

Ecology of Everything: An Essay on Outside Possibilities

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Everything is connected to everything else. This is the first principle of ecology formulated famously by the American environmental biologist, Barry Commoner. As he says in his 1971 bestseller *The Closing Circle*, “It reflects the existence of the elaborate network of interconnections in the ecosphere” (33). *Homo sapiens*, meaning “man the wise,” is, of course, included in this global ecology as an ecology of everything. Indeed, while accumulating knowledge that serves to privilege themselves over everything else, this knowledge-seeking species has made significant discoveries that challenge their self-definition. In his 1917 paper, “A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis,” for example, Sigmund Freud illustrates how self-knowledge can affect self-love by placing himself as the latest in an illustrious line of scientists. Central to his famous (or some may prefer to say, ostentatious) thought is that our self-centeredness has long suffered three major blows since the Renaissance. The first was Copernicus’s cosmological blow that displaced our geocentric view of the universe; the second was Darwin’s biological blow that discouraged our anthropocentric view of animals; and the third was Freud’s own psychological—and, according to him, “most wounding” (141)—blow that dispelled our egocentric view of the mind, which is to say, “*the ego is not master in its own house*” (143). What, then, has become of our narcissism since Freud?

The answer to this question is that, as can readily be imagined, modern humanity has subsequently sustained blows that are as severe, or perhaps more so. To name just a few: Stephen Hawking, an influential cosmologist, demonstrated that our heliocentric universe is just one of many countless others in an ever-expanding multiverse; Richard Dawkins, a highly recognized Darwinist, claimed that our body is just a vehicle to serve the interests of selfish genes; and Freud’s dethroning of the conscious mind as an

epiphenomenon of the unconscious is admittedly supported by Yuval Noah Harari, an internationally acclaimed intellectual, who argues that our free will is just an illusory effect of neurological processes in the brain: “I feel a particular wish welling up within me because this is the feeling created by the biochemical processes in my brain. These processes might be deterministic or random, but not free” (286). As paradoxical as it may sound, the knowledge-seeking human has thus developed its self-knowledge as an unprivileged and decentered subject. If humanity is part of an interconnected whole in science, much the same holds true in criticism, where humanism, including the idea of the *anthropos*, meaning “human being,” has come under increasingly sharp attack from the ecological perspective of everything.¹ With that being said, one question comes to mind: if everything is interconnected, then is it not possible to think of any outside of everything? With this naïve but necessary question in mind, an attempt will be made in this essay to critique the ecology of everything as an expanded discourse that embraces a wide range of fields from philosophy to technology to everything in between. The overall aim in doing so is to explore outside possibilities in the literal sense—that is, possibilities of the outside. As we shall see, these possibilities arise with reference to a selection of fiction writers who make their own sense of things.

Things Associated or Dissociated

It is an oft-repeated metaphor in science, most notably in chaos theory, that even a butterfly’s flapping of wings in one hemisphere can lead to a storm break in another hemisphere. This so-called butterfly effect describes how very small events can produce very large consequences involving a broad range of things. It is more than a metaphor when it comes to the ecology of everything. This global or even cosmological ecology concerns itself with how interactions evolve between things—animate and inanimate, organic and inorganic, tangible and intangible. Such an immense universe of discourse is certainly applicable to critiquing literature. Take, for example, “I Guess Everything Reminds You of Something,” a semi-autobiographical story by Ernest Hemingway. In this late work, Hemingway-like character named Mr. Wheeler is fairly impressed by

his son's creative writing. This writing is indeed awarded a school prize, but it reminds the father of some other piece of work. The story ends when the writing in question is revealed to have been entirely plagiarized: "Now he knew that boy had never been any good. He had thought so often looking back on things. And it was sad to know that shooting did not mean a thing" (601). The father laments that the boy has never learned anything from their common experiences, such as writing and shooting. In this story, as suggested by its title, "a thing" cannot mean something if it is not recognized as part of "things," which is to say, everything means a lot if nothing stands alone.

Written around 1955, "I Guess Everything Reminds You of Something" was first published in the posthumous story collection of 1987. It was in the same year that Paul Auster published his postapocalyptic epistolary novel, *In the Country of Last Things*. In its opening passage, Anna Blume, the narrator-protagonist who has traveled to the titular unnamed country in search of his missing brother, explains in her letter what she means by last things: "One by one they disappear and never come back. I can tell you of the ones I have seen, of the ones that are no more, but I doubt there will be time. It is all happening too fast now, and I cannot keep up" (1). In this urban dystopian and postmodern environment (readily recognizable as New York City), many, if not most, of the population collect garbage or salvage to resell, and she opts for object hunting. In her words: "The garbage collector looks for waste; the object hunter looks for salvage. He is in search of specific goods and materials that can be used again" (33). The object hunter is closely akin to the bricoleur—the practitioner of bricolage. In his classic, *The Savage Mind*, Claude Levi-Strauss defines the bricoleur as being adept at performing a variety of tasks: "His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand'" (17). Anna's postmodern explanation of objects is hardly far from the bricoleur's premodern exploitation of them in terms of reusability. In either case, the point is that things are by no means lasting in the country of last things, and thoughts are no exception. "Nothing lasts, you see," she says, "not even the thoughts inside you. And you mustn't waste your time looking for them. Once a thing is gone, that is the end of it" (2). If Hemingway's story is about

things that are associated through the medium of such immaterial things as experiences, then Auster's novel is about things that are dissociated through disappearance of such immaterial mediums as thoughts. When seen in this light, the former is certainly more realistic than the latter in empirical terms. As we will see below, however, the latter can also be so in another sense.²

The Contingency of Everything

In the Country of Last Things poses an ontological question that exists throughout the novel: can things exist without thoughts? The classic answer to this question is that things cannot exist without relations, or more specifically, brain processes—that human consciousness, such as emotions, feelings, memories, and of course, thoughts, plays an essential role as an interface between things and their existence. This long-held idea of correlation between things and consciousness has aroused severe criticism from modern philosophers, especially those whose new materialist thoughts are dubbed “speculative realism.” Perhaps foremost among them is Quentin Meillassoux, the French philosopher who brings into question the dominant belief since Kant that one can only access things through correlations between thinking and being. As articulated in the opening chapter of his best-recognized work, *After Finitude*, his critical attention is primarily directed to what he calls correlationism, the gist of which is that “thought cannot get *outside itself* in order to compare the world as it is ‘in itself’ to the world as it is ‘for us,’ and thereby distinguish what is a function of our relation to the world from what belongs to the world alone” (3-4). For correlationists, a thought-free reality cannot exist, as represented in the very act of thinking of such a reality—reality that is thinkable but unknowable. In this subjective worldview, there are no such objects as things in themselves, nor is it possible to grasp as they are, because nothing exists outside thought.

Under correlationism, everything is correlated with everything else via thought. *After Finitude*, subtitled “An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency,” is an avid attempt to think otherwise about this ecological philosophy by transforming the closed circle of

correlations into the whole bundle of contingencies. Taking full advantage of the idea of contingency, this challenging work of philosophy furnishes an outside perspective that refuses to take the thought-world correlate for granted; that is to say, he articulates “the absolute necessity of the contingency of everything” (62). Everything is necessarily contingent, and it is a possibility that may or may not materialize. Such an uncertain condition is exactly what is experienced by Anna Blume. Since nothing seems to last in her surroundings, she describes her life in the city as an embodiment of contingency: “Our lives are no more than the sum of manifold contingencies, and no matter how diverse they might be in their details, they all share an essential randomness in their design” (143-44). Marco Stanley Fogg, the narrator-protagonist of Auster’s another novel, *Moon Palace*, too, sees life in terms of contingency: “Our lives are determined by manifold contingencies...and every day we struggle against these shocks and accidents in order to keep our balance” (80). Central to these holistic viewpoints is that our everyday lives are in essence an infinite series of contingent events. As Brendan Martin notes, therefore, “Throughout his writings, Paul Auster focuses upon the lack of certainty associated with contemporary life” (35). In short, Auster’s special theme of contingency reveals our uncertainty in the form of “the lack of certainty.”

That being said, however, it may seem too hasty to draw the conclusion that there is nothing certain in our lives, for, as noted by the philosophical scientist Takeshi Yoro, “those who claim that nothing is certain would never imagine that their home might have disappeared when they go home tonight. But there is always the possibility that their house will have burned down while they’re out. It’s just a question of probability” (13-14). Anna can then be considered one of the few who deserve to claim this very “possibility” or “probability.” Early in her letter, she writes:

I don’t expect you to understand. You have seen none of this, and even if you tried, you could not imagine it. These are the last things. A house is there one day, and the next day it is gone. A street you walked down yesterday is no longer there today. Even the weather is in constant flux. (1)

The country of last things is where everything is contingent or “in constant flux.” An infinite number of events that she witnesses represent “the contingency of everything.” Of equal note is that an absolute form of contingency is described at the very close of the novel where she finishes her letter to an unnamed recipient with: “I will write to you again, I promise” (188). The reader is completely uncertain whether her promise will be fulfilled or not. This uncertainty is an absolute form of contingency: it can never be resolved empirically and only be subject to speculation. As Nathan Brown puts it in *The Meillassoux Dictionary*, “what is absolutely contingent is a real possibility that may come to pass for no reason whatsoever, but that also may not come to pass, since nothing necessitates it” (43). Thus, absolute contingency, which grounds a speculative reality, is the ultimate condition of all possibilities that manifest themselves within the framework of the contingency of everything.

Outsideness and Otherwiseness

Meillassoux’s concept of the contingency of everything is well illustrative of his speculative realist position. It works against the ecology of everything when it calls into question whether all things happen by necessity and whether they exist in relationality. To reemphasize, his first and foremost objective is to refute every philosophy claiming that everything, including ourselves, falls within the correlational circle and therefore that nothing exists outside the subject-object correlate:

Correlationism consists in disqualifying the claim that it is possible to consider the realms of subjectivity and objectivity independently of one another. Not only does it become necessary to insist that we never grasp an object “in itself,” in isolation from its relation to the subject, but also it becomes necessary to maintain that we can never grasp a subject that would not always-already be related to an object. (5)

After reading this passage, an immediate question will arise as to the very claim that he aims to establish: if “it is possible to consider the realms of subjectivity and objectivity

independently of one another,” then how? Meillassoux’s central and crucial claim that the correlationist tends to lack ability to think a non-relative outside—that being can be independent of its correlation to thinking—is, more often than not, open to criticism for his insufficient exploration of things-in-themselves or, in his words, “*the great outdoors*, the *absolute* outside of pre-critical thinkers” (7). It is nevertheless fair to say that an infinite desire for the outside world is at the core of *After Finitude* and that it is this desire that inspires ongoing debates in all areas of philosophy, especially ontology.

Meillassoux brings ancestry and facticity into sharp focus in his search for “the great outdoors” or “the absolute outside.” His argument is that ancestral statements are objects of pre-critical thought—“those which refer to any reality prior to the emergence of consciousness, such as the statement that the date of the origin of the universe is approximately 13.5 billion years ago” (Gratton and Ennis 5). The span of 13.5 billion years is an ancestral, non-empirical reality, but the correlationist tends to make sense of this fact in relation to the present, with particular emphasis on how existent it is. The point of his speculative realist account of ancestry is to make it intact as an absolute necessity of facticity so as to think, or rather seek, an outside that is neither relative to nor dependent on human thought. An epitomic example of this thought-independent outside can be found in literature. In his insightful introduction to Donald Barthelme’s posthumous collection, *The Teachings of Don B.*, for example, Thomas Pynchon stresses that what is on the outside matters in the author’s writings, including such literary sketches of recipes as “Donald Barthelme’s Fine Homemade Soups”:

His ingredients tend to come from outside New York, back in the U.S., brand names always good for some evocation of his native region, mostly canned or otherwise preserved, food meant to sit on shelves or in freezers for months before being used, each meal, each can opened or dinner defrosted, being an occasion for sadness, because, like using a dream or a memory in a piece of writing, it’s taking something back inside the passage of time that otherwise might have continued on, suspended, exempt. (xix)

A sense of sadness that pervades the work of Barthelme has much to do with that of outsideness. His use of ingredients (e.g. those in the dry soup mixes produced by the Anglo-Dutch multinational company Unilever) reveals an outside in not only its spatial but also its temporal sense—the outside of “the passage of time” as well as “New York.” Those foods, “mostly canned or otherwise preserved,” are meant to remain intact, untouched, and oblivious unless they are brought into the present. They are what “otherwise might have continued on, suspended, exempt,” and this otherwiseness exists as an outside possibility to speculate about what lies beyond the correlationst universe of things.

The IoT, the Emergence Theory, and the Man-Made World

The discourse of things challenges humanistic and anthropocentric worldviews. This ongoing and ever-evolving challenge is offered not only by the global ecology and ecological philosophy but also by the digital technology of everything, as posed by the Internet of Things (IoT). With the exponential advancement of technology, things, and in particular electric ones, are increasingly automated, connected, and shared, thus allowing them to interact without any, or almost any, human involvement. This historic phenomenon of interconnectedness stretches the definition of thingness to deal with the interrelationships of physical objects and their own environments. As Jennifer Gabrys argues in her essay on thingness in the IoT,

a discussion about things should not throw us back into substantialist debates about mind and matter (or derivatives thereof), but rather open up attention to how things come to be, what sustains things, and the effects that things have in the world. This is not an idle philosophical project, but one that has consequences for how relations and things emerge, are mobilized, and transformed. (188)

In the so-called connected age, things can be more than things within their own network. Unlike the substantialist/correlationist philosophy of “mind and matter,”

therefore, “a discussion of things” requires an intentional shift of our focus from the epistemology to the ecology of things, or more specifically to things themselves that are capable of their own autonomous operations. “In other words,” Gabrys says, “human interaction within the Internet of Things is not a prerequisite for relationality; but relationality does unfold among things, nevertheless” (187). As we will see below, however, something more can be said about this nonhuman environment of things.

What emerges among things is not only relationality in its emphatic sense, but also their personality, or more broadly, personhood. As Christian Smith claims in *What Is a Person?*, human personhood is irreducibly emergent. It is entirely dependent on the parts from which it emerges—bodies, brains, environments, and so forth—but, once emergent, cannot be reduced into those parts: it emerges from interactions of multiple human capacities. To demonstrate how emergence takes place all the time in everyday life, Smith provides the examples at opposite ends of the spectrum: natural and artificial. The former is of water that emerges with distinct properties not possessed by hydrogen and oxygen: H_2O extinguishes a fire, whereas H and O feed a fire. The latter is of the computer that emerges as an independent entity with its own capabilities when built from a collection of small pieces of plastic, metal, and many other different materials as well as electric energy. As far as emergence is concerned, Smith says, “Reality is thus significantly constituted through relationality, not merely composition” (30). The reality of emergence materializes from relationality. What is equally or perhaps more important is that, as illustrated above, this theory of emergence is applicable to artificial as well as natural entities. It is by no means unreasonable, then, to pose the following question: if the emergence of human personhood overlaps at least to an extent with that of things like the computer, then what about the emergence of posthuman personhood? To put it another way: can things construct their personhood?

In light of such human attributes as consciousness and self-consciousness, it is certainly questionable if posthuman entities (e.g. androids and artificial intelligences) can possess the same personhood as human beings or more appropriately, *Homo sapiens*. Still, it is worth considering possibilities for posthuman personhood, given

corporate personhood entitled to a broad set of rights. One of those possibilities was considered by, for example, Philip K. Dick, who was already aware of how objects can be brought to artificial life as early as 1972. In his oft-cited speech, “The Android and the Human,” he addressed the thinning line between humanity and machinery:

[O]ur environment, and I mean our man-made world of machines, artificial constructs, computers, electronic systems, interlinking homeostatic components—all of this is in fact beginning more and more to possess what the earnest psychologists fear, the primitive sees in his environment: animation. In a very real sense our environment is becoming alive, or at least quasi-alive, and in ways specifically and fundamentally analogous to ourselves. (183)

Here Dick conjures an ecological image of things as “all of this.” Central to his point of view is that the acceleration of technological advancement leads to the animation of our artificial environment—“our man-made world of machines.” The above-quoted passage showcases how acutely this science fiction writer observed that things can be energized as well as technologized—that they can emerge as being “alive, or at least quasi-alive” and thus “analogous to ourselves.” Overall his speech, along with the suggestive fact that in its title “the android” comes prior to “the human,” reveals an advanced notion of personhood.

Viewed historically, just as seen in the fact that the concept of legal personhood is at least as old as ancient Rome, the line between beings and things has remained blurry since the time of the Roman Empire, where a wide range of tasks were performed by slaves who were treated as property because they had no personhood under Roman law. One may argue here that the distinction between persons and things has become rigid in our time in the name of humanity or what it entails (e.g. human rights). As Alberto Angela points out in *A Day in the Life of Ancient Rome*, however, “The machines we have in our houses, carry out the same tasks which in the past were done by servants or slaves. In a certain sense, technology has replaced slaves with robots” (192). If this

comparison between slaves and robots, or more generally, persons and things is still feasible, technology does play an essential part in energizing the network of things and thus conceptualizing the ecology of things—things like beings as envisioned by Dick.

Do the Electric Things Have Their Lives, Too?

In Dick's posthuman vision of the material, or let us say thingful, environment, one can find striking parallels not only with everyday life in ancient Rome but also with extraordinary life portrayed in what was published a generation later—Don DeLillo's 2003 novel, *Cosmopolis*, which tells of an eventful and fateful day in the life of Eric Packer, an exceedingly wealthy twenty-eight-year-old asset manager of Packer Capital. Most of the novel's action takes place in the protagonist's egomaniacally customized stretch limousine. Packer's Manhattan headquarter office is located in the intelligent tower called "the complex," but it is, in effect, this high-tech limousine equipped with television screens and computer monitors that serves to conduct his business of global trade in currency markets. Created against the backdrop of the dot-com bubble that stemmed from the speculative fever among online companies, the novel assigns specific significance to digital technologies represented by big data. Surrounded by extremely large data sets that can be analyzed only computationally to reveal trends, patterns, and associations, especially in relation to human interactions and their consequences, Packer thinks to himself:

It was shallow thinking to maintain that numbers and charts were the cold compression of unruly human energies, every sort of yearning and midnight sweat reduced to lucid units in the financial markets. In fact data itself was soulful and glowing, a dynamic aspect of the life process. This was the eloquence of alphabets and numeric systems, now fully realized in electronic form, in the zero-oneness of the world, the digital imperative that defined every breath of the planet's living billions. Here was the heave of the biosphere. Our bodies and oceans were here, knowable and whole. (27)

In the virtual financial markets, money exists as electronic data. This form is arguably the purest of all fiat money—money without intrinsic value—which champions the economic assumption that money is money if, or only if, it is used as money, in whatever form it takes. According to the money-theorist Katsuhito Iwai, “money is a pure ‘social entity’ whose existence owes nothing to the ‘technology and preferences’ of the economy nor to the ‘infinite memory’ of its members,” and “money can mediate exchanges between individuals whose abilities and needs fail to supplement each other and whose past actions are unknown to each other” (423). In brief, money is primarily a medium for exchange, but it is also a medium for expanding the sphere of exchange itself. In *Cosmopolis*, however, money is viewed as something more than such a “social entity,” something quasi-biological which manifests itself in the streams of charts and numbers of currency indexes as representations of “every breath of the planet’s living billions” and “the heave of the biosphere.”

In his best-known and oft-filmed novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Dick has his bounty hunter/police officer protagonist, Rick Deckard, whose job is to kill (or in his term, retire) runaway androids, confront the total collapse of his either-or sense of humanity—“So much for the distinction between authentic living humans and humanoid constructs” (113)—and reach the conclusion: “The electric things have their lives, too. Paltry as those lives are” (191). Now Deckard is fully aware of how arbitrary the human-machine boundary is. Packer is also situated in such arbitrary surroundings. “The electric things have their lives, too,” he would say. “Monetary as those lives are.” Given his electronic data environment that digitizes even things like “the time cycles of grasshopper breeding, wheat harvesting” (228), it comes as no surprise that he perceives “data itself” as “a dynamic aspect of the life process.” This currency-speculating genius is blessed with the capacity not only to play the market but also to study its context, as has been remembered for years by his ex-employee who turns into his assassin: “I loved the cross-harmonies between nature and data. You taught me this. The way signals from a pulsar in deepest space follow classical number sequences, which in turn can describe the fluctuations of a given stock or currency. You

showed me this” (228). The advent of cyber capitalism, along with the advancement of computer processing capability and data storage capacity, makes it possible to integrate widely diverse phenomena, from financial to natural to cosmological. This integration of big data is an essential aspect of cyber capitalism. The before mentioned Yuval Noah Harari explains in his international bestseller, *Homo Deus*, that capitalism processes data by connecting parties rather than centralizing power, and so it is fundamentally associated with dataism, or in his words, “data religion,” whose core missions include connecting each and every thing in the universe to the system. Inherent in Packer’s practice of cyber capitalism is thus the idea of dataism as an all-embracing universe.

In Packer’s intelligent limousine office, everything is interconnected as data to be digitized and kept alive to be utilized—monetarized, to be accurate. Here, everything means all things, including his body that is at all times monitored remotely by the complex. While living his life, therefore, his life is lived in the web of things; he is a living thing in the literal sense. In Harari’s view, as long as we are dataists, “We mustn’t leave any part of the universe disconnected from the great web of life” (387). In the expanding universe of dataism, everything keeps living as long as it keeps flowing as information; organisms are hence processed as algorithms, and humans are no exception. If this universe incorporates anything as information, it can be seen as an ecology of everything, human and nonhuman alike. In this connection, one can hardly resist asking if there is an outside of this newly emergent ecology. The aim of the concluding section that follows is to answer this question from a posthuman perspective and beyond.

Life beyond Death

According to Harari, death is not meant to occur where data is perpetually being pursued for its own sake. The extension of this view of life is that death is the only outside of the vast network of data as the greatest goodness: “Conversely, the greatest sin is to block the data flow. What is death, if not a situation when information doesn’t flow?” (387) The question raised here is relevant to the realm not only of data but also

of potentia—an empowering resource of life—conceptualized by the acclaimed critical posthumanist Rosi Braidotti.³ Within her framework, death is not an endpoint; it is an impersonal or, in her words, inhuman part of life not only as *bios*—the human view of life—but also as *zoe*—the nonhuman force of life—which prevails fueled by *potentia*: “Death, the inhuman within, marks the becoming-imperceptible of the subject as the furthest frontier of the processes of intensive transformation or becoming” (136). For Braidotti, death is thus a vital continuum wherein one is becoming impersonal toward “the furthest frontier,” namely “the ultimate outside as the frontier of the incorporeal” (137). Technologically, though, this outside is not necessarily ultimate, as envisioned by DeLillo’s 2016 problematic novel, *Zero K*.

Now that oocyte cryopreservation is increasingly practiced as one of the major technologies in life sciences, it is worth considering whether death can be replaced with life or whether the former can be postponed by prolonging the latter. *Zero K* takes these considerations into full account. It is concerned with cryonics technology that allows the living body to be preserved at ultra-low temperatures to permit the future revival of the cryopreserved person. *Zero K* is in an intertextual relationship to *Cosmopolis*. It presents Eric Packer’s future incarnation as Ross Lockhart, an American reclusive billionaire in his sixties, who cannot stand losing his younger wife with terminal illness, nor can resist his urge to become immortal together with her. The novel opens with: “*Everybody wants to own the end of the world*” (3). These words are recalled by Ross’s son Jeffrey, who arrives at a remote and secret compound where bodies are preserved until the time comes to restore them to medically improved lives—where death is, and life will be, under control. Echoes of Ross’s above-quoted words are to be found in Eric’s end at the close of *Cosmopolis*: “This is not the end. He is dead inside the crystal of his watch but still alive in original space, waiting for the shot to sound” (240). This ending implies the future transformation of his personal death into an impersonal life—life in the “original space” free from time constraints represented by “his watch.”

Can we live an enduring life? The answer is negative at present, but it is subject

to change in the future. *Zero K* imagines the possibility of life beyond death. Ross as well as Eric embodies the dataist logic that concerns life alone, but it must be noted that the former, unlike the latter, incorporates, not eliminates, death into his vision of eternal life by allowing himself to enter a state of apparent death. This holistic way and view of life is a closed circle where there seems no outside to life. Ross's resurrection is still open to possibilities, and his possible life is the subject matter of the future ecology of everything, which will involve more than what we think and therefore will continuously require imaginative works of fiction.

Acknowledgment

The present study was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP20K00390.

Notes

¹ Here humanism means a philosophy centered on human interests or values, or more specifically, "(among some contemporary writers) a system of thought criticized as being centered on the notion of the rational, autonomous self and ignoring the unintegrated and conditioned nature of the individual" (211) as defined by *The Oxford Dictionary of Difficult Words*.

² In his 1989 interview with Larry McCaffery and Sinda Gregory, Auster lays particular stress on the novel's realistic aspect, especially in historical terms: "As far as I'm concerned, the book has nothing to do with science fiction. It's quite fantastical at times, of course, but that doesn't mean it's not firmly anchored in historical realities. It's a novel about the present and the immediate past, not about the future. 'Anna Blue walls through the twentieth century.' That's the phrase I carried around in my head while I was working on the book" (36).

³ Terminologically, posthumanism is as difficult to define as humanism, for, as explained by Francesca Ferrando: "'Posthuman' has become an umbrella term to refer to a variety of different movements and schools of thought, including philosophical, cultural, and critical posthumanism; transhumanism (in its variations of extropianism,

liberal and democratic transhumanism, among others); the feminist approach of new materialisms; the heterogeneous landscape of antihumanism, metahumanism, metahumanities, and posthumanities. Such a generic and all-inclusive use of the term has created methodological and theoretical confusion between experts and non-experts alike” (26). In order to avoid or at least minimize this “confusion,” posthumanism in the present essay refers only to critical posthumanism by Braidotti.

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全てをめぐるエコロジー ——外部性の可能性に関する試論

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論文要旨

全ては他の全てと関連している——それが一般的なエコロジーの第一原則である。本稿は、そのように全てを関連性の総体とする全体論を広義のエコロジーとして捉え、様々なエコロジーの外部を探求する。その際に文学作品に言及することで、フィクションが提示する外部性の可能性も見出す。第一に扱う全体論は、カント以来とされる相関主義——現実は意識と事物の相関による現象であると主張することで人間の思考の外部性を排除する主義——である。この哲学論に対して、意識に先立つ事物の存在から意識の外部を考えるのが思弁的实在論である。主唱者の一人であるカントン・メイヤースーは、偶然性の必然性を説くことで思考に基づく相関性の外部性を指摘する。そして相関性を前面にした作品がアーネスト・ヘミングウェイの「何を見ても何かを思い出す」であり、対照的に偶然性を前面にした作品がポール・オースターの『最後の物たちの国』である。つづく全体論は、人間中心主義としてのヒューマニズムである。この全体論は、IoTやAIの登場によって、その完全性を維持できなくなりつつある。そしてP・K・ディックの代表作『電気羊はアンドロイドの夢を見るか?』におけるモノの世界は、まさに外部性を体現している。最後に扱う全体論は、歴史哲学者ユヴァル・ノア・ハラリが考察するデータ主義である。ビッグデータなどの膨大なデータにおいては、ヒトもモノも解析データとして一様に存在する。そして絶え間ないデータの流通を生命体として描いているのがドン・デリーロの『コズモポリス』である。データ主義を体現する主人公の死をもって終わる本作は、データ主義の外部性を象徴的に描く。かくして本稿は、「外部性の可能性」(outside possibilities)を発見することで、エコロジーとしての全体論を批判的に思考するための本来的な意味における「わずかな可能性」(outside possibilities)を提示する。