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Melting Words: Literature In An Age Of Climate Change

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Melting Words

Literature In An Age Of Climate Change



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MA Thesis Modern European Philosophy

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12 – 6 – 2024

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Introduction

The following thesis aims to shed light on the relation between literature and climate change. I will argue that our experience of literature has definitively changed in comparison to earlier times, because of the way in which the awareness of global warming has changed the way in which we experience our surroundings. The main research question of this thesis is: what is the specific form of revealing at play in literature in an age of climate change?

To answer this question a couple of steps are required. In the first chapter I will lay out how Heidegger understands the notions *world* and *earth*, as well as investigate what modes of revealing are at play in technology and works of art. Heidegger's thought can be used to illustrate how human beings relate to entities in their surroundings, as well as how we do not relate to everything in our surroundings. The world in which we are, is one with which we are familiar and comfortable, and that which human beings are familiar with changes throughout history. Art always appears within a world in the Heideggerian sense. In this thesis I will argue that this world can in short be characterized by a continuously growing awareness of the dangers of climate change to this world. We have become comfortable with the uncomfortable knowledge that if the effects of climate change will be as predicted, then we will be unable to live as we have up until this point. A considerable number of people live with the knowledge that their world is threatened by these possible effects. In the first chapter of this thesis, I will describe what Heidegger understands under both his notion of world and of earth. According to Heidegger, we can experience the strife between world and earth in an artwork. It is important to note that this is only the case when we experience the artwork as art. We won't notice the strife at play in an artwork if we concern ourselves with selling or placing the artwork somewhere. Throughout this thesis I will always talk about the artistic experience of works of art, the experience that makes you stop in your tracks to try to get a better grip on the artwork. The experience of an artwork that makes you say: 'wow, that's so beautiful!'

In the second chapter, we will move toward the contemporary world, a world threatened by climate change. Having a sufficient understanding of what Heidegger understands under his notions of world and earth, we will see how we can conceptualize climate change within this framework. To do this, I will draw on Timothy Morton's works *Hyperobjects* (2013) and *Being Ecological* (2018). Morton makes use of Heidegger's concepts *world* and *earth* to show how climate change affects our experience of the modern world. He argues that the world has ended because of our awareness of global warming. I will argue instead that global warming has caused our world to definitively change.

In the third chapter, I will discuss what for Maurice Blanchot is the question of art and literature in his work *The Space of Literature* (1955). For Blanchot, literature has become the search for its own essence: literature tries to unravel what literature is. Blanchot investigates extensively the revealing at play in different works of art, especially literature. When we know what for Blanchot is revealed in a work of literature, we might use this to investigate what is then revealed in our own age.

The fourth chapter of this thesis will be dedicated to showing how literature has come to be experienced differently because of global warming. I will first try to explain what is at play in an experience of an artwork as art using the theory of the four causes as explained by Heidegger in *The Question Concerning Technology* (1954). This will provide a framework which I will use to explain what makes literature be experienced differently by different people and through time. To better illustrate this, I will provide a reading of the poem *In lovely blue* by the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin and compare my reading to Heidegger's reading of the same poem.

Chapter 1: Heidegger's World and Earth

In order to investigate the revealing at play in works of literature, I will first investigate the context from which this question arises in this thesis. This is a context in which a concern for climate change has become an everyday reality. Whether it is a drought in Spain, floods in Slovakia or extreme fires in Hawaii, we already know under which general denominator these events must be placed: these are the effects of climate change.

In this chapter I will investigate Martin Heidegger's concepts of world and earth. In the first section, I will investigate Heidegger's concept *world*, which he introduced in *Being and Time* (1927), and which he further developed in *The question concerning technology* and in *The origin of the work of Art* (1950). To investigate the context in which our question of literature is raised, we will also need to investigate technology as an inescapable part of this context. In *The question concerning Technology*, Heidegger investigates how our relations with technology affects how we experience our lifeworlds. Since this text was first published in 1954, we have made great strides in the field of modern technology: we have grown even more dependent on and familiar with modern technology. As we will see, Heidegger claims that modern technology causes beings to appear as standing-reserve, which is: as to be used for other ends.

In *The origin of the work of art*, Heidegger introduced his concept of *earth* in order to talk about the inner workings of artworks. *Earth* is the aspect of all beings which allows them to manifest themselves within the context of the *world*. In the second section, I will lay out the characteristics of what Heidegger understands under his notion of *earth*, which has a special relation to artworks.

As a form of art, literature will likely share similarities with other forms of art. In the third and last section of this chapter, I will discuss what Heidegger thinks works of art disclose to us. He examines this mainly in *The origin of the work of art*, but also in *The question concerning Technology*. I will discuss how Heidegger uses works of art in order to let them bring the truth of beings into unconcealment: how works of art make truth available to us.

1.1 Heidegger's World

In *Being and Time* Heidegger raises the question of Being, which means that he wants to investigate how we come to understand ourselves and our environment. Or, as Dreyfus puts it: "to make sense of our ability to make sense of things" (Dreyfus 1991, p.10). To answer this question, Heidegger introduces his primary research-object: Dasein, or there-being. This is a being which already has made sense of itself and its surroundings: Dasein "understands itself in its Being" (Heidegger, 1927 p.12). Dasein "is ontically not only what is near or even nearest -- we ourselves *are* it, each of us" (Heidegger, 1927 p.15). Regardless of what we are doing or where we are, we are always Dasein. This has as a consequence that Dasein "tends to understand its own Being in terms of *the* being to which it is essentially, continually, and most closely related -- the 'world'" (Heidegger, 1927 p.15). We can already see the close relationship of the Dasein with the world. In this section, we shall see what this 'world' is with which we are most closely related.

Dasein is for Heidegger being-in-the-world. The words 'being-in' do in this case not at all signify the spatial relationship of containment, such as water being in a glass. For Heidegger, being-in means "to dwell near..., to be familiar with" (Heidegger, 1927 p.54). Whatever we do in our everyday dealing, we are always already comfortable with these dealings. Heidegger notes that being-in-the-world is not a "'property' which Dasein sometimes has and sometimes does not have" (Heidegger, 1927 p.57). The Dasein is always already being-in-the-world: regardless of what Dasein does and before being conscious of it, it is being-in-the-world. The world with which Dasein is comfortable with changes historically and socially: we do not understand ourselves and our surroundings in the same way that the ancient Greek aristocrats did. As Taylor Carman writes: "Ontic-existential worlds vary widely, as anthropologists know, according to the particular character of the lives that at once shape and are shaped by them, Dasein at once projecting in and being thrown into them" (Carman 2003, p.133). The ways in which human beings have understood their lives and surroundings has changed greatly. Beings come to stand differently through time, the way in which they stand before us, their standing, changes when the world in which they appear changes.

What are the beings with which Dasein is most closely related in its historical world? Heidegger answers: "useful things [Zeug]" (Heidegger, 1927 p.68). These are things which we use as "something in order to" (Heidegger, 1927 p.68). We use useful things as something with which we can..., or in order to.... In this way, useful things contain for Heidegger "a reference of something to something" (Heidegger, 1927 p.68). That useful things contain a reference is to say that we are familiar with how they are to be used. Heidegger writes: "the act of hammering itself discovers the

specific 'handiness' of the hammer. We shall call the useful thing's kind of being in which it reveals itself by itself *handiness* [Zuhandenheit]" (Heidegger, 1927 p.69). When we use the handy hammer, we don't pay attention to it: "it withdraws, so to speak, in its character of handiness in order to be really handy" (Heidegger, 1927 p.69). For Heidegger, useful things are used in order to ... We are not primarily concerned with the useful things; we are concerned with the work which we intend to use the useful thing for. Heidegger writes: "But the work to be produced is not just useful for... Production itself is always a using of something for something. A reference to 'materials' is contained in the work at the same time" (Heidegger, 1927 p70). That the table we have made with the hammer contains a reference to its materials, means that we grasp that the material had to come from somewhere: nature. As such, for Heidegger, 'nature' is discovered in the work which is in the world. He distinguishes between this kind of nature, "nature in the light of products of nature" (Heidegger, 1927 p.70), and nature "as what 'stirs and strives', [...] entrances us as a landscape" (Heidegger, 1927 p.70). Nature as source of products is disclosed in works; the nature which grows for itself, which enchants us, remains hidden. According to Heidegger "we can abstract from nature's kind of being as handiness; we can discover and define it in its mere objective presence [Vorhandenheit]" (Heidegger, 1927 p.70). Initially something is a useful thing; only later do we deduce what this thing is without its usefulness. But this '*vorhanden*' thing is still not the nature which stirs and strives, the thing as it is in itself.

Here we have touched upon the fundamental relationship between useful things and technology. In *The Question concerning Technology* Heidegger dives deeper into this relationship. His starting point is what to him are the common ways in which technology is usually understood: "One says: Technology is a means to an end. The other says: technology is a human activity" (Heidegger, 1954, p.312). He calls these the instrumental and the anthropological definitions of technology. Heidegger continues by stating that a means is "that whereby something is effected and thus attained. Whatever has an effect as its consequence is called a cause" (Heidegger 1954, p.313). This is a reason for Heidegger to discuss the four causes as disclosed by Aristotle. For Greek philosophers, a 'cause' was to be understood as *aition*: "that to which something else is indebted" (Heidegger 1954, p.314). The four causes are ways of being indebted, of being responsible for something else. Heidegger writes: "the four ways of being responsible bring something into appearance. They let it come forth into presencing." Something which was at first not here before us yet is brought into unconcealment by the four causes. It is what Heidegger calls *bringing-forth* (Heidegger 1954 p.317). He writes: "Bringing-forth brings out of concealment into unconcealment. Bringing-forth appropriates only insofar as something concealed comes into unconcealment. This coming rests and moves freely

within what we call revealing” (Heidegger 1954, Pp.317,318). Technology makes something available for us to encounter. This availability for encountering takes place in unconcealment, in revealing.

It is important to note that Heidegger up until this point in his technology essay, has spoken solely about the way in which Greek thought might have formulated the essence of technology. For the Greeks, technology was a way of bringing-forth out of concealment into unconcealment. According to Heidegger, the Greeks thought that *aletheia*, truth, happens where revealing takes place. When the smith makes a metal bowl, he brings it out of concealment into unconcealment. The metal bowl is *encounterable*, it is revealed. For Heidegger, however, nowadays we have a different kind of technology, namely modern technology. Modern technology is also a way of revealing. But Heidegger writes: “And yet, the revealing that holds sway throughout modern technology does not unfold into a bringing-forth in the sense of *poiesis*” (Heidegger 1954, p.320). This means that what has been brought-forth by modern technology is not made available for encountering in the same sense as something brought-forth by traditional technology. The kind of revealing that dominates modern technology is what Heidegger calls “‘a challenging’, which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such”(Heidegger 1954, p.320).

Let us say that we wish to mine coal. We might buy a plot of land in which we suspect coal, which we then *challenge* to produce coal. Heidegger writes that this is a setting-upon: the wish to mine coal is set-upon the land. But when we have this coal we are not finished yet. We do not let the coal be as it is but now above the land which was challenged, instead: “It is being stored; that is, on call, ready to deliver the sun's warmth that is stored in it” (Heidegger 1954, p.321). We ship the coal to a factory in order to melt ore, which in turn is shipped somewhere for further processing. Heidegger calls this way of revealing a standing-reserve (Heidegger 1954, p.322). For Heidegger, mankind is also challenged. We are challenged to reveal that which is concealed as standing-reserve. The wish to mine coal is not only set upon the land, but also on the worker who must carry out this business. He writes: “We name the challenging claim that gathers man with a view to ordering the self-revealing as standing-reserve: Ge-stell” (Heidegger 1954, p.324). The Ge-stell is a way of revealing, but only insofar as that which is revealed is able to be called upon for other ends. In this way, the revealing that is dominant in modern technology reveals nature as storehouse for energy, and not as what Heidegger in *Being and Time* calls the nature that *stirs and strives*. Within worlds where modern technology is the dominant way of revealing, entities are brought forth into unconcealment only as standing-reserve.

This is undeniably a fundamental aspect of the world in which we ourselves have raised the question of literature. In chapter 2, we will see how climate change is also a fundamental aspect of this world.

1.2 Heidegger's Earth

In this section we will be discussing what Heidegger understands under his notion of earth. He discusses this concept in *The origin of the work of Art* by contrasting it with his notion of world. As we have seen in the previous section, the world of Dasein is constructed historically: how entities are revealed depends on the socio-historical context of Dasein. As we have seen, in *The question concerning Technology* Heidegger claims that in an age of modern technology, entities are revealed as standing-reserve.

In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger discusses the source of the essence of art: "Origin here means that from which and by which something is what it is and as it is. [...] The origin of something is the source of its essence" (Heidegger 1950, p.143). As Harman points out, Heidegger claims that the essence of art "turns out to be strife between earth and world."¹ In the next section, we will further investigate what Heidegger means with this strife caused by the work of art; in this section, we will focus on *earth*.

As we have seen in the previous section, the things closest to Dasein are useful-things. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger names the Being of useful-things handiness. In his art-essay, he claims that the handiness of useful-things can only be such by virtue of the reliability of useful-things. He writes: "The equipmental Being of equipment consists indeed of its usefulness. But this usefulness itself rests in the abundance of an essential Being of the [useful thing]. We call it reliability" (Heidegger 1950, p.160). In other words, the in-order-to structure of useful things can only appear when the useful thing can be relied upon. Heidegger continues: "By virtue of this reliability the peasant woman is made privy to the silent call of the earth; by virtue of the reliability of the [useful thing] she is sure of her world. World and earth exist for her, and for those who are with her in her mode of being, only thus -- in the equipment" (Heidegger 1950, p.160). The reliability of useful things makes it so that the everyday dealings of the peasant woman can be carried out without further thought. Zimmermann writes: "equipment [useful things] can arise and have application only within a stable, ordered world and grounded in the self-generating earth."² But what does it mean that the peasant woman is made privy to earth's silent call?

¹ Harman, G. (2007) *Heidegger explained: from phenomenon to thing*. Illinois: Carus publishing company. p.110

² Zimmerman, M. E. (1990) *Heidegger's confrontation with modernity*. Indianapolis: Indiana university press. p.161

We discuss earth always in relation to world, for they are intimately linked: "World and earth are essentially different from one another and yet are never separated. The world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through world" (Heidegger 1950 p.174). In the world, Dasein is sure of the work to be done. As Heidegger formulates it: "the world is the self-opening openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people" (Heidegger 1950 p.174). This is to say that within a world people entertain possible undertakings insofar as these undertakings are available, *opened*. But these possible undertakings do not only belong to a historical world. They can only be realized in virtue of the earth on and in which this world is situated: "that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call [...] *earth*. What this word says is not to be associated with the idea of a mass of matter deposited somewhere, or with the merely astronomical idea of a planet. Earth is that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises as such" (Heidegger 1950 p.168). It cannot be denied that man dwells on the planet Earth, but this is not what the word 'earth' refers to. Within the world entities come to stand according to the historical context of a people. How entities come to stand does not exhaust the entities, because there are other ways in which they can appear. Earth is the aspect of things which allows things to appear to us differently through the course of history, because earth bears all possible appearances. As Zimmerman writes: "The world enables entities to show themselves in various ways, to be distinguished from other entities. But there is much that cannot appear within a finite world" (Zimmerman 1990, p.228).

By giving examples of ways in which earth escapes explanation, Heidegger shows what he understands under this notion. The stone "presses downward and manifests its heaviness. But while this heaviness exerts an opposing pressure upon us it denies us any penetration into it" (Heidegger 1950, p.172). Would we want to investigate the heaviness of the stone, we would not get far by breaking open the stone to attempt to locate its heaviness. Heidegger also claims that by placing the stone on the scale and thus measuring its weight, we only translate its heaviness into "a calculated weight" (Heidegger 1950, p.172). The stone's heaviness "shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained" (Heidegger 1950, p.172). By translating the stone into calculable weight, we bring it into the world as, as we have seen in the previous section, standing-reserve, as such it is revealed for further processing. As standing-reserve, however, the stone is not fully disclosed. This is also the case for the ready-to-hand hammer, which in its ready-to-handness is only revealed to us in a certain way, never completely revealed. There always remain aspects of objects which are concealed: "The earth is the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continually self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing" (Heidegger 1950, p.174). Heidegger warns against an explanation of *earth* as the name of those aspects which remain concealed to us: "The

relation between world and earth does not wither away into the empty unity of opposites unconcerned with one another. The world, in resting upon the earth, strives to surmount it. As self-opening it cannot endure anything closed. The earth, however, as sheltering and concealing, tends always to draw the world into itself and keep it there" (Heidegger 1950, p.174). The historical world tries to bring the earth into itself by translating it into terms in which it can understand earth: world tries to surmount earth. Earth however, juts through world, which is to say that every explanation of something raises just as many questions: nothing is ever fully present. Or as Zimmerman writes: "earth resists the world's disclosive assault and thus can never be brought completely into the realm of history. Earthly things are not simply self-concealing, however, they do also emerge into presence" (Heidegger 1950, p.121). This means that in both world and earth there is concealment and unconcealment.

World and earth, concealment and unconcealment all take place in what Heidegger calls *the clearing*: "Thanks to this clearing, beings are unconcealed in certain changing degrees. And yet a being can be *concealed*, as well, only within the sphere of what is cleared. Each being we encounter and which encounters us keeps to this curious opposition of presencing, in that it always withholds itself at the same time in a concealment" (Heidegger 1950, p.178). Nothing can be brought into unconcealment completely, there always remain aspects of beings which will be concealed. Nowadays some aspects of beings might be concealed which once were unconcealed, and vice versa.

Heidegger writes that "truth means the essence of the true. We think this essence in recollecting the Greek word *aletheia*, the unconcealment of beings." As we have seen above, however, beings are never fully in unconcealment, never fully present. This leads Heidegger to say that "Truth, in essence, is untruth" (Heidegger 1950, p.179). Which is to say that truth would not be truth, if it was not for its un-truth. Within the clearing, beings cannot fully be grasped. We are, so to speak, always only grasping at straws, when thinking we are touching the hay bale. To be made privy to the "silent call of the earth" is to realize that there is more to things than there seems to be, but as this call is silent, it is never clear what this more consists in.

Zimmerman writes that Heidegger "argued that entities cannot be reduced to the event of their appearing within a historical 'world,' for entities belong to the 'earth' which can never be made fully present in any world" (Zimmerman 1990, p.226). The truth of entities we encounter within our historical worlds is that there is always more to them than meets the eye. Beings don't belong to our world, but they can only be understood within this world. Beings belong to the earth, but there they cannot be understood. Only insofar as one recognizes that there is always a concealed dimension to

entities, does truth occur: “the unconcealment of beings -- this is never a merely existent state, but a happening” (Heidegger 1950, p.179). Truth is the strife between world and earth.

1.3 World and Earth in Works of Art

As I have alluded to at the start of the last section, Harman writes in *Heidegger Explained* that in essence art is strife between world and earth. But we have now also seen that this is the same for the essence of truth, the unconcealment of beings. Thus we can say that the essence of truth is at play in the work of art. In order to bring the specific way of revealing of literature into view, we will need to see how truth, the unconcealment of beings, relates to works of art in general. In this section, we will explore what for Heidegger is experienced in an artistic experience of a work of art.

Heidegger begins his essay on art by describing the object of his inquiry: art and the artwork. He writes: "In order to discover the essence of the art that actually prevails in the work, let us go to the actual work and ask the work what and how it is" (Heidegger 1950, p.144). The essence of art must be present in the artwork. This raises the question of what an artwork actually is. Heidegger remarks that works of art are familiar to everyone: statues stand on the market square and paintings hang on the wall, much like a mirror might be hung on the wall. Artworks are things in the world, they are shipped from one museum to another and sold in auctions. Heidegger, however, is not interested in works of art as commodities. He writes: "Shippers or charwomen in museums may operate with such conceptions of the work of art. We, however, have to take works as they are encountered by those who experience and enjoy them" (Heidegger 1950, p.145). This is an important remark, for it means that the painting which is hung on a wall to make the wall prettier is dismissed as an artwork, because this painting is not enjoyed as an artwork. Instead, this painting is experienced as something to make the wall more enjoyable to look at, and as such it disappears in virtue of the activity of enjoyment. The object of Heidegger's interest is the artwork experienced as art. In this thesis I will also take this to be the main object of interest: the artwork as it is experienced in an experience of art.

Heidegger writes in his technology-essay that art was for the Greeks like technology in the sense that it is a *techne*: "because it was a revealing that brought forth and made present, and therefore belonged within *poiesis*" (Heidegger 1954, p.339). Like technology, art is a way of revealing, a way of bringing-forth into unconcealment. As we have seen above, the unconcealment of beings is what the Greeks called *aletheia*, which we call truth. For Heidegger, modern technology is a danger, because it reveals beings solely as standing-reserve. The revealing at play in works of art is different, and might just be the antidote for modern technology.

In *The Origin of the Work of Art* Heidegger dives deeper into the question of how art relates to truth, world and earth. He writes: "in setting up a world, the work sets forth the earth. [...] The work moves the earth itself into the open region of a world and keeps it there. *The work lets the earth be an earth*" (Heidegger 1950, p.172). When the artwork is experienced as a work of art, there is both a world and the earth situated in the work. As we have seen, Dasein is familiar with its world, within which beings present themselves. The earth is the self-closing and -emerging aspect of beings. This means that in the work of art the self-closing region is moved within what is familiar. Heidegger gives an example of how this takes place in the case of a Greek temple. He writes: "the building encloses the figure of the god [...] By means of the temple, the god is present in the temple. [...] It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and defeat, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being. The all-governing expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people" (Heidegger 1950, p.167). The temple makes people remember their relationship to it: they go there to ask the gods to help them in a war, to thank them or to ask them for forgiveness. In this way the world of a people is present in this work. And not only is the world of a historical people housed in the work, but the work also "makes visible the invisible space of air. [...] Tree and grass, eagle and bull, snake and cricket first enter into their distinctive shapes and thus come to appear as what they are" (Heidegger 1950, p.168). As we have seen, within the world, the things closest to Dasein disappear in their in-order-to structure. The stone with which we build a street, withdraws itself so that we may use it as a street: we hardly notice the stone. The work of art has the capacity to make the in-order-to structure of things disappear, their usual context is replaced by the work's world. The self-emerging and self-closing aspect of beings, their *earthy* aspect, is made visible in the experience of the work. Not only the earthy aspects of the beings portrayed in the work are suddenly visible, but also the material of the work and the beings surrounding the work. Heidegger writes: "in setting up a world, [the temple work] does not cause the material to disappear, but rather causes it to come forth for the very first time and to come into the open region of the work's world" (Heidegger 1950, p.171). Because our historical world is always already set up, the interplay between world and earth is concealed. The work, by setting up a world, makes visible the dynamic interplay between world and earth.

In the experience of a work of art, the experiencing subject is thrown out of his everyday dealings with his surroundings. Whereas normally everything that is in the world is unconcealed in a certain way, in the experience of a work of art this way does not speak for itself anymore. Within the work, beings seem to *get* their standing, while in the historical world beings seem to have already *gotten* it. Beings *happen* to come into emergence within the work: it is a happening; it needs to be

done. The never-ending strife between world and earth is at play in the work, whereas in the world it is done playing.

Chapter 2: Timothy Morton and the World of Global Warming

In the previous chapter we have investigated what Heidegger understands under his notions of world and earth, as well as tried to get into view what is revealed in an experience of an artwork. The world in which we dwell is, for Heidegger, one in which we know what to expect and with which we are familiar. Behind or before these comfortable worlds, there is the earth which allows for worlds to be built on it. Earth is the towering, self-emerging and -closing reality of things. The work of art lets the earth be earth, which is to say that in a work the world cannot *world*: it cannot make beings come to stand in accordance with the world. That which arises out of itself, earth, is in the everydayness of Dasein concealed. World reduces earth endlessly. This is not possible with a work of art. Our worlds come to a dead end when confronted with earth. Heidegger writes: “The setting up of a world and the setting forth of earth are two essential features in the work-being of the work” (Heidegger 1950, p. 173). The world which is set-up in the artwork is not the world in which Dasein dwells; it is set-up precisely because the 'normal' world is unavailable.

In this chapter I will explore what it means for our experience of the world that this world is endangered by global warming. To do this I will draw on works of philosopher and literary scholar Timothy Morton. Morton is professor of English literature at Rice university and one of the core members of the Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO, or triple-O) philosophical group. This group claims that “nothing has special status, but that everything exists equally—plumbers, cotton, bonobos, DVD players, and sandstone for example. In contemporary thought, things are usually taken either as the aggregation of ever smaller bits (scientific naturalism) or as constructions of human behavior and society (social relativism). OOO steers a path between the two.”³ For our purposes, Morton’s work is helpful for its analysis of the world of global warming. This is a world which is characterized by a growing awareness of the worrying effects of global warming.

In the first section of this chapter, I will investigate what global warming is according to Morton. In *Hyperobjects*, he explains what kind of 'object' global warming exactly is. Morton does this by taking the OOO-definition of what an object is. Graham Harman, founder of this approach, writes in *Object-Oriented Ontology* that “an object is anything that cannot be entirely reduced either

³ http://bogost.com/writing/blog/what_is_objectoriented_ontolog/

to the components of which it is made or to the effects that it has on other things” (Harman 2018, p.43). In other words, a drop of water can neither be completely explained by establishing that it is made up of two hydrogen molecules and one oxygen molecule, nor by establishing the effects that the water droplet has on other objects. *Hyperobjects* are objects “that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans” (Morton 2013, p.1).

In the second section I will examine what global warming means for beings we encounter within our world. In *Being Ecological*, Morton claims that the world has ended. I will claim on the contrary that there are still worlds which make beings come to stand in certain ways. The only world which has definitively ended is the world of ecological ignorance.

2.1 Global warming as hyperobject

In order to properly raise the question of literature in an age of global warming, we must first learn what this global warming is, and how it is different from other objects. In *hyperobjects*, Timothy Morton writes that global warming is a hyperobject, an object so vastly distributed in both time and space, that we cannot ever grasp or even see them. He writes in the introductory pages: “A hyperobject could be the sum total of all the nuclear materials on Earth; or just the plutonium, or the uranium. A hyperobject could be the very long-lasting product of direct human manufacture, such as Styrofoam or plastic bags, or the sum of all the whirring machinery of capitalism” (Morton 2013 p.1). In this section, we will explore the properties of the object global warming, as well as other hyperobjects.

As a OOO philosopher, Morton holds that there is a radical divide between an object and its qualities. Graham Harman writes in *Object Oriented Ontology*: “real objects exist regardless of whether we perceive or think of them, sensual objects exist only as the correlate of our acts of consciousness” (Harman 2018, p.155). Real objects have qualities which we can sense, but what we sense, the sour apple, is not the apple as it is in itself: it is not the Real Apple, it is the apple as how it is sensed. Thus Morton writes: “things are open, they withdraw from total access. With your thought you can’t encapsulate everything that an apple is, because you forgot to taste it. But biting into an apple won’t capture everything an apple is either, because you forgot to tunnel into it like a worm” (Morton 2013, p.21). This should echo what we have explored in the last chapter. Whether the apple is ready-at-hand or present-at-hand, the apple as it is in itself is not exhausted by either of these two ways in which it is brought into unconcealment. There is always more to the apple than how its qualities present it to us, which is why Morton asserts “if everything exists in the same way, that means that wholes exist in the same way as their parts, which means that there are always more parts than there is a whole— which means that the whole is always less than the sum of its parts” (Morton 2018, p. 47).

Morton and other OOO-philosophers have drawn on Kant to make the distinction between the sensory and the real object. Morton writes that one reason Kant gives for making this distinction is the experience of beauty. Morton writes: “That’s because beauty gives you a fantastic, ‘impossible’ access to the inaccessible, to the withdrawn, open qualities of things, their mysterious reality” (Morton 2018, p.41). In the experience of an artwork as art you notice that the artwork is more than the way in which it is to you. The artwork does not show the aspects of the thing which are normally inaccessible; it shows the inaccessibility as such. As we have seen in chapter 1.3, Heidegger writes

that in the work a world is set-up and the earth comes to tower, which means that the work is never exhausted by any explanation. For both Morton and Heidegger, this is not just a quality of works of art, but something which everything has in common. Artworks just make this quality more apparent: “Things are unspeakable. And you discover this aspect of things, as if you could somehow feel that un-feelability, in the beauty experience” (Morton 2018, p.47).

A hyperobject is just like a real object, but the properties which all objects share are more obvious when discussing hyperobjects. As was observed by Harman, there is a way in which for Morton every object is a hyperobject: “By book’s end, Morton will conclude that in light of our environmental crisis, there is a sense in which *every* object is a hyperobject” (Harman 2018, p.233). Although every object is withdrawn, this quality is more obvious when we discuss hyperobjects such as global warming: “a thing so vast in both temporal and spatial terms that we can only see slices of it at a time; hyperobjects come in and out of phase with human time; they end up contaminating everything, if we find ourselves inside them” (Morton 2018, p.125). One of the qualities of hyperobjects is that they are *viscous*, or sticky; you cannot get away from them. You might walk away from an apple, but hyperobjects such as the climate or radioactive materials are inescapable: “A good example of viscosity would be radioactive materials. The more you try to get rid of them, the more you realize you can’t get rid of them. They seriously undermine the notion of ‘away’” (Morton 2013, p. 36). And “When you feel raindrops, you are experiencing climate, in some sense. In particular you are experiencing the climate change known as global warming. But you are never directly experiencing global warming as such” (Morton 2013, p.48). Just as the taste of the apple should not be confused with the real apple, the rain on my head is not global warming. Still, both the apple's taste as well as the drops of rain *belong* to their respective real objects. These qualities are the emerging properties or manifestations of other real objects. The raindrop is both a quality of the daily weather, which in turn is a quality of the climate, and in itself the raindrop is also a real object.

The hyperobject *Global Warming* can never be brought into unconcealment. This is first of all because no object at all can be completely brought into unconcealment. But at least I can walk around an apple, so that I can look at it from all sides; I cannot walk around global warming, for then I would be walking everywhere. This is what causes Morton to say that “Hyperobjects are nonlocal” (Morton 2013, p.38). Hyperobjects are not only spatially enormous; they are also temporally huge. Hyperobjects are still unfolding themselves through time: “the half-life of plutonium-239 is 24,100 years. [...] The future of plutonium exerts a causal influence on the present, casting its shadow backward through time” (Morton 2013, p.120). Hyperobjects force us to think about a future where their effects will still be felt, but not by us. There will still be plutonium and global warming in 24.000

years. It might be tempting to think of hyperobjects as processes instead of as objects, but Morton writes: “A process just is a real object, but one that occupies higher dimension than objects to which we are accustomed” (Morton 2013, p.70). By this higher dimensional object Morton means that global warming would appear as a fixed thing, like an apple, if you could somehow see it as a four dimensional being: if you could see not only space but also time. As mere three-dimensional beings, we can only see slivers of the object global warming: “When the weather falls on your head, you are experiencing a bad photocopy of a piece of that plot. What you once thought was real turns out to be a sensual representation, a thin slice of an image, a caricature of a piece of global climate” (Morton 2013, p.70).

In this section we have roughly outlined the properties of the hyperobject global warming. As a hyperobject, global warming is so spatially and temporally enormous, that it is impossible to ever bring it into unconcealment. In the next section, we will explore what it means that we find ourselves inside global warming.

2.2 Inside Global Warming

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the concept of world is used by Heidegger to refer to the familiar and comfortable human relation with his or her direct environment. For him, during an age of modern technology, the world in which we live is ruled over by a way of revealing he called standing-reserve. Beings which we find in our world, such as coal and airplanes, are ordered to be called upon for other ends. Heidegger writes in *The Question concerning Technology*: “Yet an airliner that stands on the runway is surely an object. Certainly. We can represent the machine so. But then it conceals itself as to what and how it is. Revealed, it stands on the taxi strip only as standing-reserve, inasmuch as it is ordered to insure the possibility of transportation” (Heidegger 1954, p. 322). In an age of global warming, the airliner might still be revealed as ordered to transport man around the globe, but as a widespread phenomenon such as flight shame indicates, the airliner is in today’s age also revealed as a threat to the climate. This phenomenon suggests that there is more to the airliner than just the way in which it is encountered as standing-reserve: it is more than a way of transport. The danger of modern technology which Heidegger spoke about, the danger of only revealing beings as standing-reserve, has become common knowledge. In this section, I will explore how beings are brought into unconcealment within a world that is inside global warming.

In both *Hyperobjects*, as well as *Being Ecological*, Morton claims that the world has come to an end. First I want to outline the reasons Morton gives for making this claim. Then I would like to

suggest that the Heideggerian notion of world is still useful for understanding our relationship with our surroundings. The only world which has come to an end is one of ecological ignorance. Morton writes: “All humans, I shall argue, are now aware that they have entered a new phase of history in which nonhumans are no longer excluded or merely decorative features of their social, psychic, and philosophical space. From the most vulnerable Pacific Islander to the most hardened eliminative materialist, everyone must reckon with the power of rising waves and ultraviolet light. This phase is characterized by a traumatic loss of coordinates, ‘the end of the world’” (Morton 2013, p. 22). For Morton, the world has already ended because of the recognition that non-human beings are influencing and are influenced by our lifeworlds. To try to hold on to the worldview that humans are the only actors on Earth prevents “a full engagement with our ecological existence here on Earth” (Morton 2013, p.7). Morton wants us to recognize that we should not act to save the world that we care for, because this world is beyond saving. Instead, we should care for the Earth and acknowledge our co-existence with non-human beings.

Morton argues that the world has ended because we are beginning to see that there are objects, such as the hyperobject global warming, which cannot be brought into unconcealment. He writes: “We took weather to be real. But in an age of global warming we see it as an accident, a simulation of something darker, more withdrawn—climate. As Harman argues, world is always presence-at-hand— a mere caricature of some real object” (Morton 2013, p.102). For Morton, the end of the world means the end of the weather being *just* the weather, the end of the weather as a stable background against which I go about my daily business.

As I noted in the previous section, we can only see slivers of the hyperobject global warming, slivers which we call the weather: “That wet stuff and that golden stuff, which we call weather, turns out to have been a false immediacy, an ontic pseudo-reality that can’t stand up against the looming presence of an invisible yet far more real global climate” (Morton 2013, p.103). The background we call weather, has in this age of global warming become the foreground of the climate: the background has radically come to the foreground.

And it is not only weather which has been placed in the foreground. Morton writes: “every decision we make is in some sense related to hyperobjects. [...] When I turn the key in the ignition of my car, I am relating to global warming. When a novelist writes about emigration to Mars, he is relating to global warming” (Morton 2013, p.20). Because every decision is in some sense related to global warming, there is no escaping it: there is no away. Every being is entangled in the giant web we call the biosphere: “a network of relations between beings such as waves, coral, ideas about

coral, and oil-spewing tankers, a network that is an entity in its very own right” (Morton 2013, p.75). Ecological awareness forces us to constantly recognize that we are not alone on Earth. Instead, everything is connected: “everything is relevant to everything else, but is also really unique and vivid and distinct at the very same time” (Morton 2018, p.88). The idea that everything is relevant to everything else, was of course already present in the philosophies of the likes of Spinoza and Leibniz. The crucial difference is that for Morton we cannot ignore this conclusion: we are always aware of everything being relevant to everything else. Global warming gives us a feeling that everything is relevant to everything, instead of this being theoretically deduced.

The world in which we dwell, the stable background against which we play out our lives, is revealed to be not stable at all. Instead, this background is buzzing with other beings. The world which has ended is Heidegger's world, the view according to which only Dasein has a world: “The specialness we granted ourselves as unravelers of cosmic meaning, exemplified in the uniqueness of Heideggerian Dasein, falls apart since there is no meaningfulness possible in a world without a foreground–background distinction. [...] We have no world because the objects that functioned as invisible scenery have dissolved” (Morton 2013, p.104). For Morton, there is no world anymore with which we are familiar, because this familiarity has been exposed as a fiction. Audry Mitchell writes: “[Morton] urges us to stop trying to save a rigid and groundless notion of world and instead to accept that we are embedded within objects that are constantly changing, and which may be indifferent to our existence.”⁴ Ecological awareness has forced us to recognize the truth of Heidegger's claim that what had previously seemed ordinary is not ordinary at all. Since this awareness cannot be reversed, Morton concludes that the world has ended.

As I alluded to above, I would like to suggest that the only world which has ended was a world characterized by ecological ignorance, and that this world has been replaced by one in which ecological awareness plays a major role. As we have seen in the first chapter, the way in which entities can be encountered is determined by the world in which Dasein dwells. The world *worlds*; it gives entities their standing. That entities come to stand differently does not mean that there is no more world, just that there is another world. Elizabeth Boulton writes in a discussion of Morton's book that “Morton suggests that, at a very deep level, humans' understanding of their sense of existence, their Dasein, is being rocked and shaken. He also provides a narrative that describes the nature and 'feel' of global warming.”⁵ The fact that Dasein is being shocked and that there is a *feel* of

⁴ Michtell, A. Climate change as a 'hyperobject': a critical review of Timothy Morton's reframing narrative: Climate change as a hyperobject (Wiley interdisciplinary reviews: Climate Change · May 2016)

⁵Boulton, E. (2013) A (re)view of Timothy Morton's Hyperobjects. (University of Minnesota Press)

global warming, are signs that there is a new world, a new way in which beings are encountered. This is a feeling which results from the recognition that the ordinary is not so ordinary: “The recognition of being caught in hyperobjects is precisely a feeling of strange familiarity and familiar strangeness. We already know the weather like the back of our hand. But this is weird weather, this global warming weather” (Morton 2013, p.55). The weather is strangely familiar because we sense the same things as before: the sunlight and the drops of water. Still, it is strange because we know that this is not how the weather has to appear: it is just how it appears *now*, in the current stage of global warming in progress.

As we have seen, Heidegger argues that we are characterized by being-in-the-world. The *in* is supposed to refer to a feeling of at homeness, of dwelling near ... or being-familiar-with. The world which Morton describes is one characterized by ecological awareness, which is “awareness of unintended consequences” (Morton 2018, p.50). We are inside hyperobjects called biosphere and climate, out of which nothing can escape and every action has repercussions. The airline with which Heidegger might have flown to Greece and which was brought into unconcealment as standing-reserve, is now revealed to be an object which does not only refer to the destination of the traveller, but also to the threat it poses to the hyperobjects climate and biosphere. In an age of global warming, the world with which we have become familiar is precisely a world in which we are familiar with unfamiliarity and comfortable with uncomfotability.

Chapter 3 Literature and the World

Up until this point, we have investigated the world in which our question is raised: how does global warming affect the way in which beings are brought into unconcealment. In this chapter we will move closer to the very thing we ask about: literature. In the previous chapter we concluded that the world in which we raise our question is a world in which we have to constantly recognize that everything is relevant to everything else. In this chapter we will investigate the function of literature: is it just a flight into fantasy, or is there more to it?

In order to figure out what literature does, we will investigate *The Space of Literature* (1955) by Maurice Blanchot. In this work, Blanchot discusses how literature compares to other forms of human activity and how beings are brought into unconcealment in literature. Like Heidegger, Blanchot is interested in the objects of an experience of art. Written in the 1950's, it remains the question whether the same conclusions can be upheld in today's day and age.

In the first section, I will sketch Blanchot's conception of the history of art. Every work of art has been fashioned in a certain age, but they have been received differently through the ages. The way the ancient Greeks saw their statues, tragedies and temples is not the same as people who enjoy these works today. For Blanchot, art has functioned differently in different historical times. We will explore what the different ways of the functioning of art have been.

In the second section of this chapter, we will explore the relationship between the work of art and the world in which it is experienced. Artworks are experienced differently in different time-periods due to what Blanchot calls the remove of the artwork from the world. We will investigate this remove and how it relates to the truth drawn from artworks.

In the third section, we will investigate what for Blanchot are the differences and similarities between the experience of the plastic arts and literature. Statues and paintings can be enjoyed in a fraction of the time it takes to enjoy literary works, because these works do not need to be read before one sees what these works are all about. Made of language, literature speaks to us when being read, while artworks such as statues and paintings seem to remain silent.

3.1 History of art

As we have seen in the first two chapters of this thesis, that which is revealed in the work of art is dependent on the specific person experiencing the work of art. In the first chapter we noted the intimate relation between the individual person and the historical world in which he dwells. In the second chapter we have discussed how Morton characterizes our historical period, characterized by an awareness of hyperobjects such as global warming. He notes that hyperobjects force us to think about a distant future in which the effects of hyperobjects will still be felt, but not by us, maybe not even by human beings. In this section, we will explore what Blanchot writes about the history of the role of art within society. As the world changes, so too does the reception of works of art constantly change. *The Space of Literature* was published in 1955. It contains many essays Blanchot had written in the four years prior to their final compilation and publication.⁶ In this work, Blanchot considers the different roles art has played within certain historical periods up until the 1950's. Within our contemporary world characterized by a growing awareness of the effects of global warming, art might serve a different role still.

The artist has as his/her goal a work of art, and is as such comparable to the smith who also has as his/her goal an object. Blanchot writes: "art has as its goal something real: an object. But a beautiful object. Which is to say, an object of contemplation, not of use, which, moreover, will be sufficient to itself, will rest in itself, refer to nothing else, and be its own end" (Blanchot 1955, p.212). In the experience of a work of art Truth happens in the work of art, but the way in which it happens cannot be exactly determined. One needs to contemplate how the work makes truth happen. Within the worlds we inhabit, nothing can be done with the work of art. 'World' is used by Blanchot in a similar fashion to how it is used by Heidegger and Morton. It is a place with which we are familiar, where we know what to do and how to get things done. Works of art are in a way removed from the world with which we are familiar. The influence of Heidegger's writings on Blanchot's thinking is vast, as has been investigated elsewhere.⁷ Leslie Hill writes: "Heidegger, of course, thanks to Levinas, had been familiar to Blanchot since the late 1920s; and by the early 1940s [...] he had evidently become for Blanchot the thinker most deeply and purposefully engaged in articulating philosophically the question of the foundational nature of language in general and poetic language in particular."⁸ In what follows, I will lay out the history of the role of art as Blanchot describes it.

⁶ Hill, L. (1997). Blanchot, extreme contemporary. Routledge.p. 14

⁷ see for example Clark, Hill and Langstaff.

⁸ Hill, *Blanchot, extreme contemporary*. p. 79

Blanchot discusses the function of art from the time of the ancient Greeks until his own age. For the Greeks “art was able to coexist with other absolute demands. Painting served the gods, poetry made them speak” (Blanchot 1955, p.213). As we have seen in the first chapter, art was for the Greeks a *techne*, because it brought beings forth into unconcealment. Works of art brought the gods into the daily life of the polis: the painting made them visible and the poem gave them a voice. Blanchot writes: “When art is the language of the gods, when the temple is the house where the god dwells, the work is invisible and art unknown. The poem names the sacred, and men hear the sacred, not the poem.” (Blanchot 1955, p.230) Because of the presence of the gods which the artwork brings forth, the artwork itself falls to the background. The gods are invisible and forever silent, aspects which the work brings forth: “since the divine is unspeakable and ever speechless, the poem, through the silence of the god which it encloses in language, is also that which speaks as poem, and shows itself, as a work, at the same time that it remains hidden” (Blanchot 1955, p.230). The work names the unnameable, and brings it into the daily lives of the Greeks. This is not to say that what is concealed is brought into unconcealment in an artwork. Rather, the gods are brought into unconcealment as concealed. Because the gods are so elusive, no two people will have the exact same conception of them, which is why the work of art for the Greeks too is an object of contemplation. The real gods have surely much more to say than what they are made to say in a poem. By being given a voice to speak with in the poem, the experiencing subject is constantly reminded of the silence of the gods in his daily life.

With the disappearance of the Greek gods art became what Blanchot calls humanistic. It “[offers] to man a means of self-recognition, of self-fulfillment. [...] It oscillates between the modesty of its useful manifestations (literature tends increasingly toward effective, interesting prose), and useless pride in being pure essence” (Blanchot 1955, p. 218). Works of art were at this stage in history only art insofar they presented humanity to humanity. Humanity is brought forth into unconcealment in the same way that the gods were brought forth into unconcealment for the Greeks, namely as concealed. In this era, the artwork is also beautiful in the sense that it evokes contemplation of what *humanity* is. Still, it does not refer solely to itself, but rather to humanity.

However, Blanchot writes: “art -- man's presence to himself -- does not manage to be satisfied with this humanist avatar which history reserves for it. It has to become its own presence. What it wants to affirm is art. What it seeks, what it attempts to achieve is the essence of art” (Blanchot 1955, p.219). For Blanchot, what was once hidden behind the work in order to make that which the work gave voice to appear, is made visible itself: art.

We have already discussed the fact that the work of art can mean different things to different people. Blanchot elaborates on this by saying that the artist has by no means the final say as to what his work says. He writes: "It is sometimes said regretfully that the work of art will never again speak the language it spoke when it was born, the language of its birth, which only those who belonged to the same world heard and received. Never again will the Eumenides speak to the Greeks, and we will never know what was said in that language. This is true. But it is also true that the Eumenides have still never spoken, and that each time they speak it is the unique birth of their language that they announce" (Blanchot 1955, p.206). Whereas Heidegger seems to hold in *The Origin of the Work of Art* that one can experience the enclosure of the Greek gods in the temple in the same way that the Greeks did themselves, Blanchot states that an artwork is always experienced differently. This does not mean that our experience is less pure than the experience of the Greeks, for the Eumenides (or any work of art) has never spoken still. Works of art speak differently to everyone, regardless of whether they inhabit the same world.

This is not to say that how the work is experienced is not influenced by the world at all. As I have outlined in this section, within the world of the Greeks the work of art brought forth the gods, and later it brought forth humanity. Although works of art are experienced differently by everyone, the world in which they are experienced definitely plays a role. In Blanchot's time, the work of art brought forth art as such. It remains to be seen if works of art still do this in our own time, the time of global warming.

3.2 Art and the world

In the previous section, I have shown Blanchot's analysis of the history of the functions of art. That artworks can take on different meanings in history is due to what Blanchot calls the remove of the work to the world. In order to investigate the relationship between the artwork and the world, I will in this section explore what Blanchot understands under this remove.

As I have shown in the previous section, for Blanchot the goal of an artist is to produce a beautiful object, an object of contemplation. In the first chapter I have discussed that we are comfortable within the worlds we inhabit, wherein everything has its in-order-to structure. The work of art is a stranger to these worlds. As Hill writes, for Blanchot the work of art "abolish[es] the world absolutely in order to put in its place an absolute absence of world and thereby to substitute for real, functional objects a series of imaginary, absent objects."⁹ The work of art evokes contemplation, because it is not clear how to approach the absent objects which it puts in place of the functional objects of the world. As we have seen in the first chapter, functional objects disappear in their use for goals in the world. The absent objects, however, appear in their absence from the world.

Blanchot calls this the distance or the remove of the work to the world. He writes: "It is this remove that permits the work to address the world and at the same time to reserve comment, to be the ever reserved beginning of every story" (Blanchot 1955, p.233). Functional objects cannot address the world because they disappear in their use. The absent objects in the artwork tell us how we understand the functional objects in the historical world. In the last section we have seen that the artwork addresses the world differently in different historical contexts. This is because the functional objects are also understood differently in different times. The artwork will always tell something different, it reserves comment. According to Blanchot the artwork is exposed "to all the contingencies of time, showing it ceaselessly in search of a new form, of another culmination, acquiescing in all the metamorphoses which, attaching it to history, seem to make of its remove the promise of an unlimited future" (Blanchot 1955, p.205). The meaning of the work is never fixed, the truth drawn from it never the same, because of the remove of the work to the world.

The art-experiencing subject "sees in the marvelous clarity of the work, not that which is brought to light by the darkness that withholds it and that hides in it, but that which is clear in itself -- meaning: that which is understood and can be taken from the work, separated from it to be enjoyed and used. Thus the reader's dialogue with the work consists increasingly in 'raising' it to truth, in

⁹ Hill, *Blanchot, extreme contemporary*. p. 107

transforming it into ordinary language, effective formulae, useful values” (Blanchot 1955, p.230). What exactly in the work is clear in itself, depends on the historical world in which the work of art is experienced. The truth of the work is dependent on what is clear in itself in a given world. In his engagement with the work of art he senses truth in the work, but it is the truth of his world he senses.

3.3 The literary experience

In the last two sections, we have explored the relationship between the artwork and the world in which it is experienced. In this section, we will investigate how the experience of a literary artwork differs from that of a more plastic artwork.

In the last section we have seen that the artwork substitutes functional objects with imaginary ones. The literary work is made in language, but for Blanchot it is not ordinary language in which it is fashioned. Blanchot cites the French poet Mallarmé in order to distinguish between the language of a literary work and the language of ordinary life, which he calls *crude*. He writes: “through it we are in the world: it refers us back to the life of the world where goals speak and the concern to achieve them once and for all is the rule. Granted, this crude word is a pure nothing, nothingness itself. But it is nothingness in action: that which acts, labors, constructs” (Blanchot 1955, p.40). Crude words are a pure nothing, because they rarely draw attention to themselves. Like functional objects, they refer us to the tasks in the worlds which we inhabit. These words are not beautiful, because they do not evoke contemplation. In ordinary language, language disappears in its use so that beings may be brought forth into unconcealment. In contrast to crude words, Blanchot calls the words of a literary work *essential*: “In this language the world recedes and goals cease; the world falls silent; beings with their preoccupations, their projects, their activity are no longer ultimately what speaks. [...] Beings fall silent, but then it is being that tends to speak and speech that wants to be. The poetic word is no longer someone's word. In it no one speaks, and what speaks is not anyone. It seems rather that the word alone declares itself” (Blanchot 1955, p.41). Language in the literary work brought forth into unconcealment as language. Just as the absent objects address the world by telling us how we understand the functional objects, the elemental words tell us how we understand the crude words.

But the literary work does not only offer a reflection on how we understand individual words. Blanchot writes: “reading and vision each time recollect, from the weight of a given content and along the ramifications of an evolving world, the unique intimacy of the work, the wonder of its constant genesis and the swell of its unfurling” (Blanchot 1955, p.207). Although the words on the

pages remain the same, the reader reads them in accordance with his/her own world, creating different meanings in different ages. *Oblomow* by Ivan Goncharov might reflect how we spend our own time delaying actions which will combat global warming; *1984* might have been written to offer a reflection on what life in a communist state might be like, but it might just as well offer a reflection on how social media platforms sells the information of its users. What we take the work to mean says a lot about our current world.

A literary work needs to be read to be experienced. Only in reading can it become the object of an experience of art, and it takes time to read the entire work. As such it takes time for the reader to transform the book into the object of an experience of art. The statue, in contrast, seems to already be experienced as a whole. Blanchot writes: "The plastic arts have this advantage over writing: they manifest more directly the exclusive void within which the work seems to want to dwell, far from every gaze. [...] The book seems to lack this decisive separation" (Blanchot 1955, p.192). An object is only an artwork when it manifests the exclusive void, something which the statue is more capable of doing than an artwork of language. As we have seen, an artwork bears all meaning which is ascribed to it through the course of history. To say that the plastic arts manifest the void more directly, is to say that these works of art are harder to draw into a world, to ascribe meaning to within the world of current truths. As an artwork of language, literary works are always closer to the world in which they are experienced than more tangible artworks.

The literary book must be taken up by a reader who "does not add himself to the book, but tends primarily to relieve it of an author" (Blanchot 1955, p.193). The reader makes the book his or her personal work of art by relieving it of an author. The book is *put to work* by the reader. What the content of the book comes to mean depends on the historical world in which the reader reads. For Blanchot this means that the book as it is read by the reader "puts itself at the reader's service. It takes part in the public dialogue. It expresses or it refutes what is generally said; it consoles, it entertains, it bores, not by virtue of itself or by virtue of a relation with the void and the cutting edge of its being, but via its content, and then finally thanks to its reflection of the common language and the current truth" (Blanchot 1955, p.206). In different eras the literary work *works* differently. Where *Utopia* was originally written as a vision of what a utopic civilization might look like, nowadays the lack of individual freedom in the novel comes to the fore as downright dystopic.

Chapter 4 Reading Literature In A Melting World

This chapter will be dedicated to answering the main research question: what is revealed in literature in an age of climate change? In the first three chapters of this thesis, we have explored how the human being relates to its environment in different ways. We have seen that for Heidegger in a world ruled by modern technology, beings are brought forth into unconcealment as standing-reserve, as things to be used for other ends. Within the world of modern technology things are used for something else, and as such they disappear in their use. According to Blanchot's analysis, this is also the case for language itself: we barely notice language when we speak. However, as we have seen in the second chapter, our era is no longer solely dominated by modern technology. Global warming has forced us to recognize that our technologies have a big impact on the planet, on the environmental balance which has made it possible for life on earth as it is now to have become as it is. Things come to stand in our world not merely as standing-reserve, but also as taking place on the planet. Morton argues that due to the vast temporal and spatial scales on which hyperobjects such as global warming take place, we can never know in advance how our actions influence them; we only know that our actions influence them. I have argued that this does not mean that the world has ended, but only that things within the world present themselves differently to us.

In this chapter we will use much of the material already discussed in the previous chapters. In the first chapter I have laid out what an artwork is for Heidegger, namely a strife between world and earth (Heidegger 1950, p.177). Things always appear to us within the referential whole of a world, but we do not notice this in our everyday lives. When we experience the artwork as art, however, we experience the shortcomings of our worlds: there is always more to the things themselves which we do not normally notice, their earthy aspects. For Heidegger, we see in a work of art this conflict between what shows itself and what conceals itself: we see that there is more to things. As we have seen in the second chapter, this is also what Morton asserts. For Morton, works of art make the unfeelability of things felt, we feel the shortcoming of our historical worlds. In the third chapter we have seen that the unfeelability of things is experienced differently in different historical times. Blanchot offers an explanation of this, claiming that this is because the work of art is removed from the world. Because of the remove from the world, the way in which the experiencing person takes back the work of art into his or her world is subject to history: we experience works of art differently through the ages. As we have seen, according to Blanchot the work of art in his time brings art into unconcealment. The question remains: what is brought into unconcealment in a world which is characterized by an awareness of global warming?

To answer this question, I will discuss in the first section how the theory of the four causes, which was mentioned in chapter 1.1, can be related to the experience of a work of art. Throughout this thesis we have seen that the experience of a work of art is dependent on more than the work itself. Using Heidegger's description in *The Origin of the Work of Art* of his experience of a painting by Van Gogh, I will show how the four causes might be used to capture what is at play in an experience of art.

To better draw out the difference in revealing of literature in a time of global warming, I will make a case study of the poem "In lovely blue" by the poet Friedrich Hölderlin. This is a poem frequently discussed by Heidegger, but in contrast to Heidegger, my analysis draws out more than just the way in which mankind is on earth. In a time of global warming this poem can be read as a poem about how everything on earth stands in relation to everything else. In the third section I will note the similarities and differences between my and Heidegger's experience of this poem. This will shed light on the way in which works of literature bring forth beings differently in a world threatened by global warming.

4.1 The four causes of an experience of art

In this first section, I will show how the theory of the four causes, described in chapter 1.1, might be used to explain what is at play in the experience of a work of art. To do this, I will once more return to the passage in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in which Heidegger describes Van Gogh's painting of a pair of peasant shoes. By considering the four causes in our analysis of Heidegger's interpretation of the painting, we can get a better grasp of why every work of art is experienced differently through time as well as by different viewers. This will help explain the difference in bringing-forth into unconcealment by works of art in a world threatened by global warming.

In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger describes what he claims is experienced in several artworks. We should, however, remember that Heidegger describes his own experience, not the only experience of a specific work of art. Following Morton we might note that no way of bringing forth into unconcealment fully exhausts the object. When Heidegger describes the Van Gogh painting of a pair of peasant shoes, he writes

From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth... In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death (Heidegger 1950, p.159).

About this passage I would like to say that Heidegger gives the painted shoes their standing by providing them with a world in which they are used. The underlying feelings accompanying every piece of equipment are made explicit in Heidegger's description of the painted shoes. These feelings, this background, is normally invisible within the world of our ordinary lives, where the shoes seem to disappear in their use. In the confrontation with the artwork, Heidegger suddenly notices this hidden background and makes it available for explicit reflection. In *Heidegger explained* (2007), Graham Harman writes the following about Heidegger's description of the painting: "In Van Gogh's famous painting of the peasant shoes (Heidegger is wrong: they were actually Van Gogh's own shoes), the shoes are no longer reliable tools, and neither are they simple pieces of leather and string. The shoes incarnate the strife of world and earth, thereby revealing the essence of the shoes" (Harman 2007, pp.110-111). In the work of art the shoes have lost their in-order-to structure and it is revealed how reliability is the essence of the shoes. Curiously, Harman passes over Heidegger's 'mistake' in

regarding Van Gogh's shoes as the shoes of a peasant woman. Like all mistakes, much can be learned from this one.

When looking at Van Gogh's painting of his own shoes, Heidegger sees the “toilsome tread of the worker”. I will try to capture what is at play here using the theory of the four causes, which Heidegger writes about in *The Question Concerning Technology* in relation to the silver goblet.

(1) the *causa materialis*, the material, the matter out of which, for example, a silver chalice is made; (2) the *causa formalis*, the form, the shape into which the material enters; (3) the *causa finalis*, the end, for example, the sacrificial rite in relation to which the required chalice is determined as to its form and matter; (4) the *causa efficiens*, which brings about the effect that is the finished, actual chalice, in this instance, the silversmith (Heidegger 1954, pp. 313-314).

Heidegger might be wrong in saying that these shoes are those of a peasant woman, but his experience of these shoes as that of peasant woman is not wrong. In his experience of the work of art, he has found the truth of equipment: reliability. The work as it was experienced by Heidegger, is indebted to Heidegger as the realizer of how a work comes to be. I would like to say that Heidegger himself is the *causa efficiens* of the work which brought about the truth of equipment: by virtue of his experience Heidegger has raised this truth in the work of art. As we have seen in chapter 3.1, Blanchot states that the work of art always speaks the unique language of its birth, which means that every artwork is always experienced differently. Following this claim, I would like to state that Heidegger's experience of the work has, in a way, birthed a new artwork. The *causa materialis*, then, is the painting, which is the material co-responsible for the artwork as it is experienced by Heidegger. The *causa formalis* is the world in which Heidegger is at home. This world, as we have seen, strives to surmount earth. In other words, Heidegger's world wants to explain the work of art, which always escapes complete explanation, for it belongs to earth. Heidegger sees in the painted shoes the shoes of a peasant woman. The world which is set-up in the work of art, is Heidegger's world of a peasant woman. This world is Heidegger's vision of what the world of a peasant woman consists of. As we have seen in the third chapter, Blanchot notes that the work of art is removed from the world, which means that the experiencing subject needs to draw the work into his or her own world. Now, as Harman shows by pointing out Heidegger's 'mistake', the world which is set-up does not at all exhaust the material we call the work of art: many other worlds are possible. As Heidegger himself writes: “as a world opens itself the earth comes to tower. It stands forth as that which bears all, as that which is sheltered in its own law and always wrapped in itself” (Heidegger 1950, p.188). The *causa materialis*, here the artwork, bears all explanations; and every explanation has its limit, none

can fully exhaust the work of art. In confrontation with the work of art as material, Heidegger gives the portrayed shoes their standing by providing them with a world in which the shoes are indeed of use. This causes the normally hidden features of every shoe to be suddenly available within Heidegger's own world. In a way, the shoes' world is imported in Heidegger's own world.

The *causa finalis*, then, is the truth brought forth from the work, it is what was for the observer meant with the work, what he thinks the artwork is all about, and what it says to him. It is a truth about which Blanchot writes: "As soon as the truth one thinks one draws from it [(the artwork)] comes to light, becomes the life and the action of daytime's clarity, the work closes in on itself as if it were a foreigner to this truth and without significance. For the work seems a stranger not only with respect to truths already known and certain; it is not only the scandal of the monstrous and of the nontrue; it always refutes the true, whatever it may be. Even if truth be drawn from the work, the work overturns it, takes it back into itself to bury and hide it" (Blanchot 1955, pp. 227-228). A poetic truth can only find its affirmation in the work from whence it came. When, however, one would try to locate this truth in the work, the work also always seems to hide the truth: it never says its truth clearly. This is why it always feels strange to hear someone say what an artwork is about, because the artwork does not express its truth clearly at all. When Heidegger says that the truth of Van Gogh's painting is that the essence of equipment is reliability, we wonder how he could say such a thing on the basis of this painting. For him however, the artwork expresses this truth as clear as day: how is it that not everyone sees this?!

The truth brought forth is unique because although the work of art as material is unchanging, the *causa formalis* and the *causa efficiens* are changing constantly. Heidegger writes: "The establishing of truth in the work is the bringing forth of a being such as never was before and will never come to be again" (Heidegger 1950, p.187). In setting up a world in the work of art, by giving the portrayed entities their standing, the observer brings forth a being such as never was before: truth happens differently every time. Thus it is the observer who brings forth and makes present, but only insofar as a world is being set-up. We see this in Heidegger's description of the painting when he gives the shoes a world in which they are of use: Heidegger's conception of the world of a peasant woman.

I take the world of the experiencing subject as the *causa formalis*, because the work of art is not only experienced differently by different people, but is also experienced differently through time. As we have seen in the third chapter discussing the history of art according to Blanchot, the Greek temple is experienced differently through time. Whereas the ancient Greeks saw in the temple the silently dwelling gods, Blanchot sees in it a testimony for art. Heidegger might write about the

temple: “The building encloses the figure of the god, and in this concealment lets it stand out into the holy precinct through the open portico” (Heidegger 1950, p. 167). But this is still Heidegger's world of the Greek people. And through time the way in which people have thought about the Greek experience of their world has changed.

Moreover, Heidegger describes only a world in which the Greek people thought of their temple as a house of the gods. He does not describe the experience of an individual. In chapter three, we have seen that for Blanchot a work of art speaks differently to everyone, regardless of whether they live in the same time period and the same place. An experience of a work of art is a very personal experience, which is why the individual is in my view a cause of his own: the *causa efficiens*. The subject is responsible for the artwork as it is experienced by him.

After his encounter with the artwork, Heidegger feels justified in saying that he has brought the essence of equipment in general into unconcealment. The artist is only the creator of the *causa materialis* by virtue of which an observer can truly make it into an artwork, that is “the disclosure of the particular being in its Being, the happening of truth” (Heidegger 1950, p.164). We also saw this in chapter 3.2, where we discussed how, for Blanchot, the observer raises the content of the work to truth: “the reader’s dialogue with the work consists in 'raising' it to truth, in transforming it into ordinary language” (Blanchot 1955, p.230). We can conclude from the fact that Heidegger makes truth happen in this painting by Van Gogh, that it is not only literary works which are risen to truth, but also the plastic arts. The *causa finalis* is this truth which is taken from the work. Just as the silver chalice is made for the ritual in which it will function, the work of art is made to serve the truth it makes happen. We can actually see this in Heidegger's description of Van Gogh's painting. Notice how he only describes the shoes, and not the background on which they stand. This is because the background of the painting cannot be made to serve the truth Heidegger sees in the work. The work Heidegger experiences is indebted to the *causa finalis* because the painting is made to function as a testimony to this truth. Those parts of the painting which cannot be made to serve this truth, are taken back by the earth to which the work belongs.

4.2 Reading *In lovely blue* in a world threatened by global warming

From the previous section we may draw several conclusions. We understand the way in which an artwork is experienced by using the theory of the four causes. This way of looking at an artistic experience explains why an artwork is experienced differently by different people, regardless of the time they live in. The *causa formalis*, the world in which the work is experienced, and the *causa efficiens*, the person experiencing the work, make the work appear differently every time by each observer. Thus the truth drawn from the work, the *causa finalis*, is different every time the work is experienced. To illustrate this, in this section I will analyse the poem *In lovely blue*¹⁰ by Friedrich Hölderlin, a poem frequently discussed by Heidegger because it contains the intriguing lines: *poetically / Man dwells on this earth*. Because I am in a world threatened by global warming, it is to be expected that my conclusions on what this poem tells us will be different from those of Heidegger.

The poem starts:

In lovely blue the steeple blossoms / With its metal roof. Around which / Drift swallow cries,
around which / Lies most loving blue. The sun, / High overhead, tints the roof tin, / But up in
the wind, silent / The weathercock crows. [...]

The steeple receives the blossoming quality of a flower, which to me means that the man-made structure is like nature in the sense that it is capable of growth. Surrounding the steeple swallows cry, and surrounding these cries lies the most loving blue. All these things appear by virtue of each other. Because the sun tints the roof of the steeple tin, it not only makes the steeple appear as it does, but it also influences the lovely blue of the sky and the cries of swallows. The weathercock, something man-made, crows in the wind like a living cock, further reducing the differences between nature and culture.

[...] When someone / Takes the stairs down from the belfry, / It is a still life, with the figure /
Thus detached, the sculpted shape / Of man comes forth. [...]

When, under the previously described conditions, a person comes into view, it is a still life, which to me suggests that the sight of the steeple and the sky becomes like a work of art. The figure of the

¹⁰ Hölderlin, F. (1984). *In lovely blue*. In R. Sieburth (Trans.), *Hymns and fragments* (pp. 249–253). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

person becomes detached, suggesting that the person loses the characteristics that makes him or her the person s/he is. Instead s/he comes to represent anyone: mankind.

[...] The windows / The bells ring through / Are as gates to beauty. Because gates / Still take after nature, / They resemble the forest trees. / But purity is also beauty.

The sound of the bells goes through the windows, the gates to beauty. Which suggests that the beautiful is not found inside the steeple, but rather outside of it. These windows can be as gates to beauty, because they resemble nature. The *But* suggests a warning, as if at first glance nature, free of man-made structures, cannot be beautiful. However, purity, the lack of man-made structures, is also beautiful.

A grave spirit arises from within, / Out of divers things. Yet so simple / These images, so very holy, / One fears to describe them. But the gods, / Ever kind in all things, / Are rich in virtue and joy. / Which man may imitate. [...]

From within the steeple, a grave spirit arises out of divers things. Whereas the beautiful is outside of the steeple, a seriousness is found within. The connotation of 'grave' as a burial marker further suggests that this seriousness is in a way like death, devoid of life. This seriousness comes from divers, that is, different things than the beautiful, namely from images, representations of the gods. These representations are taken as the gods, which make a grave spirit arise, but they are not the gods. For the gods are virtuous and full of joy. It is these real gods which man may imitate, and not the representations found within the steeple.

[...] May a man look up / From the utter hardship of his life / And say: Let me also be / Like these? Yes. / As long as kindness lasts, / Pure, within his heart, he may gladly measure himself / Against the divine. [...]

That a man may look up to the gods, suggests to me that the divine is not to be found inside the steeple, but rather outside it, up in the sky, in or perhaps beyond the lovely blue. That people have such hard lives, whereas the gods are full of joy and virtue, does not mean that someone cannot compare him- or herself to the divine. But s/he needs to have pure kindness within his or her heart.

[...] Is God unknown? / Is he manifest as the sky? This I tend / To believe. Such is man's measure. / Well deserving, yet poetically / Man dwells on this earth.

The poem suggests that God is not unknown, but rather known as the sky is known. We might approach this through Morton's distinction between a sensory object and a real object. We are quite used to the sky; it is always there above us. An airplane flies in the sky. We can see the sun and the clouds in the sky, and we know that there is an atmosphere protecting us from outer space and the rays of the sun. But all these ways of knowing the sky do not fully exhaust the Real sky, which cannot be exhausted by any explanation; there is always more to the sky. We are used to the sky, but what we are used to is not the Real sky. This, the speaker in the poem suggests, is the way we also know God. It is this familiar yet at bottom unknown God against whom man measures itself.

Man dwells on this earth, but in what way? It will be helpful to bear the original German in mind, which reads: *Voll Verdienst, doch dichterisch, wohnt der Mensch auf dieser Erde*. The word *Verdienst* can according to the Collins dictionary be translated as either *merit* or as *service*.¹¹ The English translator of the poem chose to translate this to *Well deserving*, and the translator of Heidegger's essay on this poem chose to translate it to *Full of merit* (Heidegger 1951, p. 214). In the next paragraph we will see that Heidegger hears in the words *Voll Verdienst* the merits which man earns in his or her life. This does not necessarily have to be the case, as is shown by a Dutch translation of these lines: "In dienstbaarheid, doch dichterlijk, woont de mens op deze aarde"¹² (Hölderlin 1988, p.179). The Dutch translator chose to translate these lines in the sense of *in service*, rather than as *full of merit*. In this reading, I choose to follow the Dutch translator, because the poem has not yet said anything about the potential earnings of mankind. The poem has spoken about ways in which beings are in service to each other. Beings are in service, *yet poetically*, as if the two do not normally come together. Here I cannot help but be influenced by my background in Heidegger's thought. 'Poetry' comes from the Greek *poiesis*, which for Heidegger mean to bring forth into presencing. On earth, man makes things come forth into presencing, that is, poetically. To me, to think *in service* and *poetically* together, means that man is serving the very things that man brings forth into presencing. We also see this in the lines: "so simple / These images, so very holy, One fears to describe them." Man has brought forth these images and relates to them differently through time. In the poem, the images are brought forth by mankind as things that one should fear to describe. That they are feared by the people in the poem has less to do with the images in themselves and more with the standing they received within the world of this historical people.

¹¹ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/german-english/verdienst>

¹² Hölderlin, F. (2011) *Gedichten*. Translated by Besten, den, A. p.179. Amsterdam: Athenaeum – Polak & Van Genneep.

But the shadow / Of the starry night is no more pure, if I may say so, / Than man, said to be the image of God.

A shadow is in some sense like an image of the thing the shadow is cast of. The images cast by nature, the shadows cast by the silverly light of the night, are no more pure, no more beautiful, no more in the right, than the beings which are like images, sort of like shadows, of God: mankind. To me this means that the poem suggests that we should not think any less of things of nature than of mankind itself. Both are part of reality and should be taken as seriously.

The poem reduces the line dividing natural things and things made by man. The weathercock crows like a real one and the steeple blossoms in the sky. The poem refuses to create a hierarchy in which either nature or culture is portrayed as higher. This is because purity is also beauty, which in this poem means that a lack of man-made structures can also be beautiful. But this does not mean that only purity can be beautiful, for the poem does not say: only purity is beauty. How beings appear to us in our daily lives, such as the person coming down from the belfry or the gods we see in images, is not what they are in themselves. We continually mistake the representation with reality, which I explained through mistaking the sensual object with the real object. We create the representations ourselves, poetically. The poem shows the mysterious aspects of our daily lives and seems to urge us to recognize that what we consider ordinary is not ordinary at all.

In my reading of the poem *In lovely blue*, the aspects which came to light were those which we already were quite familiar with, which echoes Blanchot's words discussed in the second section of the third chapter: "[The reader] sees in the marvellous clarity of the work, [...] that which is clear in itself -- meaning: that which is understood and can be taken from the work, separated from it to be enjoyed and used. Thus the reader's dialogue with the work consists increasingly in 'raising' it to truth, in transforming it into ordinary language, effective formulae, useful values" (Blanchot 1955, p.230). In a time in which global warming plays a major role, the poem speaks to us, or at least to me, about the differences between nature and culture, about how we sense beings and how they are for themselves. In our daily lives we serve the images which we have brought forth, in the steeple and the sky. But neither the images of the gods nor the sky as we see it, are the gods or the sky for themselves.

In the next section I will compare my reading of the poem to Heidegger's, to see what the differences are and whether these differences can be explained by the threat of global warming which I, in contrast to Heidegger, experience on a daily basis. This will also show the influence global warming has on an experience of a literary work of art.

4.3 Revealing global warming in literature

In his reading of *In lovely blue*, in his essay “...poetically man dwells...”, Heidegger draws specific attention to this very phrase. He writes: “If we are to hear the phrase 'poetically man dwells' rightly, we must restore it thoughtfully to the poem” (Heidegger 1951, p. 211). The emphasis on this phrase results in a very different reading of the poem than the one I gave in the previous section. In this section I will note the most important similarities as well as differences regarding Heidegger's and my reading of the poem.

While there are many critiques of Heidegger's readings of Hölderlin,¹³ I want to count his reading of Hölderlin as one reading among many others. Heidegger's interpretations of Hölderlin's poems might be unlikely or implausible interpretations, but they are interpretations nonetheless. An interpretation of a poem is an explanation of what it says, and someone's interpretation can be called bad when someone else thinks that the poem does not support this interpretation. In order to make an interpretation, one needs to set up a world in the artwork, meaning that the artwork has to be made into a meaningful whole. Heidegger's interpretation of *In lovely blue*, regardless of whether it is a good interpretation, does make the poem into a meaningful whole. Micheal Murray notes that Heidegger's methods regarding interpreting Hölderlin's poems vary: “Sometimes he provides quite detailed readings of particular major poems [...] while at others he selects stanzas, lines, and phrases from other poems for intensive meditation” (Murray 1980, p.44). In the case of *In lovely blue* he chose the latter method, focusing on the lines directly preceding and following the lines ‘poetically man dwells,’ as well as drawing on other poems by Hölderlin to elucidate the meaning of those lines.

Heidegger writes: “When we follow in thought Hölderlin's poetic statement about the poetic dwelling of man, we divine a path by which, through what is thought differently, we come nearer to thinking the same as what the poet composes in his poem” (Heidegger 1951, p.217). Following Blanchot I would like to claim that this is impossible, and that Heidegger has only spoken the poem anew. Heidegger cannot think the poem in the same way as Hölderlin because “reading and vision each time recollect, from the weight of a given content and along the ramifications of an evolving world, the unique intimacy of the work, the wonder of its constant genesis and the swell of its unfurling” (Blanchot 1955, p.207). Heidegger has set up a world in the work of art and raised it to truth, but it is not Hölderlin's world that was set up nor Hölderlin's truth that was raised. Heidegger has instead read the poem along the ramifications of an evolving world, which means that he has

¹³ Micheal Murray names Pierre Bertaux, Bernhard Böschenstein, Paul de Man, and Peter Szondi among others. Murray, M. (1980). HEIDEGGER'S HERMENEUTIC READING OF HÖLDERLIN: THE SIGNS OF TIME. *The Eighteenth Century (Lubbock)*, 21(1), pp. 41–66.

read it according to his own age. This means that Heidegger cannot think the same as the poet did, but in his attempt to do so he has created an interpretation of the poem.

In Heidegger's reading of the poem he understands *Voll verdienst, doch dichterisch*, quite differently than I did. His understanding of *Voll verdienst* is translated as "Full of merit," (Heidegger 1951, p.214). As I noted in the previous section, the word *Verdienst* can be translated either as *merit* or as *service*. That the translator of Heidegger's essay has chosen to translate this word as *merit*, has in my view to do with the way in which Heidegger understands the German word, namely as the potential earnings of mankind. To translate *Verdienst* as *service* in this essay, would create confusion in regard to what Heidegger has heard in this word. Heidegger writes: "Before [the word 'poetically'] are the words: 'Full of merit, yet' They sound almost as if the next word, 'poetically,' introduced a restriction on the profitable, meritorious dwelling of man. But it is just the reverse. The restriction is denoted by the expression 'Full of merit,' to which we must add in thought a 'to be sure'" (Heidegger 1951 pp.214-215). Heidegger hears in the word *verdienst* 'earnings', or that which someone deserves. For him, the words *Full of merit* are a limitation on the poetic dwelling of mankind. He writes: "[merits] even deny dwelling its own nature when they are pursued and acquired purely for their own sake" (Heidegger 1951, p. 215). For Heidegger, the poem says that the dwelling of mankind is poetic, but only insofar as man does not pursue merits. Whereas in my interpretation the words *yet poetically* are a specification, perhaps even a restriction, of the line *Voll verdienst*, in Heidegger's interpretation everything in the poem is put to service to explain the poetic dwelling of mankind. Heidegger explains what Hölderlin means with these words with the help of the lines *May a man look up / From the utter hardship of his life / And say: Let me also be / Like these? Yes*. Heidegger writes: "The upward glance spans the between of sky and earth. This between is measured out for the dwelling of man" (Heidegger 1951, p. 218). Man measures him- or herself against the gods by looking up from the earth to the sky. Heidegger holds that this is what is, for Hölderlin, poetic in the dwelling of man: "The taking measure is what is poetic in dwelling" (Heidegger 1951, p.219).

In my interpretation man measures him- or herself against God as well. Neither in my, nor in Heidegger's, interpretation is God to be found inside the steeple. And although in both our interpretations God is unknown, He is unknown in different ways. Heidegger writes: "God's appearance through the sky consists in a disclosing that lets us see what conceals itself, but lets us see it not by seeking to wrest what is concealed out of its concealedness, but only by guarding the concealed in its self-concealment" (Heidegger 1951, p.220-221). In Heidegger's reading, God appears through the sky in the same way that an artwork shows what is portrayed: by showing that there is always more to any being than how we know it. For Heidegger, the poem says that God is, by virtue

of the sky, known as unknown. In my interpretation, God is not manifest through the sky, but rather is *like* the sky. Using Morton's lens of the difference between the sensual and the real object, I noted that the sky as it appears to us is not the sky as it is in itself. The poem says that God is manifest like the sky, which in my view means that the god which appears to us is not God as He is for himself. In both interpretations of the poem mankind is unsure as to what it compares itself with.

The most striking difference in our interpretation of the poem, might be our approach. Heidegger focusses solely on the way in which mankind dwells on earth, whereas in my interpretation I have looked to discern how beings on earth relate to each other. Heidegger cares not for how mankind, the swallow, the steeple and the sky relate to each other according to the poem. This is also apparent in his understanding of *Voll verdienst*, in which he hears what man earns in his dwelling. In my interpretation, man dwells on this earth in service to the beings he brings forth into presencing: we are at the service of the beings as they have received their standing within our historical world. And *beings* should here be understood as *objects* in the object-oriented-ontology sense: anything that cannot be reduced to either its parts or its effects. This means that we care for beings in accordance with the way we understand these beings: with the way they appear to us within our world. These beings, or objects, include anything at all: the whole of nature, the forest next door, but also our pet hamster and the images of the gods in the steeple. We care for or serve these objects in the way that we think they should be taken care of.

Within a world threatened by global warming, we have become attentive to more beings than just mankind. We have become more aware than ever before that what we do on earth influences not only other people, but also swallows and the skies. A swallow needs to manoeuvre around the steeples we build, and the sky absorbs the carbon dioxide which is released when we make concrete for the steeple.

Works of literature have as one of their characteristics that they are removed from the world, which makes them able to bear different explanations in different times. When reading Hölderlin's poem *In lovely blue*, Heidegger reads a poem about man's dwelling on earth. According to him, the poem expands on the idea that man poetically measures himself against the unknown God. Since there is no true measure on earth, man looks upwards to the sky where he suspects the gods dwell and measures his own kindness to the kindness beyond measure of the gods.

In my interpretation of the same poem, man compares himself to God as well, but he is at the service of many more beings than just of God. We are at the service of the beings as they appear within our world. How they appear within our world is a poetic undertaking. Entities never appear as

themselves, but only as how we have made them come forth. In my view, it is my awareness of global warming that has made me attentive to other beings in the poem than just mankind. As we have seen in chapter 3.1, for Blanchot literature reveals the essence of literature. This is no longer the case. Instead, our reading suggests that literature reveals the interconnectedness of beings on earth. Literature is no longer a dialogue about what literature is, as it was for Blanchot. And in contrast to Heidegger, in the experience of the poem not only mankind is revealed, but the way in which steeples, swallows and man exist on this earth in a lively interplay.

In my view, my experience of the poem came to be in virtue of the interplay between the four causes. Heidegger and I have raised different truths from this poem, a poem which has remained *qua causa materialis* the same. At a certain moment in my reading of the poem, I formed an image of what this poem meant to say, what the truth of this poem was, and I started to argue towards this truth so that the other elements of this poem came to serve this truth. The truth that has been raised in my reading of the poem is that mankind serves the beings it brings forth on this earth. This would be the *causa finalis* of my experience of the poem. As I have said in the previous section, I took inspiration from Heidegger's explanation of *poiesis* as a bringing-forth into unconcealment. This inspiration is clearly not due to my daily experience of living in an age of global warming. As such it must be regarded as a part of the *causa efficiens*, because it has more to do with my person than the age within which I live. That I looked to other beings than just man in this poem, can be seen as an influence of the world in which I live, which is a world which is characterized by a concern for global warming and by ecological awareness. As such it can be placed under the heading of the *causa formalis*.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that our experience of literature has changed due to our daily experience of global warming. The experience of artworks is deeply influenced by the world within which they are experienced. Drawing on Heidegger, I have provided a way of viewing how entities come to stand within a world. We are comfortable with and at home in the world, so much so that we usually do not pay attention to things as they appear within the world: they disappear in their use. However, as I have tried to show by looking at Morton, this is not entirely the case anymore. Whereas Heidegger argues that things in an age of modern technology are revealed as standing-reserve, as being calculable and controllable, Morton argues that in an age of global warming things are revealed as having a bearing on other things on the planet. Everything is relevant to everything else, but we can never be exactly sure for how long and how much. I have tried to capture this feeling by saying that if we are comfortable within our world, then nowadays we are comfortable with being uncomfortable: we are comfortable with not exactly knowing how everything hangs together, how we will influence future life on the planet, how global warming will affect the daily weather. This is what Morton calls ecological awareness, which has influenced our experience of our daily lives.

When we experience an artwork as art, the world of ordinary experience is unavailable to us. Heidegger writes that a world is set up and the earth is set forth in the artwork. Whereas entities show themselves in the world, earth allows them to show themselves and takes them back into itself. The interplay between world and earth is hidden in our ordinary experience, but come to the fore in the experience of art. Here we come to feel that the sense we make of the artwork, does not exhaust the artwork at all. Our explanation of the artwork does not explain it completely. In fact, no object can be entirely explained, but this quality is more noticeable in the experience of an artwork. The explanation we give the artwork, the standing we give it, is dependent on the historical world within which we normally dwell, as well as on our personal circumstances. Using the theory of the four causes, I have shown that the truth of an artwork, how we construe the artwork, is dependent on the artwork, the world within which it appears and the person by whom it is experienced. Moreover, the artwork comes to serve this truth, so that the parts of the work which can not serve this truth seem to disappear.

As the experience of an artwork is influenced by the world within which it is experienced, global warming is sure to have an effect on this experience. Works of literature, as artworks of language, are also experienced differently because of global warming. We have seen that in the time Maurice Blanchot published *The Space Of Literature*, literary works revealed the essence of literature. Nowadays, however, ecological awareness forces us to always recognize the

interconnectedness of everything. In this thesis, I have tried to show that this is also the case in the experience of literature, by contrasting my analysis of the poem *In lovely blue* with the analysis Heidegger provided. Whereas for Heidegger the poem is all about human existence, for me the poem speaks about the mutual dependence of everything on earth. In the age of global warming, we have become more attentive to other beings than just mankind, and this awareness is mirrored by our experience of literature.

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