, than it is of the opposite movement. But this is not to say that one has to turn oneself over, bound hand and foot, to the *Unheimliche*, because I don't believe in that' (1985, 156, emphasis in original). As Derrida argues elsewhere, a hospitable place relies not on openness only, but also on mastery — there is always a master of the house. Derrida distinguishes "conditional hospitality" from "absolute hospitality" and in one of his famous deconstructive moves shows that absolute hospitality would mean that all that is "own", that is "proper" that defines our house as our house, would cease to exist if we let the other in unconditionally, that is, there would be no home left in which to invite the other in. The notion of being "at home" is an unstable category that is caught up in the dialectic of both "host" and "guest" and also in the dialectic of "friend" and "enemy". He points out that there is hostility in hospitality (which he dubs hostpitality), which refers to the Latin root *hostis*, that can mean both friend and enemy (Derrida, 2000). Who is at home and who comes to visit? And how to distinguish friend from foe? When inviting someone in and telling them to make themselves "at home" we don't invite them to do as they please, but to play by our rules. Derrida: 'I want to be a master at home, to be able to receive whomever I like there. Anyone who encroaches on my "at home," on my ipseity, on my power of hospitality, on my sovereignty as host, I start to regard as an undesirable foreigner, and virtually as an enemy. This enemy becomes a hostile subject.' (2000, 55) Hospitality, then, depends on selecting and filtering, on categorizing and choosing who to invite in and on what grounds. This does, however, mean that the tables can turn and the host can become a hostage. Derrida: 'It is always about answering for a dwelling place, for one's identity, one's space, one's limits, for the ethos as abode, habitation, house, hearth, family, home.' (2000, 150) Who is to be invited in and who's barred from entrance?

Although, as I argue here, we cannot neatly distinguish ourselves from (our) waste, this does not mean we

should refrain from setting boundaries. As Josh Reno remarks: 'when waste management is lacking, people and wastes mix in ways that threaten human life and dignity' (2015, 561). We should keep in mind, however — and that is a lesson we can learn from Derrida, whose work is all about deconstructing the metaphysics of the proper and showing 'how difference operates at the heart of identity' (Royle, 2003, 24) — that what we call our own, our proper, is always already expropriated, because it is not our own or of our own. There was never anything proper, it was always already of the other too.

In making waste, however, we make things our own and mark them as our own. Appropriation and dirtying (or wasting) seem to go hand in hand. Although all living beings pollute to lay claim to their habitats, the emphasis on appropriation since the Industrial Revolution has let to unprecedented pollution (Serres, 2011). As Michel Serres point out, the verb 'to have' has the same root in Latin as 'to inhabit' (namely habere). Our language echo's the relation between the nest (or home) and appropriation. Serres: 'between the living space and possession: I inhabit therefore I have.' (2011, 8) Serres would therefore not invite us to regard the earth as our home, since it is because we regard it as our home, our own, that we dirty it. Serres: 'by generalizing and globalizing dirt and so erasing the borders where polluting starts or stops, and hence appropriation, the right to property suddenly reaches an intolerable threshold and becomes literally unbearable.' (2011, 71) Serres suggests that instead of marking places as our own (and in so doing, dirtying them) we should become tenants. Tenants too, inhabit the places they dwell in, but don't mark them as their own. Serres: 'The world, which was properly a home, becomes a global rental, the Hotel for Humanity. We no longer own I; we only live there as tenants.' (2011, 72) It is dispossession of the world that Serres is after. The "natural contract", a contract between the earth and its inhabitants, as Serres envisioned it twenty years prior in his book *Le Contrat naturel* (1990) turns out to be a rental agreement. Is that the way to go? Should we let go of the idea that the world is our home and conceive of it as a hotel? Will that allow us to share it with ghosts, specters, and other (unwelcome) co-inhabiters? Let's not forget that hotel rooms are anonymous places that we can easily make our own because all the traces of those who've come before us have been carefully removed. While we stay there, we mark these rooms with our waste. We do not, however take responsibility for our waste, but trust the housekeeping will clean up after us and take it "away".

4. FROM WORLD TO HABITAT

It is said that the world is a stage. But who's stage? Who are the lead characters and who play a supporting role? Whose world takes center stage? These days we are learning that humans are not the only actors. The décor is acting up and what used to be behind the scenes has crawled onto the stage, challenging humans' leading role (Latour, 2018). This changes the script and suggests different dénouements. It turns out we are not surrounded by passive, dead matter, but by active, "vital matter" (Bennett,

2010) such as waste, which is starting to "force thought" (Hawkins, 2009). How does this change the stage — the world? Up until now I have stuck to the notion of (un)homeliness and steered clear of the concept of "world". Although I cannot do justice here to this key philosophical concept, I will give some remarks on how I think we can and should open up (the concept of) "world" to non-humans.

Philosophers have been driven not so much by the desire to be in the world, but to find a vantage point on the world as a whole (Gaston, 2013). Such a notion of world does not leave room for much cohabitation. As Sean Gaston argues, it is Derrida who allows us to think of the possibilities of a concept of world beyond the logic of containment and in doing so allows for cohabitation of the world (2013, xiii). Why not let go of the concept of world altogether? Derrida does indeed argue for the end of the world. Drawing on a line of poetry from Paul Celan — "Die Welt ist fort, ich muss dich tragen" [the world is gone, I must carry you], he argues that with the disappearance of the world "as such" every death becomes an "end of the world." (2017, 170) However, a concept of the world remains of importance to Derrida insofar it indicates a domain in which people and animals live and die together, 'a place of common habitat' (2017, 264). In doing so, Derrida takes us beyond the logic of containment and allows for a world that is shared by, but not identical to all. Also, "the world is gone, I must carry you" holds a promise, a responsibility, a commitment, that we might not want to let go off.

Morton, however, does urge us to let go of (the) world. He argues that world is a "fragile, aesthetic effect" that depends on foregrounds and backgrounds, that has ended now that global warming (among others) has revealed that 'what we took for a reliable world, was just a habitual pattern.' (2013, 102) The world is not a passive, inert place that we can have our way with, but an active, alive environment that does not bend to our will. Morton: 'when we look for the environment, what we find are discrete lifeforms, non-life, and their relationships. No matter how hard we look, we won't find a container in which they all fit; in particular we won't find an umbrella that unifies them, such as world, environment, ecosystem, or even, astonishingly, Earth.' (2013, 129) We are surrounded by global warming and nuclear radiation, not a world. As Morton points out we prefer the world somewhere outside us, where we can admire and reflect on it. We don't like finding ourselves in it, where there is no "away" and things come crashing in on us.

What if we let go of (the) "world"? What concept would be able to replace it? Since we're looking for a concept that takes being to be ecological and steers clear of vantage points, I would suggest a concept that lies at the root of ecology: habitat. Whereas the concept of world is overarching per se — even when we make the world as small as our individual world, it still presupposes a birds-eye view of that particular world — the concept of habitat is specific to these things (both living ánd non-living) that inhabit it. Although in ecological research the term "habitat" is highly problematic, as the definition of habitat varies a lot (Hall, Krausman & Morrison, 2007) and is used correctly only 55% of the times (Hall, Krausman & Morrison, 2007; Kirk et al., 2018), in a theoretical context it works perfectly. Al-

though originally a fundamental concept in plant ecology only (Yapp, 1922) it has evolved into a concept that can describe virtually any location occupied by organisms (Kirk et al., 2018) and can, as I would suggest, also include the dwelling places of non-living things, or more succinctly put: include non-living things such as waste into the dwelling places of living things.

If we want to learn to live with waste, we have te learn to not try and close our habitats of, but share them with the other things — both living and non-living — that are already there. And let's not forget that even if we wanted to, we cannot keep our distance from waste — waste-things are hard to keep at bay. Both the waste that is landfilled (but leaks), that is incinerated (but leaves toxic ash and dioxins) and that is anaerobically digested (but not all of it) leaves remainders. There are, however, two types of waste that stand out in being hardest to live with and could be construed as the wastes of our times: plastic waste and nuclear waste. It is on living with these two wastes that I would like to turn to finally.

5. AT HOME WITH GHOSTS AND MONSTERS

As two recents documentaries reflect — *Into Eternity* (2010), that follows the construction of the radioactive waste repository in Onkalo, Finland and *Containment* (2015), that focusses on the communication of what is stored at the WIPP (Waste Isolation Pilot Plant) near Carlsbad, New Mexico to future generations—it is not easy to live with nuclear waste. How to make sure the waste is contained there? How to make sure that nuclear waste sites remain undisturbed (for at least 10.000 years)? How to make universal warning signs that will still be legible and understood after all these years? As Peter van Wyck points out in his study of nuclear waste burial and ecological threat, where nuclear waste is concerned there is no such thing as containment: '[n]uclear material stand in relation to their containment only very imperfectly — there is always leakage' (Van Wyck 2005, 19). This is not just a technical matter. As *Containment* shows we can never be sure that signs that we erect to spell "danger, don't dig!" might in a future times by future creatures be taken for an invitation to dig — "there are treasures here"!

We will have to keep knowledge alive about the danger of what is stored at these sites. Morton somewhat jokingly suggest that instead of storing our nuclear waste below ground and (accidently) forgetting about it, we should keep it out in the open and care for it there. Preferably in city centers, where we cannot avoid being aware of it and knowledge of its danger and conservation can be handed down through generations. Although not located in a city center, the Dutch nuclear waste disposal site COVRA (Centrale Organisatatie voor Radioactief Afval) is very visible. The building is painted a bright orange and open to visitors through educational programs and guided tours, that even give access to the faults in which the containers with radioactive waste are stored. In the end the radioactive waste stored there might indeed find its way into a city center. This waste disposal site was never meant as a permanent location and since it is located at the coast-

line and sealevels are rising ever more rapid (Bamber et al. 2019) it will have to be relocated a lot sooner than anticipated. Whatever we do with it, we should keep it in sight and in mind.

On medieval maps unknown territory was marked by monsters. Nowadays we seemingly have no uncharted territory left; there are no monsters on Google Maps. But there are monsters nonetheless. Nowadays these monsters are not supposed to unhabit parts of the world that we have not made our own yet, but are said to live in our waste and wasteland for example, such as the ever-growing mineral residues that are brought forth by mining processes (Ureta and Flores, 2018). Monsters are also found in the remains of material we did not only dig up, but also processed: oil-based plastic. To raise awareness for the ever-growing problem of plastic waste, plastic is regularly framed as monstrous, most recently in the Greenpeace's "Plastic Monster Ship Tour" (2019). Charactaristic for these projects is that the people involved — both in activist and in educational settings — gather plastic and gather together to make monsters out of plastic. Although these monsters are usually rather friendly looking, the idea is that they warn us and scare us of (Figure 1).

If we delve into the etymology of "monster" we learn that the roots of the English "monster" can be found in the Latin *monstrare* (to show) and *monere* (to warn). But how do they warn? And what for? Monsters tell us something about the times they arise in. As fantasy fiction writer China Miéville puts it in his "Theses on Monsters", history can be written in monsters and 'epochs throw up the monsters they need' (Miéville, 2012, 142). These monsters don't, however, speak for themselves. They need "decoding" (Miéville 2012). As Stephan T. Asma points out in the epilogue of his extensive study on monsters, it is no coincidence that he doesn't give a single definition of "monster". Rather, monsters are 'environmentally specific archetypes for a clan's central threat [that] appear and reappear in our stories and in our artwork because they help us (and helped our ancestors) navigate the dangers of our environment [and] provide us with a ritualized, rehearsable simulation of reality, a virtual way to represent the forces of nature, the threats from other animals, and the dangers of human social interaction' (Asma, 2009, 282). Nowadays we need not fear gigantic sea monsters lurking in the depths of waters unknown, but (among others) the plastics that we have let slip into these waters. The plastic monster makes us pay attention to life's "symbiotic entanglement across bodies" (Tsing et al., 2017). Plastic goes places, our bodies included. The danger, however, lies not so much in this monstrous entanglement itself, but in the denial of it. As the editors of *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* put it, 'our continued survival demands that we learn something about how best to live and die within the entanglements we have. We need both senses of monstrosity: entaglement as life and as danger.' (Tsing at al., 2017, 4).

How should we deal with these plastic monsters? As Latour points out, there is an important lesson to be learned from the most famous of monsters: Frankenstein's. Dr. Frankenstein's great mistake was not that he created a monster, but that he got scared of what he had created and

FIGURE 1: Plastic monster; photocredit: Marten van Dijl / Greenpeace.

abandoned his creature. As the monster tells Dr. Franken-stein when he meets his creator later on, he wasn't born a monster but became one when he was abandoned and left to his fate (Latour, 2011). If we take this cautionary tale to heart and ask wherein the monstrosity of plastic lies, we find that it is not so much in the material itself but in our lack of care for it. We have put a material in this world and then abandoned it.

Living in an unhomely world means living in a world of monsters. It means living in a world in which an ever-grow-ing amount of material demands our care. As Latour puts it, we are living in a time of cohabitation, a "monstrous time" (Latour, 2005). The question should no longer be: can we flush you? Or: will you go away? Or: are you going to disappear soon? But: can we cohabitate with you? This time of cohabitation is a radical break with the time of pro-gress and of succession. As Naomi Klein points, out the time of progress, that has been central to modernity, takes the world as a frontier of conquest rather than as a home (2014). Moreover, this future-oriented thinking relies on sacrificing in the present and in so doing allows for "zones of sacrifice" (Kuletz, 1998; Lerner, 2010; Klein, 2014) such as abandoned tarsand fields and mines, chemically pollut-ed areas and other wastelands. The time of cohabitation on the other hand, demands that we trade the temporal for the spatial and care for these spaces. This "spatial turn" (Mor-in 2015) requires that we relate to the space in which we dwell and invites us to consider matters of openness to that space and of border patrol — or in other words: hospitality.

Do we invite waste in? Derrida would probably argue that we need to set boundaries and decide on who to in-vite in and who to keep out. Monsters teach us that these boundaries are porous and that it is indeed of the greatest importance that we learn something about how best to live and die within the entanglements we have. As Tsing points out, 'we need both senses of monstrosity: entanglement as life and as danger.' (2017, 4) But most of all, we should become familiar with all these different kinds of things that are made to waste and decide if we are wise to let them in or not. A Derridian approach to this consists in the par-adoxical relation between conditional and unconditional hospitality. Paradoxical, because they push in opposite di-rections and cannot be sublated into one imperative. The ethical gesture requires we do not ask which side is the "good one," for the good is always on the other side (Morin, 2015). When I invite in unconditionally and with open arms, the good is on the side of the conditional and vice versa. Morin: 'I can never stand firm on the side of the good; rath-er, finding myself on one side, ethics is what pushes me to the other side indefinitely.' (2015, 33)

Back to Latour, who in his "parliament of things" (Latour, 1993) asks who are at the table, assembled, and then asks if and how those at the table can coinhabit. In Latour it is those who are already in the collective who decide if those outside it can or cannot enter. The meaning of Latour's "can we live together?" seems to be 'can we, who already

belong to the collective, live with you, who do not (yet) belong.' (Morin, 2015, 37) Morin suggests we complement Latour with a Derridean understanding of unconditional hospitality, that is, with an openness that, I would add, is reminiscent of Morton's notion of "ecological being". When we take cohabitation as a starting point it becomes unclear who is the host and who comes to visit. As Morin asks in the opening chapter of Humankind: 'Am I simply a vehicle for numerous bacteria that inhabit my microbiome? Or are they hosting me?' (2017, 1) Who knows, in time we might become dependent on the microplastics that are invading our bodies and that, like it or not, we have become entangled with — there is no way to keep the bad things out. Our house is a haunted house and we'd better make ourselves at home.

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