

FOR A FUTURE(S) AGAINST PROGRESS: BOG-TIME AND THE TROUBLING OF ECOLOGICAL GRIEF

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“Renewed generative flourishing cannot grow from myths of immortality or failure to become-with the dead and the extinct.”¹

Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016)

“The past leaks back through its own channels.”²

Barbara Hurd, *Stirring the Mud: On Swamps, Bogs, and Human Imagination* (2008)

It is not that we have grown comfortable. Perhaps it is that we have grown numb. Although the particularities of the disasters we witness, partake in, and suffer from in disparate ways often go undifferentiated until they come too close to ignore, we understand that we are living (and dying) through times of planetary ecocide. We are living (and dying) within ongoing times of escalating ecological crises, and reasons for grief abound. The aim of this article is to begin to explore a reformulation of the phenomenon of ecological grief that is especially focused on its resistant temporal potential. I do this by learning from ecologies that live with and within death, rather than seeking to overcome death. Therefore, this article begins to explore the possibility of reconfiguring the temporality that remains largely implied in discussions on ecological grief by learning from ecologies that disturb normative temporalities; ones that hold on to the dead, ones that in fact rely on the dead as partners in the project of co-constructing liveable futures.

In recent years, scholarship in psychology, environmental humanities, anthropology and sociology has engaged with the phenomenon of ecological grief. Across disciplines ecological grief has been approached widely, ranging from normative conceptions of it as a possible mental health-related response to climate change, to expansive readings that see it as a way of approaching the “sensuous experiences of the more-than-human world(s).”³ It is understood as a common and pervasive reaction to ongoing environmental destruction.⁴ Notably, it occurs not only from witnessing present ecological destruction, but also from *anticipating* unknowable future losses.⁵ The anticipatory dimensions of ecological grief distinguish it not only as a reaction to a specific loss, but as an invitation towards a mode of relating to the unsettling temporality of

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Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 160-161.

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Barbara Hurd, *Stirring the Mud: On Swamps, Bogs, and Human Imagination* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 82.

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Susan Clayton, Christie Manning, Kirra Krygsman, and Meighen Speiser, *Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications and Guidance, March 2017* (Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, Climate for Health and ecoAmerica, 2017), accessed October 15, 2024, <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/03/mental-health-climate.pdf>; Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman, eds., *Mourning nature: Hope at the heart of ecological loss and grief* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2017), 3-4.

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Andrew Bryant, “What is Climate Grief?,” *Climate & Mind*, August 25, 2019, <https://www.climateandmind.org/what-is-climate-grief>.

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Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville R. Ellis, “Ecological grief as a mental health response to climate change-related loss,” *Nature Climate Change* 8, no. 4 (2018): 276-277.

ecological catastrophe still to come.⁶ Despite the fact that ecological grief clearly applies to a multiplicity of temporal standpoints, encompassing past, present and future losses, theorisations of ecological grief tend not to disrupt the temporal constrictions left implicit in definitions of grief itself.

Canadian environmental advocate and leading expert on ecological grief, Ashlee Cunsolo, explains that ecological grieving experiences extend “the concept of a mournable body beyond the human.”⁷ Therefore, the phenomenon functions to expand the possible subjects of grief and to provide recognition of the “value [of] what is being altered, degraded, and harmed.”⁸ This recognition contains political potency insofar as it takes up American philosopher Judith Butler’s call to interrupt “the differential allocation of grievability that decides what kind of subject is and must be grieved, and which kind of subject must not.”⁹ Although extending the boundaries of grievability is necessary, I fear that expanding what is considered a worthy subject of grief is not enough. Ecological grief may still fail in its quest to exist as a mode of “resistance to the pressures, forces, and processes that are underpinning current practices of environmental destruction and commodification” if the chrononormativity left unquestioned in this expanded vision of grief is not disturbed.¹⁰ Ecological grief must do more than expand grievable subjects. It must also trouble the regime of neoliberal health and wellness cultures that define grief through capitalist temporalities, constructing it as a process of overcoming losses that necessarily takes place along a path of mythic temporal linearity.¹¹ Currently, grief is framed as a *process* that one goes through so that lost objects can be mourned, overcome, and griever can eventually return to their lives unencumbered.¹² Danish feminist scholar and writer in the field of queer death studies Nina Lykke suggests that the “time limits of mourning stipulated by biopolitical agendas of current neoliberal health normativity regimes” constrict grievers into experiencing a grief that is shaped by discourses that only accommodate a linear movement through time; an orientation that only points grievers forward.¹³ In this vision of grief, ‘healthy’ grief can only be expressed by connecting to what is lost through reminiscing on a past disconnected from the present. Even if the boundaries of what is grievable are expanded through present theorisations of ecological grieving, if we do not pay special attention to the ways that normative temporalities remain unperturbed, overcoming loss and returning to productivity remains the ‘goal’ of grief, even if it is a non-normative, boundary-expanding experience.

⁶ Panu Pihkala, "The process of eco-anxiety and ecological grief: A narrative review and a new proposal," *Sustainability* 14, no. 24 (2022).

⁷ Ashlee Cunsolo, "Climate change as the work of mourning," *Ethics & the Environment* 17, no. 2 (2012): 141.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Judith Butler, *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2004), xvii.

¹⁰ Chrononormativity is a term coined by Elizabeth Freeman used to describe the imposition of linear time in the service of normative capitalist aims. Chrononormativity is a regime of naturalised times, which also serves to convince individuals that there is only one type of temporality. See: Elizabeth Freeman, *Time binds: Queer temporalities, queer histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Cunsolo and Landman, *Mourning Nature*, 15.

¹¹ Kerri Mozessohn and Rhea Ashley Hoskin, "Vibrant death: A posthuman phenomenology of mourning," by Nina Lykke," *Journal of lesbian studies* 26, no. 4 (2022): 474–478.

¹² The pathologisation of grieving according to adherence to temporal linearity is evidenced most clearly by the inclusion of “prolonged grief disorder” in the most recent edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), revised in March 2022.

¹³ Nina Lykke, "Co-Becoming with Diatoms: Between Posthuman Mourning and Wonder in Algae Research," *Catalyst. Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 5, no. 2 (2019): 16–17.

When current temporal regimes that shape grief are not disturbed by theories of and engagements with ecological grieving, ecological grief approaches a “nostalgic, sentimental or utilitarian process – a process that does not challenge or change the intersecting necropowers¹⁴ that cause planetary-scale death and destruction.”¹⁵ If temporal normativity remains unquestioned in discourses of ecological grief; that is, if its framing as a process that one *goes through*, is not explicitly disrupted, it will do nothing to disrupt capitalist temporal logics. It will in fact, uphold these logics, subsuming environmental destruction into an undifferentiated background of necessary losses for the sake of capitalist *progress*. Good faith engagements in ecological grief often extend capitalist permission structures for environmental degradation, where we are invited to mourn for a mythic, idyllic nature, through consuming it as a nostalgic commodity representative of a bygone era.¹⁶ Thus ecological grief runs the risk of confirming the environment as dead – rendering it static once again, in a fatal repetition of the Cartesian dualism of dynamic/static – precisely by engaging in the mourning process. I believe that ecological grief has a more potent potential to intervene in the relentless ongoingness of forward-oriented, capitalist temporality.

The task ahead is to fundamentally displace Cartesian dualisms that, when applied to grief, uphold strict separations between past/present/future and alive/dead. To follow American anthropologist Anna Tsing, I search for a more-than-human thinking partner that may be equipped to help “evade assumptions that the future is a singular direction ahead.”¹⁷ I do this because we can only rightfully approach ecological grief from an epistemological standpoint that thinks with and from ecologies themselves, so that grief cannot remain defined through human-centred paradigms. My journey as an ecological griever, as someone who remains curious regarding the agency, presence, and potency of what is deemed dead, has led me time and time again to boglands. Boglands are ancient wetland ecologies that take thousands of years to form.¹⁸ In bogs, the rate of deposition of dead organic material exceeds rates of decomposition, and therefore they are sites that embody unique and heterogeneous temporalities wherein the dead mingle with the living and co-constitute the present and future health of the bog.¹⁹ Raised bogs, the most common type of bog, began to form

¹⁴ Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 11–40; Necropower is an extension of the concept of “necropolitics” a term coined by Achille Mbembe. Necropolitics originated to provide a counter theory to the Foucauldian concept of “biopolitics” which is understood as “the domain of life over which power has taken control” (Mbembe 2003, 12). Biopolitics examines how nations and institutions regulate and control aspects of subjects’ lives in order to create norm-adhering citizens. Mbembe’s critical intervention asserts that it is not the regulation of life that is the ultimate expression of the power and sovereignty of the Nation or the powerful, but the administration of death. Mbembe asserts that sovereignty is ultimately expressed through dictating not acceptable ways of life, but “who may live, and who must die,” (Mbembe 2003, 11). Necropolitics is a term that is useful to understand how some violence is not seen as exceptional, but perhaps necessary, excusable, or goes altogether unnoticed, while other forms of violence interrupt accepted norms and must be acted against. Necropower can be understood as an execution of necropolitical authority over individuals, populations, environments, or more-than-humans.

¹⁵ Marietta Radomska, Tara Mehrabi, and Nina Lykke, "Queer death studies: death, dying and mourning from a queerfeminist perspective," *Australian Feminist Studies* 35, no. 104 (2020): 95.

¹⁶ Catriona Sandilands, “Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies,” in: *Queer ecologies: Sex, nature, politics, desire*, ed. Catriona Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 333.

¹⁷ Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), viii.

¹⁸ Peter D. Moore, "The ecology of peat-forming processes: a review," *International Journal of Coal Geology* 12, no. 1-4 (1989): 89–103; Jeannie Evers, “Bog,” *National Geographic Education*, August 19, 2022, <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/bog/>.

¹⁹ R. Lindsay, R. Birnie, and J. Clough, *IUCN UK Committee Peatland Programme Briefing Note No 1. Peat Bog Ecosystems: Key Definitions* (Edinburgh: International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 2014), accessed October 15, 2024.

at the end of the last ice age as organic matter accumulated in depressions formed where glaciers once tore through land.²⁰ If there is poor drainage and the right climatic conditions, these depressions develop into bogs through the ongoing storage of deposited water and organic material.²¹ This organic material is most often in the form of fallen leaves and the remains of plants and mosses growing around the borders and eventually, across the surface of the basin.²² The poor draining necessary to form a bog leads to incredibly low levels of aeration in the water, because if water does not flow, oxygen cannot permeate. In a typical lake, this organic material would decompose over time, but in this case, matter accumulates incredibly slowly, stacking up and staying undigested in the body of the bog.²³ Without much oxygen, aerobic bacteria do not flourish, halting the possibility of organic decay, leaving all that is deposited in the mouth of the bog to remain there.²⁴ By never arriving at the stage of decay and resisting this progress, the bog preserves the dead within its watery body so that the dead composes its watery body.

This article will focus specifically on the distinct temporality(ies) and ecological makeup of boglands, in order to explore alternative ways of approaching grief. In the bog, death is indispensable, it is a generative force of continuance. Death is lived with, and the dead depended upon, rather than processed through and overcome. I contend that boglands ecologically embody a sort of melancholic temporality that resists notions of progress and makes clear that what is cast as dead and gone remains as a co-constitutive

partner in the crafting of futures full of multi-species liveability. This melancholic temporality I refer to as “bog-time.” Although similarities are abundant between what I term bog-time and the temporalities revealed by melancholia in the psychoanalytic sense, there remains a crucial difference. In psychoanalytic traditions, melancholia is an individual state that cannot contain political potential as it cannot be collectivised. Melancholia itself is understood as an incomplete grief, wherein the subject internalises loss so entirely that the lost object comes to define the self; stopping the possibility for an individual to move forward.²⁵ It is experienced and treated as a pathology that is oftentimes not able to be identified by the individual experiencing such melancholia, and therefore cannot be shared.²⁶ Bog-time, on the contrary, provides an ecological example of the ways that melancholic temporalities may be generative and widespread, and provides an example of how to experience ecological losses in a way that resists the processing and abandonment of what is lost through normative grieving experiences. Bog-time resists pathologisation by demonstrating that it is completely “natural” (whatever that word means) to live alongside loss, to live in a manner wherein loss comes to define

²⁰ Markus Egli, Guido Wiesenberger, Jens Leifeld, Holger Gärtner, Jan Seibert, Claudia Rössli, Vladimir Wingate et al., “Formation and decay of peat bogs in the vegetable belt of Switzerland,” *Swiss Journal of Geosciences* 114 (2021): 1-16; A. Robichaud and Y. Bégin. “Development of a raised bog over 9000 years in Atlantic Canada” *Mires & Peat* 5 (2009).

²¹ Evers, “Bog.”

²² Nils Malmer and Bo Wallén, “Accumulation and release of organic matter in ombrotrophic bog hummocks processes and regional variation,” *Ecography* 16, no. 3 (1993): 194.

²³ Benjamin Gearey and Rosie Everett, “Running out of time? Peatland rehabilitation, archaeology and cultural ecosystem services,” *Mires and Peat* 27, no. 31 (2021): 6; Holmes Rolston, “Aesthetics in the Swamps,” *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 43, no. 4 (2000): 596.

²⁴ Evers, “Bog.”

²⁵ Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and melancholia,” *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* 14, no. 1914-1916 (1917): 237-258.

²⁶ Freud, “Morning and Melancholia.”

the self in the present and plays a role in constituting the future. Bog-time is an ecological rehabilitation of melancholic temporality that refuses pathologisation in favour of disruptive potentiality. Freed from the solipsism of melancholia, understanding death in the way of boglands asks humans to recognise that widely felt - though individually experienced - affects may contain the potential to trouble the violences and immediacy of capitalist time.²⁷

It is my hope that through careful and slow methods, it is illuminated that boglands invite us to think critically about what role the past, and that which is deemed ecologically dead, play in the construction of a future(s) of multi-species conviviality. Boglands, by their very ecology, demonstrate that what is dead makes up the material of the present, and must play an explicit role in the constitution of ecologically considerate futures. Focusing interdisciplinarily on the unique temporality of boglands, I demonstrate, along with boglands, that beyond their use value as carbon sinks, these ecologies are vital epistemological companions if we are to embark on the necessary project of disrupting capitalist temporal structures and imagining alternative futures.

BOG-TIME

We can turn to the ecological makeup of bogs in order to see how temporalities are lived differently, to see how the dead are not confined to an inaccessible past, but present in the here and now, and co-constitutive of the future. Much like American multi-species feminist theorist Donna Haraway’s conception of compost, the bog not only enacts, but is “sympoiesis with the dead” where, for the bog “living-with” dead matter is “the only possible way to live-well.”²⁸ Lacking the ecological conditions for decomposition, all materials that fall into the bog remain there. Layer after layer of dead plant matter stack upon themselves. Dead but not decomposed, this organic material compresses into a waterlogged material called peat.²⁹ Peat, the thick and heavy substance that composes the body of the bog ‘grows’ incredibly slowly, at a rate of only a half to two millimetres a year.³⁰ Some bogs across the United Kingdom have layers of peat up to ten metres deep, meaning the bog has been developing layer upon layer for approximately ten thousand years.³¹ In the bog, dead matter does not just mingle with the living, but provides the conditions necessary for life to be sustained.³² Preserving dead matter rather than processing it in the form of decay is but one way we could learn from bogs about how to grieve differently. For the bog embodies a melancholic ecology, where the lost object quite literally “constitutes the self,” ecologically speaking. According to Canadian scholar of environmental humanities Catriona Sandilands, the melancholic life of the bog may serve “as an ongoing psychic reminder of the fact of death in the midst of creation.”³³ Bogs trouble the stability of temporal boundaries by offering material evidence that the separation between past and present is but a myth.

²⁷ Moss Berke, “Weathering Grief: Alternative Temporalities, Undone Senses and Melancholy Ecologies in Times of Planetary Ecocide” (Master’s thesis, Utrecht University, 2023), 89.

²⁸ Ibid, 157, 162; Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 157.

²⁹ Moore, “The ecology of peat-forming processes,” 89.

³⁰ Lindsay, Birnie, and Clough, *IUCN UK Committee Peatland Programme*, 3.

³¹ Virginia Gewin, “Bringing back the bogs,” *Nature* 578, no. 7794 (2020): 205.

³² Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Gathering moss: A natural and cultural history of mosses* (London: Penguin UK, 2021), 112-113.

³³ Sandilands, “Melancholy Natures,” 333.

Although peat is commonly referred to as growing very slowly, to do justice to the bog's distinct temporalities, I contend that we must recognise peat growth as accumulation.³⁴ This distinction may seem small, but it is important if we are to recognise the ways that bogs disturb capitalist linear temporalities. Recognising peat growth as peat accumulation troubles a chrononormative organisation which offers a vision of the present as a distinguishable and separate moment from the past. Rejecting chrononormativity, bogs are defiantly polychronic. They are "assemblages where past, present, and future intermingle."³⁵ As postcolonial and cultural scholar Ian Baucom so succinctly states in *Specters of the Atlantic* (2005), "Time does not pass, it accumulates."³⁶ The bog beckons its interlocutors to recognise that we are living in a present that cannot be cordoned away from the past because, in the case of the bog, this present is the accumulation of every leaf that has fallen into its open body, every dead cell of sphagnum that crept across its surface. Peat is a melancholic substrate, it introduces its interlocutors to an alternative temporality. Bogs are not ancient as in timeless. They are ancient as in timefull.

Bogs may serve as a figure to remind us in times of mass planetary death how to "stay with the ragged joy of ordinary living and dying" that requires a radical recognition and enactment of sympoietic relations with the dead because without the influence and input of the dead, relations amongst the living are incomplete.³⁷ Rather than assuming that alternative ways of living require "starting over and beginning anew," attentiveness to the indispensable role of the dead in the emergence and life of the bog helps us to imagine ways of liveability that "inherit without denial and stay with the trouble of damaged worlds."³⁸ Whereas we may live in a fiction that imagines easy divisions between past, present, and future, a temporal organisation that will always encourage the renouncing "of the past in an ongoing search for new cathexes," the bog offers us an example of a present liveliness that is materially "constituted by the past."³⁹ They invite us to become intimate with death rather than seek resolution through processes of grieving. The very body of the bog and its refusal to decay and process the dead invites us to "radically imagine worlds that are possible because *they are already here*. [emphasis added]"⁴⁰ Bogs do not allow us to imagine that the only way to combat climate change is to "start from scratch."⁴¹ Instead, through their ecological constitution and the unruly temporalities they reveal, boglands gesture towards a different type of liveability, one that is instructive as we occupy Anthropocene scenes of mass death. Bogs put into stark relief how unsuited humanist and medicalised frameworks are for attending to the phenomenon of ecological grief, in part because, as the bog shows us, its vitality and ecological health is dependent precisely on

³⁴ Aletta Bonn, Tim Allott, Martin Evans, Hans Joosten, and Rob Stoneman, *Peatland restoration and ecosystem services: science, policy and practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 195.

³⁵ Hillary Eklund, "After wetlands," *Criticism* 62, no. 3 (Summer 2020): 468.

³⁶ Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) 24.

³⁷ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 167, 157.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 150.

³⁹ Sandilands, "Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies," 340.

⁴⁰ Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Nils Bubandt, Elaine Gan, and Heather Anne Swanson, *Arts of living on a damaged planet: Ghosts and monsters of the Anthropocene* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), G9.

⁴¹ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 138.

retention of the dead. By thinking through bog-time, we can see that the bog lives in defiance of dualisms such as alive/dead and past/present.

Rather than "elegy in the Anthropocene" bogs offer "temporal unsettling."⁴² Elegy renders static by confirming the dead as gone. Bogs, by materialising only outside of the bounds of chrononormative time, provide generative examples of other forms of livability that exist with the dead, with untimeliness, with heterogeneity and multiplicity instead of finality. They resist the apocalypticism of our time not by outrunning, defeating, or overcoming death, but by remaining with it, and relying on the input of the dead to shape the future. Capitalist futurity is a homogenising force that weaponises even an affect as understandable as grief. Bogs, if we approach them with a willingness to displace what we think we know, offer alternative ways of being with death. Bogs beget creative methods of recognition. They ask us to abandon temporal linearity in favour of staying with what has been deemed useless. They beckon us to stay with what is largely unrecognisable; the intermeshment of death and life and the unruly temporalities born from within the tangle.

The most prominent plant species in boglands is the sphagnum moss, which is often referred to as the architect of the bog.⁴³ Once peat has accumulated enough that it reaches the level of surrounding ground, sphagnum can begin to creep slowly over this outermost layer. Sphagnum gives boglands their spongy and indeterminate surface, as it stretches over the remains of dead plants stuck in waterlogged peat, as well as across small pools of stagnant water. As it stretches across the muckish and wet surface, it extends undulating ground by incorporating water into its structure. As sphagnum interlaces within peat and retains water within its cells, it forms a surface that is not quite solid ground, sphagnum itself being more water than solid matter.⁴⁴ As sphagnum dies, some is incorporated back into peat, and in this long process, roots of new mosses sprout from the preserved shoots of the dead.⁴⁵ It flourishes in the nutrient-poor environment, and is a micro-scale example of the indispensable role of the dead in the bog ecosystem, as its water retention ability comes directly and only from its dead cells.⁴⁶ Undecayed and remaining a part of the plant, though not going through photosynthesis, these dead cells act as water retention devices, providing surface area and nutrient stores for new mosses to grow from.⁴⁷ In fact, only one out of twenty cells in the sphagnum plant are alive.⁴⁸ Their highest function is provided only after death, when they become the storehouses of water that future sphagnum depends upon.⁴⁹ Defying through its ecology the imposition of past/present, dead/alive, land/water, even on the smallest of scales, sphagnum shows us how uncomfortably the bog sits within a temporal schema that prioritises a bounded notion of the future, through imposing a strict separation between life and death. For the bog, and for its predominant plant, the sphagnum moss, death is an

⁴² Eklund, "After wetlands," 471.

⁴³ Kimmerer, *Gathering moss*, 112-113.

⁴⁴ "Moss," The Flow Country, accessed October 15, 2024, <https://www.theflowcountry.org.uk/flow-facts/moss/>.

⁴⁵ Kimmerer, *Gathering moss*, 112-113.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

ongoing presence that ensures the continuation of life. It is able to live only through internalising loss.

The bog's defiance of bounded temporal divisions is more than epistemologically generative; it actually makes the bog more useful in combatting the effects of man-made climate change. Peat stores more carbon than all the world's forests.⁵⁰ Precisely by resisting decay, bogs store rather than release gases typically emitted in decomposition. So despite being only 3% of the world's land mass, peatlands are the world's best terrestrial carbon sequestration site.⁵¹ When we look with eyes attuned for progress, that is with a vision shaped by chrononormativity to always be oriented forward, the bog can look like a site of death, and this death can look like an ending. From another perspective, a life outside of the binary distinctions of life/death can be recognised. Visions that promote a fiction of distinct temporal borders strain against material evidence provided by the bog. This vision cannot contend with "wetlands' rich and ongoing mixture of past, present, and future."⁵² Perhaps, what the mixture shows us, is that grief, in its present construction, is not the most appropriate relational standpoint for the human to relate to dead, dying or precarious more-than-human worlds, for grief cements the dead as gone – as mournable – not as stubbornly and informatively present, even in a state of death. Though reasons to mourn abound, I wonder if we could do so differently. I wonder if we could see the potential of relearning grief through how bogs live, with a persistent, stubborn and ongoing relation to the dead in the present; with the infusion of the dead into the self. Just as the bog needs death, so perhaps, do we. I do not claim that we need death in order to propose an easy way of excusing planetary ecological destruction, but to ensure that destruction cannot melt into an undifferentiated background. Keeping death present, close, and always a part of us not only acknowledges its role in the constitution of futures, but prioritises its role in the constitution of futures. I do not intend to present a pessimistic vision. On the contrary, I simply refuse to accommodate tendencies to destroy that come with an injunction to overcome and process destruction quickly for the sake of our own 'health.' What if we learned from the bog, and refused to overcome, choosing instead to accumulate?

A CONCLUSION WITHOUT AN ENDING

In times of global human and more-than-human loss, re-imagining grief as a way towards becoming-with the dead, rather than a way through which death is processed ensures that we move away from extractive and exploitative environmental relationships which permit mass ecological harm, and instead, craft the future with the input and influence of the devastation that has already been wreaked. I propose that when approaching ecological grief, we allow ourselves and our grief to be informed by sites that already live differently, that already express and embody alternative temporalities because not only do they present other ways of grieving, of living with loss, but in doing so, they present ways to approach the future that rupture

⁵⁰ Gewin, "Bringing back the bogs," 205.

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Ibid.

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Eklund, "After Wetlands," 460.

its continuity. Bogs offer a future vision of a heterogeneity; the past, the destroyed, the abandoned, take up their place as constructors and populace of a tentacular future space. Relearning grief from the bog allows for complexity, contradiction, boundary crossing, and defying norms. In short, it allows us to develop some of the tools we may need as we approach uncertain, unstable futures. Boglands provide us a way to envision time that does not take destruction and death as an End. We desperately need this as we live (and die) within times of great destruction, but not times of simple endings.

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