Dolphins in Venice:

On Nature, Revenge, and Beauty

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This article suggests that Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin contribute to contemporary discussions about how we conceptualize nature, first, via their notion of natural-history and, second, via their thinking through the contentious topic of natural beauty. Benjamin and Adorno prove especially valuable because they acknowledge the ideological obfuscations that often inhere in the cultural deployment of natural beauty without discounting the domain of aesthetics entirely. This is important because of the continued force of aesthetics in environmental issues, and the increasingly common, vivid nightmares and fantasies about "our" deserved comeuppance in the public imagination.

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In many ways, the contemporary pandemic we are all experiencing is new. Fatalistic attempts to make out "nature's revenge," however, are not. Ranging from a vision of cosmic justice (as Pope Francis recently suggested) to smug Malthusian intimations on Twitter ("we are the virus"), many macabre interpretations of the current global health crisis are amplifications of common reactions to anthropogenic global warming: we are finally getting what we deserve. (1) Found in the popular imagination *and* in environmental philosophy, these interpretations are tempting but dangerous: by promoting a blanket sense of humanity's collective sinfulness and guilt, not only do they paper over the specific practices and interests that are responsible for extreme environmental degradation, but they promote a sense of righteousness—indeed a naturalness—in the human suffering that results. Such interpretations of both the pandemic and our contemporary ecological crisis carry serious metaphysical and theological baggage.

Many working in the environmental humanities offer alternatives to this ontologically fallen and collectively sinful narrative while still recognizing the geological scale at which human activity has changed life on earth. In the recent volume edited by Jason Moore, *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?*, contributors from a range of disciplines argue that it is not a homogenized "humanity" that instigated a new geological epoch, but capitalist actors and systems of production, consumption, and exploitation—hence, Capitalocene and not Anthropocene. (2) Kyle Whyte, however, complicates the novelty of our ecological moment in aptly titled works such as, "Climate Change: An Unprecedentedly Old Catastrophe," "Is it Colonial Déjà Vu? Indigenous Peoples and Climate Injustice," and "Our Ancestor's Dystopia Now: Indigenous Conservation and the Anthropocene." (3) Whyte argues that contemporary discussions of global climate disruption largely ignore recent history, wherein Indigenous peoples were subject to both colonial and capitalist-driven anthropogenic environmental change and forced displacement to unfamiliar environments. This disavowal not only affects the historical accuracy of contemporary climate discussions but inflects ongoing struggles as well, as Indigenous communities around the world continue to lead efforts to combat the expropriation and destructive uses of land and resources.

Axelle Karera also demands that we refuse to "lose sight of those for whom both the Anthropocene and its apocalyptic imaginaries do not

necessarily hold any emancipating value," pointing to the erasure of race in major works on Anthropocene ethics. (4) Taking aim at thinkers who understand the Anthropocene to have displaced the anthropocentric subject by revealing the co-relationality of human and non-human life, Karera charges that this move again homogenizes a collective (albeit futural) subject and sanctions the erasure of anti-black racial oppression. Again, the pandemic and anthropogenic climate disruption align in that they mark similar failures of political institutions. This is undeniably the case in the United States, which is both the biggest carbon polluter in history and now the leader of the world in COVID-19 infections and deaths. The dynamic that holds true globally for victims of climate change is playing out in miniature in the United States' handling of the virus, where Indigenous, Black, Latinx, working, and poor communities are disproportionately exposed to harm and death while political debate remains centered on concern for the short-term health of the economy. (5) Anecdotally, but in line with the critics of the Anthropocene just mentioned, the placards that began to mark the lawns of predominantly middle and upper-middle class neighborhoods at the beginning of the pandemic, assuring us "We Are In This Together," or "We Will Get Through This," are perhaps prescriptively aspirational but descriptively false. (Even with the addition of a "Black Lives Matter" sign.)

Both public discourse concerning "nature's revenge" and academic discussions of the Anthropocene and Capitalocene reveal how interwoven our conceptions of nature, history, agency, and ethical responsibility are. Far beyond the issue of scientific evidence for global warming, our current moment demands that we confront a host of problems regarding how we envisage nature, the aptness or failure of our conceptions of history in relation to nature, and what forms of action can do justice to both the ecological and social disasters "we" now face with differing degrees of vulnerability.

I suggest that Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin—from their vantage point on the implosion of Europe—offer insights into this cluster of issues, first, via their notion of natural-history and, second, via their thinking through the contentious and much-maligned topic of natural beauty. Both thinkers parse divergent conceptualizations of nature from within European rationality, focusing on the ways in which nature has been the object of domination and alternative ways of refiguring our relationship to nature. Moreover, I argue that Benjamin and Adorno prove valuable precisely because they acknowledge the force of ideology within the conceptual figurations of nature and natural beauty without discounting the domain of aesthetics entirely. This is important because of the continued force of aesthetics in environmental discussions, especially the increasingly common, vivid nightmares (*and fantasies*) about "our" deserved comeuppance. In what follows, I will outline a few specific ways that Adorno and Benjamin contribute to critiques of harmful conceptualizations of nature, in light of which natural beauty itself must be reconfigured.

The first such resource is the critical concept of natural-history, or *Naturgeschichte*. In his 1932 lecture, "The Idea of Natural-History," Adorno's aim is "to dialectically overcome the usual antithesis of nature and history." (6) On one hand, this entails the unravelling of the identity of nature and the principles of necessity and repetition. When nature and necessity are conflated, nature takes on the sense of fate and inevitability. On the other hand, Adorno will seek to dislodge the sense in which history is conceived as intervening in the substance of nature, where history is the human activity that exclusively introduces the qualitatively new. History only appears as constitutively progressive or emancipatory, however, against the alleged stasis of nature. By challenging the strict conceptual dichotomy of nature and history, Adorno seeks to uncouple the triumphalist union of history and progress, where the suffering of the past or present is trivialized and/or justified in the name of development. Ultimately, the dualism that results from carving up nature and history in mutually exclusive terms serves the perception that social reality is unchangeable.

Adorno therefore assigns philosophy a twofold task: "to comprehend historical being in its most extreme historical determin*acy, where it is most historical, as natural being*," *and, "to comprehend nature as a historical being where it seems to rest most deeply in itself as nature."* (7) First, to comprehend historical being "*as nature*" is to understand that historical conditions appear to us as given, fated, and inevitable. Adorno builds on Georg Lukács's articulation of "second nature" in *The Theory of the Novel*, which denotes the way in which the organization of life under capitalism appears to be everlasting and unalterable, from its institutions and values to its very articulation of an eternal or essential human nature. Drawing on Hegel, Lukács suggests that the modern alienated subject "experiences his self-made environment as a prison instead of as a parental home." (8) Crucially, by emphasizing the *constructed* aspect of social world, Lukács challenges the capitalist social order's disavowal of its origin in human activity and the necessity it falsely claims. The effort to *denaturalize history* is therefore in service of political action and alternate histories that contest the "unchangeable" appearance of the existing state of affairs.

Second, to comprehend nature as historical "*where it seems to rest most deeply in itself as nature*" entails recognizing that the natural, material world is not alien to history. This move to *historicize* nature means both that conceptualizing "nature" is a historical and cultural act, and that nature itself is materially changed by human activity. While the latter point should be undeniable given the realities of contemporary anthropogenic climate change, attending to the former idea reveals that the separation of nature from history is itself a historical and culturally specific feature. Environmental historian William Cronon has shown that the myth of "wilderness," or pristine nature untouched by human history, is itself an artifact of a particular European imagination deployed in order to justify colonial expropriation of the Americas, despite millennia of

cultivation. (9) Vanessa Watts, scholar of Indigenous ontologies and knowledge production, further marks the cultural specificity of the conception of "untouched nature" by contrasting it with Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe cosmologies. She describes how "habitats and ecosystems are better understood as societies from an Indigenous point of view; meaning they have ethical structures, inter-species treaties and agreements, and further their ability to interpret, understand, and implement." (10) Watts' account of Indigenous ontology challenges the ahistoricity of the scientific and disenchanted separation of what is natural and what is human, while also accounting for how, through political and epistemological colonization, the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe conception of agency, land, and the human has been and continues to be deprived of its truth status.

Pointing to the historical construction of nature and even the historical specificity of the sciences does not commit one to anti-realism, as some fear. Historicizing nature also entails the recognition that like the historically shifting conceptions of nature, nature itself *really* changes. The last wooly mammoths really went extinct around 4,000 years ago (on a remote Arctic island); a British biotech company really genetically engineered male mosquitos (the OX5304—with the purpose of causing the temporary collapse of a wild population); the ocean's acidity has really increased (with dire consequences for the integrity of organisms' shells and marine food chains reliant on them). Moreover, human biological qualities themselves are formed and transformed via mutable social practices. (11)

Adorno derives the directive to comprehend nature as historical from Benjamin's *Origin of German Tragic Drama*. In his notoriously failed *Habilitation*, Benjamin asserts the importance of the crude, Baroque mourning play, or *Trauerspiel*, where human politics are overlaid with natural images: "for example, in the language of the Baroque, the fall of a tyrant is equivalent to the setting of the sun." (12) For Benjamin, and in turn for Adorno, the *Trauerspiel* is significant for staging the convergence of nature and history in the element of transience, passing, perishability [Vergänglichkeit]. Having inherited the medieval dramatic forms of the Passion-Play and Mystery-Play, which "present the futility of world events and the transience of the creature as stations on the road to salvation," the Trauerspiel playwrights also find themselves in a newly "empty world" following the Lutheran dismissal of good works and the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. (13) In this state of metaphysical abandonment—and amidst the turmoil of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation—the poets depict suffering creation that remains in need of redemption but "it was just that this century denied them a religious fulfillment, demanding of them, or imposing upon them, a secular solution instead." (14) Politics and history, devoid of otherworldly intervention, become the stage where the drama of perishable, human life plays out, and this itself constitutes the drama of the *Trauerspiel*.

Benjamin's examination of the *Trauerspiel* and the abandoned natural creature is powerful because he attends to the incomplete inheritance of theological concepts which, torn from their contexts, survive—unmarked—in secular institutions. This interpretive framework is important for intervening in responses to climate change that make nature into a vengeful God-like force or promote a naturalness in human suffering, a justified consequence of an essential and collective hubris. And while Benjamin's text is rich and famously dense, for my purposes here I will linger a moment longer on his portrayal of natural-history, wherein human beings appear as profoundly natural in their subjection to suffering and death.

In the specific literary form of the Baroque German *Trauerspiel*, allegory is a privileged form, and the skull is a privileged object. Allegory requires the interpretation of fragments; it is the narrative form wherein every image also means something other than what it is, and signs have accumulated from various provenances. Exemplary among allegorical objects, the "death's head" expresses "everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful" and thus relates to human existence in general, while just as crucially it raises questions about "the biographical historicity of the individual." (15) Transience—perishability, natural-history—is not simply ontologized into a homogenized quality that all share. Rather, it demands attention to real historical features in their unique specificity, what Yannik Thiem calls the historical "conditions of this natural demise." (16)

Thus, for Adorno, it is Benjamin who "marks the decisive turning point in the formulation of the problem of natural-history" because he brings "the resurrection of second nature out of infinite distance into infinite closeness and made it an object of philosophical interpretation." (17) That is, Benjamin redirects philosophy to the task of "awakening [the] enciphered and petrified object." (18)Benjamin reorients philosophy towards interpreting objects—including conceptual constellations—in a manner responsive to their social and historical specificity. Adorno takes up this mode of attention and interpretation—alongside the "dialectical" dynamic of natural-history—in his tracking of the domination of nature in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, where each object—from the emerging subject in *The Odyssey* to forms of life under late-stage capitalism—is analyzed with a view to how nature is figured as both dominating and dominated.

It is also only with this framework of natural-history, I argue, that we should begin to approach questions of natural beauty and the aesthetics of nature. As many note in the environmental humanities, aesthetic value has long been a component of the conservation movement, especially in the United States. The use of charged images of nature are also part of the phenomena with which I opened this essay: the Pope evokes an apocalyptic hellscape, conjuring the fires in Australia, melting glaciers, and floods all at once. Alternately, the "we are the virus" contingent

delightedly shared images of swans—and even dolphins—returning to Venice, and an endangered Malabar civet returning to the Indian city of Meppayur, as proof that "nature is healing itself." All these photos were inaccurate or doctored. Because of the significance of the aesthetic for environmental issues today, I suggest that Adorno offers key insights to the discussion. Perhaps best known in some circles for his philosophical engagement with modernist art, Adorno also writes on natural beauty, its "repression" within philosophical aesthetics, and its commodification within a social order reliant upon the domination and exploitation of nature.

Adorno's treatment of natural beauty is especially pertinent for us today because he imbues his analysis with elements of natural-history. (19) He does so by interpreting natural beauty *as historical* "where it seems to rest most deeply in itself as nature" and as natural "in its most extreme historical determinacy." Adorno *historicizes natural beauty* by indexing it to concrete historical, cultural moments. When natural beauty emerged as a significant element of aesthetic experience in the European context, the concept was affiliated with "the alleged natural rights of human beings" that served as the foundation for bourgeois emancipation; natural beauty was precisely "coined in opposition to absolutism's wigs and formal gardens." (20) Adorno *denaturalizes natural beauty*, however, when he argues that even in its development out of the bourgeois revolutionary spirit of the 18th century, natural beauty sustains the fantasy of an uncorrupted immediacy outside of history or society. Following the bourgeois revolutions' failure to solve social alienation and inequity, the cult of natural beauty then serves to redirect social disquiet from political engagement to aesthetic substitutes. The wilderness experiences and nature reserves that make up a good part of the tourist industry today serve similar functions.

For Adorno, the compensatory satisfaction of an escape into "nature" disavows the historical and social mediation of the experience. And as many have since also noted, it has historically required a distance from labor. Furthermore, conceiving of nature as outside of history reinforces the idea that history and politics are unchangeable. Adorno would agree with contemporary environmentalists critical of conservation, worrying that in designating certain tracts of land as protected wilderness, nature then becomes "neutral and apologetic," "an alibi" for larger systems of destruction and expropriation. (21) Natural beauty is therefore an ambivalent aesthetic experience for Adorno: it seems for a moment to offer a glimpse of a world free from domination, but this idealized picture can also align with reactionary resignation towards the modern world, obscuring the need for work within history.

I conclude with some thoughts on the ruin, natural-history, and the use of images in contemporary imagination. In addition to the human creature, Benjamin also emphasizes that *history itself* is subjected to transience. He therefore focuses on the ruin:

The allegorical physiognomy of the nature-history, which is put on stage in the *Trauerspiel*, is present in reality in the form of the ruin. In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. (22)

Skull and ruin mark the perishability of both nature and history. Here Benjamin moves the focus beyond the theater stage to the wider environment—to a *landscape*—where history's natural aspect appears in the ruin and nature's decline takes on historical form. The ruin poses the very question of significance, of signification, as its meaning is not assured. Far from asserting a homogenizing vitalism, Benjamin's emphasis on death and decay again point to the specific and unique historical conditions of natural demise.

The ruin, counterintuitively only at first, appears also in Adorno's discussion of natural beauty and the cultural landscape in *Aesthetic Theory*, decades after the "Natural-History" lecture. Challenging the definition of natural beauty as opposing the world of human activity, Adorno investigates the cultural landscape, an important moment in the nineteenth century where natural beauty expanded beyond "inviolable" (Rousseauean) nature. The World Heritage Committee today designates three main types of cultural landscapes, all of which reflect the "combined works of nature and of man," expressing "a long and intimate relationship between peoples and their natural environment." First is the landscape clearly designed and created intentionally by humans; second, the organically evolved landscape, which results from "an initial social, economic, administrative, and/or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment"; and lastly, the associative cultural landscape, the value of which stems from the powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations with the place. (23) In the cultural landscape, such as UNESCO's example of "cultivated terraces on lofty mountains," one can see *history and nature* in transience—one beholds both the shaping of the land by human hands, and the natural decay of the artefactual. Adorno focuses on the cultural landscape as a clearly "artifactitious domain that must at first seem totally opposed to natural beauty," but, like "hillside towns that are related to their setting by the use of its stone," the artefactual elements become beautiful by virtue of being related to their natural setting. (24) Adorno cautions against the reactionary tendency to glorify nature and the past in comparison with contemporary world, and yet, "an ahistorical aesthetic consciousness that sweeps aside the dimension of the past as rubbish is no better. Without historical remembrance there would be no beauty." (25)

For Adorno, the cultural landscape, "*which resembles a ruin even when the houses still stand,* embodies a wailful lament that has since fallen mute." (26) In this discussion, natural beauty does not facilitate an aesthetic escape from the contaminated human world, and instead, Adorno speculates, "perhaps the most profound force of resistance stored

in the cultural landscape is the expression of history that is compelling, aesthetically, because it is etched by the real suffering of the past." (27) Adorno's description of natural beauty as intimately connected to history, rather than standing outside of history, presses us to consider: what does the appreciation of natural beauty look like when it involves attending to the "real suffering of the past"? To the suffering of both humans and non-humans? How might the ethical practice of mourning be incorporated in the aesthetic recognition of natural beauty?

To put the question another way: with the conceptual unravelling of the dualism between human activity and nature—and the realities of global warming more pressing every season—how might the aesthetics of nature change? To begin with, vigilance against unreflective natural beauty and escapist Edenic fantasies seems warranted, and, crucially, the historical fiction of "pure nature" must be definitively put aside. "In schema borrowed from bourgeois sexual morality," Adorno writes, "technique is said to have ravished nature." Alternatively, "under transformed relations of production it would just as easily be able to assist nature and on this sad earth help it to attain what perhaps it wants." (28)

Secondly, the conceptualization of nature as constitutively separate from human activity also subtends the experience of nature as ominous doom. The false beauty of dolphins reclaiming Venice is relatively benign compared to its logical conclusion: the defeated sublimity of an empty urban apocalypse, which has become an increasingly popular genre in the wake of Alan Weisman's 2007 book, *The World Without Us*. A Canadian documentary series, *Aftermath: Population Zero*, asks the question of what would happen to the world if all human beings disappear in an instant. First, with no pilots and no passengers, empty planes crash into empty buildings. (A haunting relic of another nightmare entirely.) Next, dogs survive in our absence by forming packs and eating smaller dogs, just like in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the narrator grimly states. Dogs eventually come to scavenge the plentiful corpses of dairy cows. *Life After People*, a successful television show on the History Channel with two specials and two seasons, goes into even more depth. Some choice episode titles include: "The Bodies Left Behind"; "Sin City Meltdown"; "Roads to Nowhere"; "Waters of Death"; "Toxic Revenge"; and my favorite, "Holiday Hell." As reviewers on YouTube and Amazon note, the episodes begin as fascinating and disturbing, but they become repetitive. Boring. The ecological sublime is too large. Again, it homogenizes humanity and real suffering both. Instead of imagining an end of history so generic as to become entertainment, what would it mean to further rethink the ruin in light of natural-history? Perhaps new kinds of cultural landscapes: a bleached coral reef, a kudzu vine barren, the growing Gobi Desert.

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NOTES

1. English-language news outlets widely reported on the Pope's connection of the COVID-19 pandemic with the ecological issues in his interview with *The Tablet*: "There is an expression in Spanish: 'God always forgives, we forgive sometimes, but nature never forgives.' We did not respond to the partial catastrophes. Who now speaks of the fires in Australia, or remembers that 18 months ago a boat could cross the North Pole because the glaciers had all melted? Who speaks now of the floods? I don't know if these are the revenge of nature, but they are certainly nature's responses." For the full interview with Austen Ivereigh, see "Pope Francis Says Pandemic Can Be a 'Place of Conversion,'" *The Tablet: The International Catholic News Weekly,* April 8, 2020. https://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/17845/pope-francis-says-pandemic-can-be-a-place-of-conversion-. For a discussion of both earnest and satirical tweets on universal guilt towards nature, see Delilah Friedler, "'Nature Is Healing, We Are the Virus' Memes," Mother Jones. Plague Comforts, May 19, 2020. https://www.motherjones.com/coronavirus-updates/2020/05/plague-comforts-nature-is-healing-we-are-the-virus-memes/.

2. *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism,* ed. Jason W. Moore (Oakland, California: Kairos PM Press, 2016). See also Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2017).

3. Kyle Whyte, "Climate Change: An Unprecedentedly Old Catastrophe," *Biopolitical Philosophy*, January 16, 2019, https://biopoliticalphilosophy.com/2019/01/16/climate-change-an-unprecedentedly-old-catastrophe/; "Is It Colonial Déjà Vu? Indigenous Peoples and Climate Injustice," in *Humanities for the Environment: Integrating Knowledges, Forging New Constellations of Practice,* eds. Joni Adamson and Michael Davis (New York: Earthscan Publications (Routledge), 2017), 88-104; "Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now: Indigenous Conservation and the Anthropocene," in *Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, eds. Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann (New York: Routledge, 2017), 206–15.

4. Axelle Karera, "Blackness and the Pitfalls of Anthropocene Ethics," *Critical Philosophy of Race 7*, no. 1 (2019), 34.

5. See Saidiya Hartman's reflections in the Los Angeles Review of Books, "The Death Toll" https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/quarantine-files-thinkers-self-isolation/#_ftn15

and https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/05/us/coronavirus-latinos-african-americans-cdc-data.html

6. Theodor W. Adorno, "*The Idea of Natural-History," in Things Beyond Resemblance: Collected Essays on Theodor W. Adorno,* trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 252. See Hullot-Kentor for the importance of Kant in the development of the term, "Naturgeschichte," in his "Introduction to '*The Idea of Natural-History,'" in Things Beyond Resemblance*, 238-9.

7. Adorno, "Idea of Natural-History," 260, Adorno's emphasis.

8. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel,* trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1971), 64.

9. The concept of wilderness has been challenged on decolonial, feminist, and environmental historical grounds. For the latter, see William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), as well as the volume he edited, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), featuring his famous essay, "The Trouble with Wilderness; Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 69-90.

10. Vanessa Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go on a European World Tour!)," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society 2, no. 1* (2013): 23. Place, like other non-human beings, has agency, and "human thought and action are therefore derived from a literal expression of particular places and historical events."

11. A singular illustration of how history bears on nature in interrelated material and conceptual ways, a group of researchers recently presented evidence that the Great Dying, which occurred after that arrival of European colonists to the Americas, contributed to the cooling of the earth's atmosphere and the Little Ice Age. They estimate that by 1600, 90 percent of the Indigenous population or around 55 million people perished due to disease, war, slavery, and the destabilization of societies. The new vegetation that reclaimed what was formerly cultivated land pulled enough carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere to cool the planet. As Steven Vogel notes, the conceptual erasure of Indigenous populations necessary for the European conception of the North American continent as a "pure wilderness" was aided by this unprecedented, material demographic disaster: "the land seemed unpopulated simply because they had died." See Vogel, *Thinking like a Mall: Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2016), 5.

12. Adorno, "Idea of Natural-History," 264.

13. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama, trans. John Osborne* (New York: Verso, 2003), 81.

14. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 79.

15. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 166.

16. Yannik Thiem, "Benjamin's Messianic Metaphysics of Transience," in *Walter Benjamin and Theology,* eds. Colby Dickinson and Stéphane Symons (New York: Fordham University, 2016), 38-39.

17. Adorno, "Idea of Natural-History," 262.

18. Adorno, “Idea of Natural-History,” 262.

19. See Jordan Daniels, “Adorno, Benjamin, and Natural Beauty ‘On this Sad Earth,’” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 34, no. 2 (2020): 159-178. For a more skeptical interpretation of Adorno’s formulation of natural beauty in relation to natural-history, see Harriet Johnson, “Undignified Thoughts After Nature: Adorno's Aesthetic Theory,” Critical Horizons 12, no. 3 (2011): 372-95.

20. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2002), 68.

21. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 65.

22. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama,* 177-8.

23. “Cultural Landscapes,” United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Association (UNESCO) World Heritage Convention, accessed May 29, 2020, http://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/#1

24. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 64.

25. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 64-65.

26. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 65, emphasis added.

27. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 64-65.

28. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* 68.