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An Ecocritical Reading of Ursula K. Le Guin's Children's Fiction

This thesis is submitted to the University of Dublin, Trinity College in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

March 2015.

Peter Doherty.

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Summary

This dissertation articulates an ecocritical reading of Ursula K. Le Guin's fiction for children, in particular her *Earthsea* sequence. Focusing on the formal narrative and visual structures that Le Guin uses to represent nature, this dissertation argues that there is a fundamental contradiction in the author's aesthetic. On the one hand, Le Guin's texts appear to offer a vision in which the human/nature distinction is mitigated. On the other hand, Le Guin is shown to tacitly reinscribe the distinction between the human and nonhuman.

The methodology used in this dissertation draws on theoretical ecocriticism, particularly, deconstructive ecocriticism. Timothy Morton's concept of 'ecomimesis' is central to articulating the contradictions in Le Guin's texts. Morton's deconstructive environmental criticism is married to the insights of speculative realism. Speculative realism, associated with thinkers such as Graham Harman and Quentin Meillassoux, is a resolutely anti-anthropocentric body of thought. It dissents from the post-Kantian philosophical consensus insofar as it assumes the reality of the world independent of human access. My dissertation thus develops a methodology adequate to interrogating the way nature is represented in children's literature, and emphasises a perspective that does not begin from a position of human privilege.

Chapter One articulates the contradictions and inconsistencies that haunt Le Guin's rhetoric. In particular, this chapter documents the prose strategies by which the *Earthsea* texts sustain an ideology of 'embeddedness' in nature. Focusing in particular on ekphrasis, parataxis, anastrophe, and compound epithets, Chapter One functions as a taxonomy of the tropes by which the fiction of 'nature' is sustained by Le Guin's writing.

Chapter Two argues that Le Guin's texts use endpaper maps to consolidate the vision of embeddedness offered by her prose. Endpaper maps have become virtually *de rigeur* in children's fiction, especially in fantasy texts. The concept of ecomimesis is used to articulate the ideological and ecological discourses which structure these maps. This chapter argues that the rhetoric of maps in children's literature is informed by the visual traditions of medieval *mappaemundi*. Maps in children's literature, it is argued, appropriate the language of these medieval maps in order to suggest 'embeddedness' in the world.

Chapters One and Two articulate the contradictions in Le Guin's representation of nature. Chapter Three suggests that Le Guin's representation of life is mediated by a related contradiction. This chapter suggests that Le Guin's vision of life is informed by that of her near contemporary, Erwin Schrödinger. Schrödinger's and Le Guin's theories of life are shown to lend themselves to mutually exclusive readings. On the one hand, their theories appear to collapse the distinction between human and non-human life. On the other hand, Schrödinger's theory and Le Guin's aesthetic implicitly reinscribe the distinction between human and nonhuman life.

The final chapter of this dissertation invokes the concept of the Anthropocene, that is, the idea that we now live in a geological epoch whose chief characteristics are defined by human agency. It argues that Le Guin's representation of metamorphosis is inflected by the awareness that the received distinctions between human and non-human histories have come undone in the Anthropocene. Where previous chapters suggested the redundancy of concepts such as 'nature,' 'place' and 'life' in the face of the Anthropocene, the final chapter argues that extant conceptualisations of the human likewise require substantial revision.

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Introduction

That something like 'nature' as an idea has been as potent a fiction as that of 'childhood' in the development of children's fiction and scholarly criticism of that literature is readily evidenced by the critical consensus on the legacy of various strains of Romanticism still incubated by children's literature. Deborah Thacker, for instance, argues that the 'Romantic aesthetic provides a central core of ideas about both childhood and authorship which are inflected by subsequent literary and historical movements' (Thacker 2002, 5). This Romantic legacy appears insensitive to geographic boundaries. Alan Richardson suggests that 'nineteenth-century children's literature, both in Britain and America, is pervasively indebted to canonical Romanticism' (Richardson 1999, 25). Modern American children's fiction is seen by James Holt McGavran to draw as much upon a loosely defined sense of Romanticism as did children's literature in the nineteenth century. McGavran thus writes that 'American childhood at the end of [the twentieth century] continues to be haunted, for better or worse, by Romantic conflicts of identity' (1999, 2). A more or less untroubled consensus thus exists that children's fiction, both in its history and in its present form, cannot be disassociated from various inflections of literary and philosophical Romanticism.

Informing and buttressing this consensus is the high level of emphasis placed on representations of nature in fiction for children. This emphasis tends to be explained by scholars of children's literature with references to the continuing influence of Rousseau and Wordsworth. Dobrin and Kidd thus point to the persistence of literary representations of children as 'innocent and/or virtuous' that is 'in keeping with the romantic philosophy of Rousseau' (Dobrin and Kidd 2004, 5). They suggest an affinity between Rousseau's *Emile* and 'Wordsworth's 1807 "Ode: Intimations of

Immortality' which, the authors observe, 'is routinely cited as a baseline for this perspective on childhood' (Dobrin and Kidd 2004, 5). Moreover, American inflections of Romanticism consolidate the alleged importance of that body of literature and thought for representations of nature in books for children. In Emerson, a Romantic sensibility was fused with a nationalist aesthetic. Thacker thus argues that Emerson understood the child as uniquely able to 'stand apart from society' in what amounts to a 'transcendental call for nonconformity' (Thacker 2002, 23). Further, Thacker accounts for the emphasis on representations of natural landscapes in American children's literature by suggesting that 'the idealist philosophers in America reflected a perception of America as a new world, which required a freshness of vision to prevent it becoming like the old world' (2002, 23).

In documenting the critical consensus concerning the legacy of Romanticism for children's literature, I have sought to demonstrate that nature, however defined, is considered as important a presence in that literature as that of the child. Further, as will become clear below, this critical reliance on Romanticism has tended to set the terms of debate in ecocritical studies of children's literature. In the context of the twenty-first-century environmental catastrophe, these terms are profoundly limiting. By focusing so exclusively on the Romanticism which continues to shape the way nature gets represented in children's literature, scholarship has neglected to entertain the possibility that other representations of nature are possible, and, indeed, necessary.

In fact, precisely what is understood by the term 'nature' is in no way simple, and this thesis problematises what is meant by the term. In her seminal monograph, Jacqueline Rose, taking J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* as metonymic of children's fiction as a genre, writes that

> [*Peter Pan*] gives us the child, but it does not speak *to* the child. In fact so rarely has it spoken to the child throughout its history, that it led me to ask whether there might not be some relation between this all-too-perfect presence of the child and a set of problems, or evasions, in the very concept of children's literature itself. Children's fiction rests on the idea that there is a child who is simply there to be addressed and that speaking to it might be simple (1993,1; emphasis in the original).

Rose's suggestion that children's literature is animated by evasions and obfuscations is central to the argument prosecuted in this thesis. Indeed, the thrust of what follows might be introduced by substituting the word 'nature' for 'child' in the quotation given above. If, as Rose argues, the adult-child relationship implicit to children's fiction is the site and source of ideological mystifications, then, as this thesis will proceed to argue, so too is the concept of 'nature'. Rose suggests that children's fiction 'hangs on an impossibility, one which it rarely ventures to speak' (1993, 1). This dissertation will suggest that the same might be claimed of nature in children's fiction.

In the wake of Rose's monograph, critical scrutiny focused with a remarkable intensity on the constructions of childhood which have historically animated children's fiction.[1] No such critical scrutiny has been brought to bear on constructions of nature in literature for children. Given the critical consensus on the importance of nature in the development of the genre, this appears as an oversight. It is to this critical silence that the following is addressed. Although wary of the hubris such a claim entails, I nonetheless envisage this thesis as something of a belated sequel to Rose's intervention. The 'impossibility' Rose identified in the title of her book can be understood as the suggestion that children remain as a troubling absence in the

[1] The Fall 2010 issue of *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* is useful in this respect. It is a special edition that considers the influence of Rose's *The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* twenty-five years after that monograph's first publication.

literature that is addressed to them. This thesis argues for the existence of a second impossibility in fiction for children. It problematises the way fiction for children imagines a nature which is simply there to be addressed, and that speaking to it might be simple. In exposing the idea of nature to the same critical pressure Rose brought to bear on the concept of childhood, this thesis articulates nature as an ideological fantasy no less central to children's literature than that of the child.

Nature, too, it is argued, is subject to mystifications, elisions and evasions in children's literature. These acts of evasion conceal the emptiness of the signifier, 'nature'. In other words, what follows is a reading of the impossibility of nature in children's fiction.

To test the hypotheses offered above, this thesis focuses primarily on the *Earthsea* cycle of Ursula K. Le Guin. Le Guin's books promise to be a uniquely fruitful research object for the interrogation of constructions of nature in children's fiction for a number of reasons. In the first instance, the *Earthsea* books have been celebrated as exemplary works of fantasy for children. Millicent Lenz, for example, calls the *Earthsea* texts 'poetic, richly textured narratives' that are 'full of metaphor' (Lenz and Hunt 2003, 46). As works of fantasy, Le Guin's books are written in a mode with a particular debt to the discourses that circulated in literary and philosophical Romanticisms, as detailed above. C.N. Manlove, for instance, argues that 'modern fantasy owes its existence in large part to the traditional fairy tale' and points to the influence of German and British Romanticism in forging a lasting association between the child and the fairy tale form (Manlove 1983, 1-3). Likewise, Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn trace the emergence of modern fantasy to those reactionary responses to the Enlightenment that placed an emphasis on imagination and sensation (James and Mendlesohn 2012, 14). The result of these anti-

Enlightenment sensibilities, argue James and Mendlesohn, was a body of literature that emphasised the irrational: 'The very idea of a world that could be controlled and understood was subverted into a mode of literature, the Gothic, in which this surface world is a delusion' (2012, 14). As James and Mendlesohn understand it, the irrational, anti-Enlightenment sensibilities of Gothic are a significant precursor to the development of literary fantasy (2012, 15). William Gray summarises the relationship between fantasy literature and Romanticism succinctly: 'Fairy-tales and fantasy literature were not invented by the German Romantics, but they are indelibly associated with them' (Gray 2009, 10).

Fantasy literature for children, then, has been read as a form with particularly strong antecedents in Romantic discourse. Heir to a tradition that emphasises an association between childhood and nature, the fantasy genre is one particularly suitable to a reading that interrogates constructions of nature in children's literature. Furthermore, Le Guin's critics were quick to identify those thematic concerns that could be traced to European and American Romanticism. Peter S. Altman thus names Le Guin a 'visionary artist' who is 'both a receiver and a transmitter of the Romantic vision' and Warren G. Rochelle suggests that she is 'a spiritual heir of Emerson [and] Thoreau' (Altman 1979, 76; Rochelle 2001, 129). This is not to suggest that this thesis is primarily a study of Romantic concepts of nature and childhood in Le Guin's *Earthsea* books. Rather, in situating Le Guin's works in a tradition with a particular heritage in Romanticism, I am making a case for the emphasis placed on representations of nature in the genre in which Le Guin writes. Although this thesis makes occasional reference to more or less 'Romantic' constructions of nature, it is chiefly concerned with establishing a dialogue between debates emerging in the environmental humanities and Le Guin's texts. In part, this is because significant

work exists on Le Guin's relationship to Romanticism, as I document below. However, this thesis is concerned with a reading of children's literature informed by the sense of environmental crisis that emerged in Le Guin's own lifetime. Thus, in what follows, I offer a reading of Le Guin that interprets her work in light of twentieth- and twenty-first-century constructions of nature, and the philosophical responses that have arisen to these constructions.

To effect this reading, I will draw on recent developments in literary ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is a relatively new form of critical enquiry, gaining ground in the academy only in the 1990s and its modes of research continue to proliferate and diverge. The next section will document the chief methodological assumptions of this body of criticism and will serve to situate the methods of this thesis in respect to this emerging field.

Ecocriticism

Cheryll Glotfelty, in the introduction to the 1996 collection, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, defined ecocriticism as follows:

> Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies (Glotfelty 1996, xviii).

As this section will document, Glotfelty's definition has been subject to endless contestation. In particular, her formulation of ecocriticism as 'the study of the relationship between literature and the environment' has been substantially revised.

On the one hand, what constitutes the canonical literature of environmental criticism has been considerably expanded since Glotfelty formulated this rubric. Lawrence Buell identifies 'British Romanticism, with a genre focus especially on poetry in that tradition... and U.S. nature writing... with a genre focus especially on the Thoreauvian imprint' as the chief concerns of early efforts at self-consciously ecocritical practice in the 1990s (Buell 2011, 89). Since then, ecocriticism has expanded its remit considerably to the point that any work might potentially be assimilated to the ecocritical canon. Buell calls this an 'expansion of understanding of the rightful ecocritical canon to encompass nothing less than all the literatures of the world' (2011, 92). On the other hand, as will become clear below, the term 'environment' as featured in Glotfelty's definition has been problematised both by literary ecocritics and other scholars working in the environmental humanities. Moreover, Glotfelty's association of something called an 'environment' with 'an earth-centred approach' to literary criticism has been attacked as both sanguine and theoretically naïve (1996, xviii). The following will detail the methodological and philosophical concerns which have led to a consummate skepticism that anything like an 'earth-centred approach' to the 'environment' might be achieved. In doing so, I draw on a review article by Lawrence Buell. Buell's work has been seminal to the development of ecocriticism as an academic discipline and his article provides an invaluable critical overview of the state of ecocriticism.[2]

Buell identifies two waves of ecocriticism. The first, as indicated above, was almost exclusively concerned with British Romantic poetry and American nature writing. In elaborating a mode of reading adequate to articulating an earth-centred

[2] Ursula K. Heise notes that Buell's 1995 work, *The Environmental Imagination*, 'along with Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's *Ecocriticism Reader* (1996), is considered seminal by most researchers working in the field' (Heise 2006, 292).

perspective on these literatures, ecocriticism made recourse to modes of thought inflected by various strains of phenomenology. In particular, as Buell points out, the later work of Heidegger, which focused on art's relationship to being, proved particularly attractive to the influential work of Jonathan Bate (Buell 2011, 90). Bate's monograph, *The Song of the Earth* (2000), represents the zenith of a Heideggerean criticism which has since waned (Buell 2011, 90). These phenomenological literary ecocriticisms were attended in environmental philosophy by an emphasis on place. Concepts of localism and place-based knowledges were offered as antidotes to globalisation and the residual Cartesianism that was perceived to fuel Western environmental destruction. Edward S. Casey's important triptych, *Getting Back into Place* ([1993], 2009), *The Fate of Place* (1997) and *Representing Place* (2002) is representative. Drawing extensively on the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Casey, as will be discussed below, evokes a sense of place that privileges the body as an agent of ecological perception and activism.

The second wave identified by Buell not only 'sought to press far beyond the first wave's characteristic limitations of genre, geography and historical epoch', it also departed from earlier scholarship in refusing to privilege wilderness at the expense of urban landscapes, and in attempting to furnish ecocriticism with a more nuanced theoretical methodology (Buell 2011, 92). In particular, ecocriticism appeared to move away from earlier attempts to allow scientific thinking to frame literary analysis and towards a mode of criticism that explored the thinking processes, both scientific and philosophical, that sponsor the representation of environments in literary texts. As Buell puts it,

> second-wave environmental criticism has generally paid less attention to conceptual models derived from science per se than to "science studies" — that is the study of scientific theory

> and practice as inflected by its historico-cultural contexts — the aspiration continues to run strong to enlist scientific method and theory in the service of humanistic-literary analysis while avoiding the pitfalls of scientific reductionism (e.g. genetic-determinist explanations of consciousness) and the "humanistic reduction" of science as cultural construct (2011, 91).

To Buell's two waves of ecocriticism might now be added a third. Recent ecocritical practices have proven themselves particularly eclectic. Building on the momentum of second-wave ecocriticism, scholars such as Timothy Morton (2009), Timothy Clark (2010) and Claire Colebrook (2012) have drawn on the corpus of deconstructive thinking in an attempt both to adequately theorise the contemporary environmental crisis, and to illustrate the shortcomings of earlier, phenomenologically inflected bodies of thought. These deconstructive critiques have, particularly in the work of Morton, found a fellow traveller in the form of 'speculative realism'. 'Speculative realism' refers to the work of a loosely affiliated group of thinkers including Graham Harman (2002), Morton (2009), Quentin Meillassoux (2009) and Ray Brassier (2007). Like deconstruction, speculative realism is a philosophical project prosecuted in an iconoclastic spirit. Meillassoux's critique of what he terms 'correlationism' has proven particularly powerful as a challenge to reassess the role of the human, both as a figure in philosophy and as an agent of environmental destruction. As my thesis draws extensively on the work of third-wave ecocritical thinking, what follows will detail the chief theoretical insights of this body of criticism. In documenting how deconstructive and speculative realist methods diverge from and effect a critique of earlier methods and assumptions, the next section will prepare the ground for the close readings offered in the four chapters of this dissertation.

Deconstructive Ecocriticism

In a 2013 essay, Timothy Clark identifies a 'deconstructive turn' in 'much recent criticism on the environmental crisis' (2013, 11). Such criticism, which Clark identifies with scholars such as Timothy Morton and Claire Colebrook, is resolutely 'opposed to romantic idealizations of nature through notions of harmony and homeostasis' celebrated by earlier ecocriticisms and, further, exhibits a strong contrast

> with the romantic humanism of much earlier ecocriticism, with its celebration of certain literary texts as enabling the recuperation of some 'natural' part of the human identity seen as usually suppressed by the supposed effects of instrumental rationality, urban life etc. (Clark 2013, 12; 15).[3]

Much of ecocriticism's new deconstructive impetus can be attributed to Morton's work, *Ecology without Nature* (2009). Buell credits Morton with providing a 'nuanced deconstruction of... the project of representing nature's complications and internal contradictions' thereby 'infusing ecocriticism with greater theoretical sophistication (2011, 95). This greater theoretical sophistication has come at the expense of certain pieties of earlier ecocriticism, as the title of Morton's monograph makes abundantly clear. In particular, his critique is addressed to the more or less Romantic assumptions that sponsored much early ecocriticism. As Clark points out in *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*, 'the initial impetus of modern ecocriticism... lies two centuries in the past, in a broadly romantic tradition

[3] Clark notes that 'Romantic', in the context of ecocritical discourse 'is meant both in the historical period sense — a complex cultural movement of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries — but also, as *romantic* with a small *r*, to name continuing and deeply engrained modes of thought that oppose industrial society with ideas of "nature" and "the natural" as modes of secular redemption' (2011,13; emphasis in the original).

of opposition to the destructive tendencies of enlightenment ideals of the conquest of nature' (2011, 13). As will become clear later in this introduction, it is precisely this tradition that dominates in both ecocritical treatments of children's literature and Le Guin's writing. Clark furnishes a checklist of the concerns of such Romantic ecocriticism that bears quotation in full here:

> Since the mid-eighteenth century, appeals to nature and the natural world as the other of society, usually as its implicit critique, have taken many politically diverse forms. Nevertheless the decisive notions at work in such movements have some persistent features... Crucial is a norm of what human nature itself is or should be, one that may be called 'romantic' in a broad sense: that of a lost psychic or cultural wholeness, that is, the concept of an originally healthy, fulfilled or unalienated human nature that modern society is understood to have suppressed, divided or distorted and that needs to be restored. In addition, such a condition of psychic wholeness is understood to be 'natural' in the sense of corresponding to the condition of harmony, stability and health that many... Romantic writers ascribed to the unspoilt wonder of the natural world (2011, 16).

When Morton calls for an ecocriticism 'without nature', he is making the case for a species of environmental literary criticism which does not rely upon the idea of nature as a privileged site of personal redemption outside of and opposed to industrial modernity. Such Romantically inflected visions of nature are, as Morton argues, profoundly ill-equipped to conceptualise or respond to the current environmental crisis. He suggests that 'the very idea of "nature" which so many hold dear will have to wither away in an "ecological" state of human society' because 'the idea of nature is getting in the way of properly ecological forms of culture, philosophy, politics and art' (Morton 2009, 1). Morton deploys the word 'ecological' in a deeply idiosyncratic fashion in an attempt to liberate that term from the associations of harmony,

homeostasis, localism, wholeness and wilderness with which earlier ecocriticism freighted it. Indeed, the properly 'ecological thought', to invoke the title of Morton's 2010 monograph, is that which seeks out such normative understandings of nature and exposes them to deconstructive and scientific rigour. As Clark summarises his project, 'Morton's rejection of "nature" is nothing like the sweeping claim that nature is only a social construct, rather the reverse. It is an affirmation of something wild, contingent, yet also disconcertingly mechanistic that constitutes us' (2011, 70).

Clark thus points to the central importance of Morton's intervention. *Ecology without Nature* can be read as a taxonomy of contradictory claims about nature made by writers influenced by the Romantic tradition. It takes writers celebrated by first wave ecocriticism, such as Aldo Leopold, and articulates the contradictions that animate the inflection of nature in their writings (2009, 31). The most potent of these contradictions is that nature is more or less analogous to the 'object' in the subject/object dyad of post-Enlightenment philosophy. Nature writers and first wave ecocritics understand this analogy as being fundamental to modernity's mistreatment of the nonhuman (Morton 2009, 22). In response to the perceived alienation of subject and object, human and nature, writing inspired by Romantic philosophies of nature attempts to furnish a space of remediation. In this space, the violent sundering of subject and object is ameliorated. However, and this is the singular insight of Morton's readings, such writing,

> even as it establishes a middle ground 'in between' terms such as subject and object, or inside and outside, nature without fail excludes certain terms, thus reproducing the difference between inside and outside in other ways. Just when it brings us into proximity with the nonhuman 'other,' nature re-establishes a comfortable distance between 'us' and 'them' (Morton 2009, 19).

If the deconstructive turn in ecocriticism has a foundational maxim, it is surely that given above. In the course of his monograph, Morton proceeds to document the rhetorical devices used by Romantic writing to sustain its conceit of 'nature'. Considering the use of apophasis, parataxis and ekphrasis among other devices, Morton argues that this rhetoric reinstalls the distinction between human and non-human even as it appears to collapse this apparently pernicious dichotomy. Nature, as that which is opposed to the human and all its trappings, is deconstructed in the sense that it is revealed as a convenient fiction bequeathed by Romanticism. As Clark points out, however, this is absolutely not to suggest that Morton is committed to some form of belligerent idealism or naïve constructivism. *Ecology without Nature* does not claim that there is no such thing as the nonhuman, or indeed, that we have no access to nature outside of the constructions we impose upon it. Rather, if Morton seeks to itemise the rhetorical and aesthetic paradigms which structure our access to nature, he does so in the faith that reality exists independently of thought. To think this reality, Morton claims that we must think 'without nature' and all of the philosophical and historical baggage which attends it.

In this, he is joined by a loosely affiliated group of thinkers who, with varying degrees of begrudgery, are aligned with the philosophical movement known as 'speculative realism'. As Steven Shaviro puts it, 'the speculative realists are united by the rejection of what Meillassoux calls *correlationism*' (Shaviro 2014, introduction). Correlationism, an implicit assumption of post-Kantian thought, is defined by Meillassoux as 'the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other' (Meillassoux 2009, 5). Shaviro sums up the necessarily antirealist

philosophical results of correlationism: 'For correlationism, a mind-independent reality cannot exist, because the very fact that we are thinking of such a reality means that it is not mind-independent after all' (2014, introduction). Labouring in the correlationist paradigm, philosophy thus finds its remit circumscribed to the point of paralysis. In accepting the truth of the correlationist's claim, philosophy refuses to speculate as to what reality might look like independent of thought. Or, as Graham Harman puts it, accepting the unstated legitimacy of correlationism 'is to assume that we can think neither of human without world nor world without human, but only of a primordial correlation or rapport between the two' (Harman 2010, 2). Because correlationism proscribes access to Kant's 'thing-in-itself', philosophy which subscribes to this paradigm refuses to countenance speculation as to what that thing-in-itself might look like independent of our thinking it (Harman 2010, 3). Thus, philosophy abandons ontology and confines its enquiry to epistemology. As Bryant puts it, under the correlationist dispensation,

> being can only be thought in terms... of our *access* to being. As such, ontology becomes not an interrogation of being *as such*, but rather an interrogation of our *access* to being. The answer to the question, "what is being?" now, everywhere and always, carries a footnote, colophon, or bit of fine print such that the question must be read as "what is being *for us*?" (Bryant 2011, 35; emphasis in the original).

Meillassoux's succinct generalisation has spurred a revival of interest in what Bryant calls 'ontological realism', which he distinguishes from 'epistemological realism' (Bryant 2011, 18). The latter position assumes 'our representations and language are accurate mirrors of the world as it actually is, regardless of whether or not we exist' while ontological realism refers not to 'a thesis about our *knowledge* of objects, but

about the being of objects themselves, whether or not we exist to represent them' (Bryant 2011, 18; emphasis in the original). Speculative realism is, then, as well-chosen a name for a school of philosophy as any. As Bryant illustrates, it is a form of realism in that it is committed to the mind-independence of reality. It is a speculative species of thinking insofar as it claims to go beyond, bypass or reimagine correlationism to speculate on the nature of things as they are independent of thought.

The relationship between Morton's vision of an ecology without nature and that of speculative realism's vision of a thinking without correlation might, admittedly, appear opaque at this point. However, both projects are intimately linked in their refusal to accord privilege to the human, and its associated attributes (mind, language, the aesthetic, etc.). Beyond this superficial connection, however, lies a shared concern to rehabilitate metaphysics in a manner appropriate to our current environmental and philosophical situation. Morton himself has championed the insights of speculative realism as a form of thinking adequate to theorising our moment in environmental history. In an article published three years after *Ecology without Nature*, Morton extends the polemic initiated in that monograph by claiming that the concept of 'nature' itself is irredeemably correlationist. He argues for a 'ruthless rejection of the concept of Nature, in part because Nature is correlationist' (2011, 164). Morton supports this claim by drawing on 'Object Oriented Ontology', a subspecies of speculative realism, and the prose of its chief architect, Graham Harman (2011, 169). However, more pertinent to the argument being developed in this thesis is that the Romantic concept of nature is analogous to that of 'world' or horizon in phenomenology. It is against the latter that speculative realism has devoted much of its criticism. In his contribution to *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, Morton writes that

> "Worlds" fascinate phenomenology. They possess a meaningful hither and a yonder, height and depth: they bestow a sense of meaningful dimensionality. Like a powerful movie, 'world' suggests feeling surrounded by or embedded in a field rich with significance. Relying on touchy feely ideologies of 'embeddedness,' ecophenomenology resists the humiliating darkness of things: the way things elude our grasp (Morton 2014, 296).

The first half of *Ecology without Nature* is devoted to the task of carefully documenting the way Romantic nature writing sustained this conceit of a surrounding world in which the subject is embedded. In his later work, Morton draws on speculative realism to extend his critique of the related concepts of world, environment and nature. To simplify greatly, the concept of 'nature' and its cognates 'environment,' 'world', 'dwelling-place' is always a concept of things *for-us*. That is to say, in positing such a thing as 'the environment', the things that compose that environment — trees, cars, insects, rivers, plagues and bird-song — are reified into their appearance as a background for humans. Bryant summarises thus: 'Morton argues that we must abandon the concept of nature as a unified whole or milieu within which beings reside and with respect to which humans and culture constitute an outside such that nature is always "over there"' (Bryant 2011, 270). Or, put otherwise, in positing the 'environment', the being of cars, insects, rivers, plagues and bird-song becomes the being of their relation to humans. Morton's critique of the concept of world is elaborated most clearly in his most recent monograph, *Hyperobjects*, in which he claims that speculative realism means that

> the idea we are embedded in a phenomenological lifeworld, tucked up like little hobbits into the safety of our burrow, has been exposed as a fiction. The specialness we granted ourselves as unique unravelers of cosmic meaning, exemplified in the uniqueness of Heideggerean

> Dasein, falls apart since there is no meaningfulness possible in a world without a foreground-background distinction (Morton 2013b, 194).

Morton can convincingly claim that the terms 'nature' and 'environment' are correlationist because they privilege humans as the site of meaning. An 'environment' is always an environment *for* some creature. Thus, in speaking of *the* environment, we reduce the being of all objects to their relations with humans. Things become the background to human activity, intelligible only insofar as they furnish a stage for human drama. Morton's claims in this regard clearly resonate with those of his fellow speculative realists. Bryant, for instance, writes that

> at the heart of correlationism... there is a profound *anthropocentrism*, for where it is held that being can never be thought in its existence apart from thought, it becomes clear that any claims about being ultimately harbor the implicit colophon that claims about being are claims about being for *humans* (Bryant 2011, 38; emphasis in the original).

Romantic writing, in producing 'the environment', thereby shares with correlationism a tendency to reduce all objects to their appearance for humans.

Deconstructive ecocriticism and speculative realism, in Morton's thought at least, thus emerge as unlikely fellow-travellers in a conceptual landscape mediated by ecological catastrophe. Both modes of enquiry represent attempts to trouble the self-evidence of 'nature', or what is sometimes called the 'more-than-human world'.[4] Both speculative realism and deconstructive ecocriticism are addressed to the limitations of these inflections. These limitations are particularly evident in the case of climate

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[4] *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human-World* is the title of David Abram's monograph. Abram's monograph appropriates the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty in an attempt to 'renew our acquaintance with the sensuous world' and the 'textures, rhythms and tastes of the bodily world' (Abram 1997, ix-x).

change. Climate change, as my final chapter argues, challenges any easy distinction between human and nonhuman histories and thereby compromises the idea of a pristine nature. Additionally, climate change raises the possibility of the extinction of human life. As such, climate change points to the future existence of a world without thought. This is a world not defined by its relation to the human and is precisely that articulated by speculative realism. In the chapters that follow, I capitalise on the insights of deconstructive ecocriticism and speculative realism to effect a critique of inflections of 'nature' and, its inevitable correlative, 'the human' in children's literature. Each chapter will draw on the methodologies of these two schools of thought to different degrees. For instance, in chapters one and two, I place a greater emphasis on the modes of reading suggested by deconstructive ecocriticism. These first two chapters are devoted to the visual and verbal rhetoric that sustains the conceit of nature. As deconstruction has, since its inception, been fundamentally concerned with exposing the rhetorical structure of apparently self-evident realities, I draw upon its resources in the first half of the dissertation.

Chapter Three relies to a greater extent on speculative realism. Speculative realism is particularly suited to a critique of the emphasis on 'life' in Le Guin's writing. Life, it will be demonstrated, emerges as a fundamentally relational concept in Le Guin's novels, and speculative realism is particularly powerful in its exposure of the humanistic assumptions that underpin relational thinking. The final chapter marries the rhetorical emphasis of deconstruction with speculative realism's problematisation of the human. Le Guin's short stories, I will argue, are fictions of the Anthropocene, that is, an epoch characterised by the influence of humans on climate, ecosystems and geomorphology. Colebrook observes that this geological epoch is a 'threshold at which all "our" concepts of horizon, milieu, ethos and polity are voided'

(2012, 188). In other words, the Anthropocene discloses the redundancy of the phenomenological conceit of the 'life-world' discussed above. The Anthropocene thus exposes the human to the kind of environment imagined by speculative realism, that is, one that is not an environment 'for-us'. The final chapter thus draws on the resources of speculative realism to articulate what thinking and making art in the Anthropocene looks like. It couples this with a deconstructive taxonomy of the reactionary rhetorical techniques deployed to co-opt and neutralise the new reality into which the human finds itself thrust.

In what remains of this Introduction, I detail how my methodology differs from extant ecocritical readings of children's literature in general, and readings of Le Guin's fiction in particular.

History and Analysis of Ecocriticism in Children's Literature Scholarship

Ecocritical analysis of children's literature emerged in the mid-1990s, but did not really gain momentum until the new century. As I demonstrate in what follows, the tenor and thrust of much ecocritical study of children's literature has been broadly Romantic in the sense discussed above. This lingering Romanticism in ecocritical studies of children's literature might be attributed to the overwhelming critical focus on the provenance of the defining characteristics of children's literature as a genre in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In emphasising the more or less Romantic constructions of nature in children's literature, ecocritical studies of children's literature have tended to accept and document the terms in which nature is represented in children's texts. By contrast, this dissertation will subject these terms to critique.

Two important early explorations of ecocriticism as a way of reading children's literature were those collected in special editions of *Children's Literature*

Association Quarterly (Winter 1994-95) and *The Lion and the Unicorn* (Winter 1995). These early interventions established the legitimacy of children's literature as a research object for ecocriticism by appealing to its roots in Romanticism. Lisa Lebduska, for instance, suggests that 'nonhuman nature has always played a significant role in children's literature' and suggests that that literature's emergence in the eighteenth century was informed by ideas of a 'Lockean self, a *tabula rasa*... a formless being entirely susceptible to its environment' (Lebduska 1994, 170-171).

The articles in both special collections were, in the majority, more immediately concerned with the environmentalism represented in and suggested by children's books than in in interrogating constructions of the nonhuman. Thus Suzanne Rahn, in the introduction to the special volume of *The Lion and the Unicorn* suggests that

> although the roots of an environmentalist consciousness can be found in Romanticism and (in America) Transcendentalism, environmentalism in its modern sense which implies an active effort to conserve and protect nature — is little more than a hundred years old. Not surprisingly — if one believes, like the Romantics, that children and the green world belong together — children were informed and involved from the outset. In fact, merely by studying the old volumes of St. Nicholas Magazine that children read in the 1870s and '80s and '90s, one can trace the changes in attitudes toward the wilderness and its creatures with which environmentalism began (Rahn 1995, fifth paragraph).

Rahn's introduction proceeds to detail the emergence of an environmentalist sensibility in American from the nineteenth century through the early decades of the twentieth. The terms by which this environmentalism is defined, terms such as 'nature' and 'the green world', emerge as unproblematic objects both for the environmental activist and the literary critic in Rahn's article. Naomi Wood's

contribution to the volume is likewise concerned with environmental activism. She reads Charles Kingsley's 1862-3 *The Water Babies* as an expression of 'proto-environmentalism':

> Children's literature, almost from its inception, has been deeply invested in drawing connections between humans and the natural world... *The Water-Babies* is a solid part of that tradition in that it both educates readers to revere nature and advocates political action to protect human and natural resources. If Kingsley's goals are not always the goals of modern environmentalists, his metaphors are productive; they insist on a biological link between humans and nature, so that readers are drawn to see themselves as a smaller part of a larger Nature. As metaphoric mother, Nature's precepts must be obeyed, her love for her children cannot be compromised, and she implacably punishes those who wrong her or others. Kingsley thus places natural process in a framework easily understood by children learning similar lessons at home. Kingsley's environmentalism is both Victorian and radical: taking his contemporaries to task for urban blight and industrial pollution, he uses a fairy-tale form to posit alternatives to the wastefulness of industrialism, suggesting that we ought rather to follow Nature's ways of production (Wood 1995, second paragraph).

As with Rahn's introduction, Wood here assumes that something like 'nature' exists, and that representing and acting on its behalf might be unproblematic. To appropriate Jacqueline Rose's formulation, both Rahn and Wood in these early ecocritical readings of children's literature imagine a nature that is simply there to be addressed, and that speaking to it might be simple. By contrast, this dissertation refuses to assume that something like nature exists. Furthermore, Rahn and Wood assimilate the emergence of environmentalism to a liberal humanist narrative of progress. Environmental consciousness emerges in tandem with greater scientific knowledge and appears as an eminently rational response to evidence of ecosystem deterioration.

Further, if later ecocriticism brought increasingly greater theoretical scrutiny to bear on representations of nature, it has been no less stringent in problematising received ideas of the human. Cary Wolfe's inflection of 'posthumanism' has been particularly influential in shaping the direction of ecocritical treatments of nonhuman animals, as Chapter Three demonstrates (Wolfe 2010). However, in their emphasis on activism, Woods and Rahn assume, rather than problematise, a liberal humanist vision of the self as autonomous and distinct from nature even while acting on its behalf. In this, their arguments are informed in part by a more generic reticence on the part of children's literature criticism in the 1990s. Kerry Mallan and Clare Bradford note that

> while scholars in the fields of literary and cultural studies quickly responded to the theoretical turn which dominated literary and cultural studies until the mid-1990s, children's texts, and the critical discourse associated with them, continued to rely to a large extent on liberal humanist notions of individual growth and maturation, often expressed in terms of an individual who recognizes or accepts an identity which constitutes the core of being (Mallan and Bradford 2011, 6).

As Bradford and Mallan go on to observe, it is only in the later 1990s and early twenty-first century that 'these liberal humanist traditions' are balanced by 'structuralist, post-modernist and post-colonial theories which contest notions of a fixed, stable identity' (2011, 6). This dissertation thus builds on the work cited by Mallan and Bradford. Chapters Three and Four in particular depart from earlier ecocritical readings of children's literature by refusing to assume an autonomous individual who acts (or refuses to act) on behalf of nature. In contrast to the sanguine invocation of a liberal humanist narrative of environmental activism traced by Rahn

and Wood, Chapter Four in particular argues that the environmental crisis requires us to articulate visions of the human more appropriate to our historical moment.

The first major book to read children's literature from an ecocritical perspective is Sidney Dobrin and Kenneth Kidd's 2004 collection of essays, *Wild Things: Children's Culture and Ecocriticism*. The collection marks a broadening of the scope of ecocritical studies of children's literature. Periodicals, novels and television programmes are subjected to scrutiny. This expansion in focus is congruent with that in the broader field of ecocriticism as a whole, as discussed above. However, if the purchase of ecocriticism in children's culture is greatly expanded by the essays in *Wild Things*, this is not matched by a broadening of theoretical or methodological horizons. Many of the essays collected in the volume take the chief virtue of environmental literature to be its capacity to motivate its readers to environmental activism. The task of the ecocritic emerges as one of detecting salutary models of caring for the environment in contemporary children's literature, or detecting proto-environmentalist sensibilities in the literary archive. Arlene Plevin thus asks 'what kind of interaction with the environment is *Ranger Rick* magazine encouraging? What kind of activism is created?' (Plevin 2004, 169). Likewise, Kamala Platt in her contribution suggests that 'our interpretations of the physical environment in literature might also engage an understanding of the role of activists and artists in social and natural history', while Karen Welberry considers how Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* novels contributed to environmentalism in the Lake District (Platt 2004, 185; Welberry 2004). This focus on environmentalism and activism in many of the essays in *Wild Things* is potentially limiting. As will be discussed in greater detail below, in thus emphasising actions taken in local environments, such criticism risks missing the more pressing challenges invisible on such circumscribed scales. The

most obvious of these is climate change, which is entirely resistant to the ethic of caring for one's local environment emphasised by the readings in *Wild Things*. Moreover, the readings of Plevin, Welberry and Platt fail to consider that the contemporary environmental crisis might occasion a profound reevaluation of the models of human agency on which activism relies. As Timothy Clark observes,

> much ecocriticism takes the individual attitude as its starting point and then argues for a change in the choices which that individual makes. Thus, it is hoped, the growth of an 'ecological awareness' through the study of environmentalist non-fiction, eco-poetry or real ventures into the wild will be somehow sufficient to produce an ecologically viable society. Such thinking effectively recognises that climate change enacts a drastic reconfiguration of given distinctions of public and private but, without more sustained work on the nature of the state, ideology, modes of production etc., still seeks to engage it solely in terms of individual attitude and choice. The focus on the individual, whether as green consumer, a reader of an ecocritical argument, or as a backpacker, reinforces the illusion that reality and power remain a matter of individuals pursuing their rights and opinions (Clark 2010, 141).

Clark's comments are apposite to the activist emphasis in the readings in *Wild Things*. Instead of considering the environmental crisis as a signal of the failure of the liberal humanism on which activism relies, Plevin, Welberry and Platt envisage a model of ecological remediation that preserves human agency intact. Further, the kind of environmentalist ethic celebrated in the essays of *Wild Things* is circumscribed by an existing political economy that it makes no attempt to interrogate. In Timothy Luke's words, the articles of Plevin, Welberry and Platt figure the environmental crisis as one brought about by 'a series of bad household and/or personal buying decisions' (Luke 1993, 158). As such, the challenge posed to models of human agency and political

economy by the environmental crisis are co-opted by readings which seek to remediate this crisis while preserving existing social and philosophical forms.

Most pertinent to the argument offered by this dissertation is the contribution of Tara L. Holton and Tim B. Rogers to *Wild Things*. Their article, entitled '"The World Around Them": The Changing Depiction of Nature in *Owl Magazine*' is an exercise in the kind of Romantic ecocriticism discussed above (2004, 149-168). In a discussion of the archives of *Owl*, the authors detect a trend away from an earlier emphasis on embodied, experiential encounters with 'the outdoors' to more scientifically mediated representations of the nonhuman. This trend is to be deplored as disenchanting nature of the former wonder and mystery that had previously animated representations in *Owl*:

> Active involvement of the bodily senses — seeing, listening, smelling, touching, moving — is not the primary focus in the discourses/social practices emphasized in this particular magazine. In the same way that science education strips away the 'felt' passions we hold for the earth... so too has this children's magazine tended to replace passion with reason, felt subjectivity with objectivity, and embodied involvement with visually focused study. In so doing, the problematic split between humans and nature is reinstated... Perhaps in emphasizing... playful, embodied engagement in the world, we will be able to foster deeper understandings of the complexity and interrelatedness of ourselves with nature. Perhaps these deeper, embodied understandings will help to establish more sympathetic and nature-friendly ways of dialoguing with the earth (Holton and Roger 2004, 163).

Holton and Roger's argument is Romantic in the sense discussed earlier. It imagines a formerly pristine nature with which humanity has lost contact. The agent of this alienation is that legacy of the Enlightenment, the 'penetrating and objective gaze of the scientist' (Holton and Roger 2004, 149). As will become clear in what follows,

appealing to the body is a trope of much ecofeminist criticism which draws on anti-Enlightenment critique. Most pressing at this juncture, however, is Holton and Roger's claim that the body is a matrix of environmental consciousness. Holton and Roger assume, rather than demonstrate, that 'deeper, embodied understandings will help to establish... nature-friendly ways of dialoguing with the earth' (2004, 163). They do not demonstrate how, precisely, a carefully nurtured somatic relationship with nature might engender a less environmentally destructive society. They simply assume that it will, presumably because of its opposition to Enlightenment ideals of rationality that they take as foundational to the environmental crisis. However, it is increasingly the case that the environmental crisis is imaginable only by those possessed of scientific literacy precisely because it is a crisis invisible phenomenologically. As Cheryl Lousley puts it, 'invisible to the senses, traveling through bodies and ecosystems over extended times and spaces, and under proprietary or state protection, hazards like nuclear radiation, synthetic pesticides — even biological ones such as *E. coli* — only become visible through' scientific practice (Lousley 2014, 162). The body celebrated by Holton and Roger emerges as one mediated by agencies it can neither sense nor articulate. As such, the body is not a privileged locus of unmediated access to nature. Rather, the body is a site traversed by agencies only explicable in the terms of the more abstract discourses of pathology, politics, nuclear physics and material science.

Moreover, in their monolithic focus on '*the* body', Rogers and Holton participate in a Romantic tradition that figures nature as a norm. They thus observe that although

> *Owl* has steadily... carried a message indicating the importance of enjoyment and responsibility regarding the environment, its main emphasis in teaching children about nature

> has always been from the perspective of *studying* nature in order to understand and enjoy it... Certainly there are articles on games, sports, activities and other manners of involving oneself in the outdoors without studying it, but these are not the norm nor are they given the same importance as the articles that study the environment (Rogers and Holton 2004, 154; emphasis in the original).

Rogers and Holton are relatively unambiguous in privileging an unmediated, 'outdoorsy' nature as opposed to one mediated by scientific understanding. As Morton points out, such Romantic 'environmental rhetoric is too often strongly affirmative, extraverted and masculine... It's sunny, ableist, holistic, hearty, and "healthy"' (Morton 2010, 16). To put the point more stringently, Roger and Holton make the implicit claim that only certain types of bodies and certain kinds of bodily activities are capable of properly ecological attitudes. Thus, nature appears as a cipher for norms of embodiment and relationship to the nonhuman. These norms are ones that trade on a Romantic, anti-Enlightenment tradition which privileges unmediated, embedded relations with such reified terms as 'the environment'. For this reason, my dissertation suggests the critical redundancy of appeals to nature and 'the body'. Chapters One and Two in particular will articulate the contradictions implicit in the suggestion that something like an unmediated contact with nature is amenable to representation.

The Romantic humanism that frames the essays in *Wild Things* also informs Alice Curry's 2013 *Environmental Crisis in Young Adult Fiction*. This book represents the only extant monograph that argues for an ecocritical reading of children's fiction. As such, it constitutes the most significant intervention in the field of environmental aesthetics and children's literature. Further, in drawing on ecofeminist critique, Curry's work introduces a degree of theoretical nuance to

environmental analyses of children's literature somewhat alien to earlier interventions in the field. As the most sustained and, arguably, the most theoretically rigorous attempt at formulating an environmental aesthetics of children's literature, Curry's work demands attention. Indeed, *Environmental Crisis in Young Adult Fiction* provides a useful counterpoint to the argument of this dissertation. Curry's argument draws on concepts such as 'nature', 'place' and 'embodiment' that my dissertation will subject to interrogation. The remainder of this section problematises Curry's ecofeminist critique thereby establishing it as a foil for the assumptions and arguments of this dissertation.

Curry's argument draws its strength in large part from the well-established ecocritical paradigm of place. She advocates a sense of place as an antidote to the environmental destruction wrought by globalisation and late capitalism. Thus, 'in reading young adult texts through an ecofeminist lens', Curry focuses on discourses which privilege local, experiential knowledge over global, abstract information regimes (Curry 2013, 5). In Curry's words,

> place-situatedness, in the sense of an embodied connection with the earth, gives rise to situated knowledges, rather than abstract universal theories of normative ethics and philosophy, and underpins the ecofeminist assertion that 'to know' should be subsumed beneath 'to experience' (Curry 2013, 4).

This claim on behalf of 'place-situatedness' and its ability to sponsor environmental change has a particularly fraught history in the context of ecocritical debate. This history warrants further exploration. Tracing this history will serve to describe the limits of Curry's methods and introduce, by way of contrast, the methods used in the chapters that follow. As Ursula Heise observes,

> the insistence on individuals' and communities' need to reconnect to local places as a way of overcoming the alienation from nature that modern societies generate, as well as long-standing ambivalences about the global are two of the most formative characteristic dimensions of American environmentalism (Heise 2008, 29).

Although Heise takes U.S. environmentalism as her research object, the continued importance of place as a court of appeal in ecological rhetoric is evident if we consider that Alice Curry is an Australian ecocritic writing in 2013. Heise documents the particular confluence of historical circumstances which gave rise to the emphasis on a sense of place in environmental writing and activism, noting that 'a good deal of cultural critique during the 1980s and 90s emphasised local places as sources of identity, of 'situated knowledge' and as possible sites of resistance to hegemonic social structures' (Heise 2008, 44). The 'sense of place' advocated by environmentalists thus draws on a particularly potent fusion of identity politics and counterhegemonic sentiment. As Heise's investigation makes clear, a sense of place emerges in the 1980s and 90s in part because of its consonance with the postmodern suspicion of grand narratives.[5]

Moreover, the 1980s and 1990s saw a resurgence of interest in various strains of phenomenology in the United States. Environmentally inflected phenomenologies were conceived primarily as antidotes to the twin evils of modern alienation from sites of existence and Cartesian dualism. The two most important figures in this revival are Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, both of whom loom

[5] Heise writes, 'in search of countermodels to... nation-based concepts of identity, a wide range of theorists instead presented identities shaped by hybridity, creolization, *mestizaje*, migration, borderlands, diaspora, nomadism, exile, and deterritorialization not only as more politically progressive but also as potential grounds for resistance to national hegemonies... Inevitably, a certain theoretical ambiguity accompanied the development of this line of argument, as hybridity, diaspora, and marginality sometimes turned into quasi-essentialist categories themselves, especially in some of the more emphatic validations of ethnicity, local identity, and "situated knowledge"' (Heise 2008, 5).

unspoken in the shadows of Curry's monograph. Heidegger's later work proved particularly provocative for an ecocriticism keen to establish a theoretical foundation. Specifically, his later essays concerning technology, poetry and dwelling seemed tailor-made for environmentally concerned readings. 'Building Dwelling Thinking' juxtaposes 'building' with 'dwelling' (Heidegger 2010, 347-348). Building, which is nowhere exactly defined, emerges as a privative notion. It names a debased and disenchanted form of inhabitation that does not befit man's dignity. Heidegger associates building with emblems of technological modernity and rootlessness, writing, 'railways stations and highways, dams and market halls are built, but they are not dwelling' (Heidegger 2010, 347). Dwelling, by contrast is an existential concept in that it names a uniquely human way of inhabiting the earth:

> The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. The old word *bauen*, which says that man *is* insofar as he *dwells*, this word *bauen*, however, *also* means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine (2010, 349; emphasis in the original).

Dwelling is thus a normative concept defined by privileged instances of human activity, which tend, in Heidegger's later thought, to be exemplified by art and agrarian labour. Too, dwelling names a particularly felicitous relationship between humans and their surroundings. As Heidegger puts it, dwelling is a 'staying with things' in which 'they themselves as things are let be in their essence' (2010, 353). Heidegger thus offered a potent vision of an intimacy between man and his surroundings. This intimacy is one that, in some obscurely specified way, is respectful of things in a way that modernity has forgotten. That this intimacy is achieved by way

of poetry and painting only seemed to confirm Heidegger as an ecocritic *avant la lettre*. Jonathan Bate's monograph, *The Song of the Earth*, capitalised on Heidegger's later writing to argue for an explicitly environmental reading of Heidegger and the Romantic poets. In a chapter entitled 'Nests, Shells, Landmarks', Bate offers a Heideggerean reading of John Clare's 'The Mores' in which he juxtaposes dwelling with the kind of being-in-the-world enforced by enclosure (Bate 2000, 163-164). Clare dwells in the world by way of his poetic familiarity with things, and Bate connects this intimacy with an ecological consciousness. Bate thus writes, 'how are we to live fully but without profligacy upon our crowded earth? Perhaps we could take the time to listen to Clare as he catches at little things' (Bate 2000, 161). Bate here appropriates the Heideggerean association between poetry, local knowledge and a respect for things and gives it a distinctly environmental inflection. A few lines later, he offers the poetry of place as an antidote both to the human as he is conceived by modernity and the environmental destruction which, Bate assumes, follows from this conception:

> 'The cleverer I am at miniaturizing the world,' writes Bachelard, 'the better I possess it'. The thought is beautiful and true, but the associations of 'clever' and 'possess' are wrong because they are evocative of Cartesian man. Let us rephrase: the more attuned I am as I miniaturise the world, the better I dwell upon the earth (2000, 161).

Written in 2000, Bate's is a relatively late example of a work of ecocritical scholarship that assumes a 'sense of place' as conducive to greater environmental well-being. However, as Buell points out, *The Song of the Earth* 'brought Heideggerean ecocriticism to its high point to date' and the monograph may thus be taken as exemplar and culmination of the kinds of ecocritical work practiced in the

1990s (Buell 2011, 92). In his own work, *Writing for an Endangered World*, Buell claims that 'place is the specific resource of the environmental imagination' and that 'the more a site feels like a place, the more fervently it is so cherished, the greater the potential concern at its violation' (Buell 2001, 55) The above discussion of Heidegger's relationship to ecocriticism is intended to indicate that the connection between a sense of place and ecological sensibility invoked by Curry is not a natural one, but is, rather, mediated by a particular philosophical and critical history. As Heise proceeds to make clear, the easy correspondence between a well-honed sense of place and environmental conscientiousness becomes considerably more fragile if the history of 'place' and its cognates in environmental rhetoric is considered. Thus, Heise argues that

> modern environmentalist thought... invested much of its utopian capital into a return to the local and a celebration of a "sense of place" that remained impervious for a long time to the kinds of antiessentialist perspectives that had become common currency in most other areas of American culture (2008, 8).

In the first instance, the rhetoric of place has a history in libertarianism and masculine individualism that would seem to militate against its appropriation by an ecofeminist aesthetic. Heise notes that 'white male environmentalist writers between the 50s and 70s often put the emphasis on the (usually male) individual's encounter with and physical immersion in the landscape' (2008, 29). Heidegger in his hut in the Schwarzwald is a virtual caricature of this privileged relationship between man and place, and as Heise observes, 'women writers and some Native American authors later criticized the individualist focus of these writings and instead shifted the emphasis to more communal forms of inhabitation' (2008, 29).

The history of the rhetoric of place in environmental criticism and activism is thus one that sits uneasily with Curry's ecofeminism. An intimacy between a rural or wild landscape is also often the preserve of the privileged white male, exemplified by nature writers such as Henry David Thoreau ([1854] 1992) and Barry Lopez ([1986] 1999). Viewed thus, Curry's call for an 'ecofeminist reappraisal that obligates an ecofeminist reading of place, place-situatedness and grounding within the natural world' appears particularly problematic (2013, 3). Further, in cultivating an intimacy with minute particulars, celebrating those works that emphasise a sense of place hazards evading environmental problems occurring on scales invisible in the local and familiar. The most obvious of these problems is, of course, global warming. As Timothy Clark points out,

> environmental or eco-criticism evolved in the tradition of romantic humanism primarily to address local and easily identifiable outrages and injustices, the destruction of wilderness, the effects of aggressive systems of agriculture on a bioregion and its inhabitants, etc... Climate change thus challenges some green critics with the fact that while they have been inventing ways to think and act in relation to their national cultures and histories, they seem... still a long way short of thinking in the way and on the scale demanded by an issue both so global and multiplicitous (2010, 142).

Relying on a sense of place to foster environmental knowledge runs the risk of myopia. Unmediated by an awareness of processes visible only on larger geographical and temporal scales, an ecocriticism that relies on 'place' to achieve environmental consciousness might appear as a reactionary manoeuvre.

Most pertinent to what follows however, and in particular the arguments put forward in chapters One and Two, is that 'place' is a synonym for 'nature' in environmental discourse. Curry, in developing her ecofeminist aesthetic of place, cites

'the understanding of ecological thinking' of Lorraine Code, who argues for a 'conception of materially constituted and situated subjectivity for which place, embodied locatedness, and discursive interdependence [as] conditions of the very possibility of knowledge and action' (Curry 2013, 5). Curry's and Code's understanding of ecological thinking stands in absolute contrast to Morton's ecological thought in which reifications such as 'place', 'nature' and 'environment' dissolve. Thus, Morton argues,

> the 'thing' we call nature becomes, in the Romantic period and afterward, a way of healing what modern society has damaged. The damage done, goes the argument, has sundered subjects from objects, so that human beings are forelornly alienated from their world. Contact with nature, and with the aesthetic, will mend the bridge between subject and object (2009, 22).

Morton's caricature captures the thrust of Curry's argument. As is evident in the quotations from *Environmental Crisis in Young Adult Fiction*, Curry appeals to place as a site in which the alienation between subject and object, human and world might be bridged. However, chapters One and Two of this dissertation argue that 'place,' 'nature', 'the environment' and cognate terms cannot perform the ecological and critical work with which Curry and others task them. This is because, as Morton's monograph outlines, such concepts reaffirm a distinction between human and nonhuman even as they gesture towards their dissolution. Heidegger's own concept of dwelling is prototypical of precisely this problem. Dwelling is a uniquely human prerogative. It names a sense of inhabitation in the world mediated by a sense of finitude. Further, dwelling is, in some arcane sense, a privileged relationship to being.

Heidegger characterises the relationship between man and being which characterises true dwelling as one of 'freeing' or 'sparing':

> The sparing itself consists not only in the fact that we do not harm the one whom we spare. Real sparing is something *positive* and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own essence, when we return it specifically to its essential being, when we 'free' it in the proper sense of the word into a preserve of peace. To dwell, to be set at peace means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence. *The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing* (Heidegger 2010, 351; emphasis in the original).

Dwelling, and the sparing that is its characteristic activity, names a particularly felicitous relationship between man and being. In this, these two concepts appear as fruitful tools for a Romantic ecocriticism wary of our supposed alienation from that which surrounds us. However, Heidegger's concept includes an implicit humanism. This is because only *humans* are capable of dwelling. Dwelling and sparing are activities reserved by Heidegger for creatures aware of their own finitude. In Heidegger's thought, only humans are possessed of this awareness.[6] As such, the capacity to dwell, like those other attributes, art, humour and language, marks a dividing line between the human and the nonhuman. Dwelling, then, is fraught with the contradictions that Morton identifies. On the one hand, it appears to name a holistic relationship between man and being characterised by care and solicitousness. On the other hand, in its reliance on man's awareness of his own finitude, dwelling reaffirms a distinction between man and being.

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[6] In *Being and Time*, Heidegger distinguishes between the uniquely ontological relationship *Dasein* bears to its own mortality, and the 'perishing' of animals and plants. The mortality of animals and plants is explicable entirely in the terms of the life sciences (Heidegger 1996, 226).

The argument that follows thus departs from Curry's call for readings that emphasise 'philosophies of place that [authenticate] immanental experiences of dwelling within the natural world' (2013, 133). Chapters One and Two in particular articulate the contradictions that animate such philosophies of place, and suggest that they inhibit the kind of thinking needed to address our current moment of environmental crisis. John Stephens's arguments in an article which focuses on environmental fiction in the 1990s are exemplary of the contradictions which trouble appeals to place, nature and the environment in ecocritical treatments of children's literature. Stephens argues that

> in contemporary young adult fiction, such as McDonald's *Boys, Bears and a Serious Pair of Hiking Boots* (2010)... rare moments of perception are validated by a more nuanced ethical perspective than has generally been enabled by the uninterrogated moral assumptions of much environmental fiction. Insofar as ethics is already grounded in a response to alterity (what is outside-of-self), it is also implicit in both cathetic relationships and ecoconsciousness. These fictions play out an evolution of a character's subjectivity through an encounter with alterity which at first threatens to cast the subject into an ontological void but then cracks open the subject's solitude/solipsism and brings him or her into relationship with social and natural worlds (Stephens 2010, 210).

A number of questions might be asked of the claims made here. Firstly, is it possible to simply elide the human self-other relationship into the human-environment ethical relationship? How can 'the environment' be like an ethical other in the same sense as another human? Who is the other to which 'ecoconsciousness' finds itself beholden ethically speaking? Morton would argue that there is no such thing as environment and, as such, the environment cannot be a subject of ethics because it doesn't exist in the simple way that Stephens assumes. The problem is Stephens's reliance on the

word 'alterity', which effaces distinctions between the human other and the 'environmental other'. Thus, 'alterity', instead of denoting the observation of distinctions, here collapses distinction. It is, ironically, a word that homogenises. Stephens's argument, and the contradictions which trouble it, are exemplary of ecocritical arguments that rely on concepts of 'nature', 'place' or 'the environment'. Put simply, as Stephens's problematic use of 'alterity' shows, the environment cannot be a subject of ethics because it doesn't exist in the simple way that Stephens assumes.

Curry's emphasis on place is coupled with and buttressed by an ecofeminist insistence on the importance of embodiment. This argument from and for embodiment is another foil against which my argument defines itself. Thus, Curry suggests that by

> interrogating the scaling of planetary symbolisation in contemporary climate rhetoric, ecofeminists contemplate the potential for a sense-based relationship between humans and an earth that is not iconic, detached or associative, but material and embodied and known intimately through localised engagement with place (2013, 20).

Curry's reading emphasises embodied subjectivity as an antidote to the Cartesian dualism that much ecocriticism takes as the philosophical assumption enabling anthropogenic environmental destruction. In offering readings which affirm human embeddedness, Curry seeks to counter abstract, globalising narratives, thereby cultivating a sense of place and an environmental sensibility. Ecocritical readings of children's literature in the closing years of the first decade of the twenty-first century, and the early years of the second decade, have tended to place a similar emphasis on embodiment. Clare Braford et al. focus on those aspects of children's books that

reveal a 'biocentric' ethic informed by deep ecology (Bradford et al. 2008, 91). This biocentric poetics is informed by the belief that 'future human well-being will need to reweave the culture nature/duality by incorporating embodiment and nonhuman nature' (Bradford et al. 2008, 87).

It is the argument of the chapters that follow that this emphasis on embodiment is fraught with contradictions that militate against its utility as a term of environmental critique. Further, the privilege accorded to embodied subjectivity as an antidote to environmental destruction can be read as a reactionary gesture. Morton argues that environmental art and fiction turns on a rhetoric of 'embeddedness' in nature. He offers the following caricature of the assumptions which underlie this rhetoric:

> If we could not merely figure out but actually *experience* the fact that we were embedded in our world, then we would be less likely to destroy it. The subject-object dualism depends upon a distinction between inside and outside. The subject is 'this,' 'over here,' inside; the object is 'that,' 'over there,' outside (2009, 64; emphasis in the original).

However, the deconstructive thrust of Morton's argument is such that this dissolution of the subject/object, inside/outside, human/world dichotomy is 'strictly impossible' and, therefore, 'a form of ideological fantasy' (2009, 67). In ecocritical readings of children's literature such as Curry's and that of Bradford et al., a philosophical and literary critical reevaluation of the role of the body is taken as pivotal to securing a sense of our embeddedness in place. This argument derives not only from the materialist focus of ecofeminism, but also from a phenomenology resurgent in the late 1980s and 1990s. This latter body of thought, given an environmental inflection in the form of 'ecophenomenology', turned to the body as the ground of a loosely defined

ecological sensibility. Casey's work exemplifies this thought. In *Getting Back into Place: A Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, Casey writes,

> body and landscape present themselves as coeval epicenters around which particular places pivot and radiate. They are, at the very least, the bounds of places. In my embodied being I am *just* a place at its inner boundary; a surrounding landscape, on the other hand, is *just beyond* that place as its outer boundary. Between the two boundaries — and very much as a function of their differential interplay — implacement occurs. Place is what takes place between body and landscape ([1993] 2009, 29; emphasis in the original).

In grounding subjectivity in the body, ecocritical readings such as those offered by Curry seek to assuage the alienation of human from environment by affirming our embodied embeddedness in familiar places. This reasoning betrays the ultimately Romantic logic of ecocritical readings of children's literature that privilege the body thus. However, as Morton points out, and as I argue in the chapters that follow, this rhetoric of embodied embeddedness is fraught with contradictions that ultimately re-install the human/nonhuman distinctions they seek to erase. The emphasis given by Curry and Bradford et al. to the body in their readings is, however, only one inflection of a powerful strain of recent ecocriticism of children's literature which privileges wholeness, integrity, holism. Stephens thus suggests that, 'there is now, in most parts of the world, a recognition, that the continued survival of human beings depends on a harmonic balance between human subjects and natural environments' (Stephens 2010, 209). He thus presents a reading that turns on the parallel in his research objects 'between ecoconsciousness and cathectic relationships', which suggests to Stephens that 'the intersubjectivity of reciprocated cathexis mirrors an interpenetration of individual consciousness and natural environment' (2010, 207). However, Stephens's

argument becomes problematic when it is considered that the rhetoric of harmony deployed by early environmental writers has come under intense scrutiny both from the environmental humanities and ecological science.

Dana Phillips points out that the 'values to which ecology dedicated itself early on — especially balance, harmony, unity, and economy — are now seen as more or less unscientific, and hence as "utopian" in the perjorative sense of the term' (Phillips 2003, 42). Phillips documents the gradual abandonment of harmony as a viable model in ecological science in the twentieth century and argues that its adoption by ecocritics represents a serious misprision of the sciences by the humanities (2003, 43). As a discipline which flaunts its interdisciplinarity, and indeed shares a prefix with a natural science, ecocriticism which appeals to notions of harmony risks seriously misrepresenting the scientific insights which sponsor many of its readings. From the perspective of ecology, then, Stephens's claim that there is a global recognition of the need for a 'harmonic balance between human subjects and natural environments' becomes utopian in Phillips's sense (Stephens 2010, 209). Indeed, his reading is also politically problematic in that Stephens appears to efface the fact/value distinction. As Timothy Clark points out,

> a dated and now frequently questioned model of scientific ecology still sometimes functions as a kind of moral norm in some environmentalist discourse. According to this model, a natural ecosystem supposedly exists in a state of harmony, diversity in unity, balance, and so on, already, that is, as an image of coexistence and mutual dependence ripe to be transmitted as an ideal of human politics (Clark 2011,152).

Indeed, not only do appeals to nature's harmony as a model of society elide the fact/value distinction, they misrepresent the facts on which they rely — nature, as

twentieth- and twenty-first-century science has often asserted, is neither balanced nor harmonious.[7] Working in a similar paradigm, Geraldine Massey and Clare Bradford focus on novels that frame children as 'ecocitizens' (2011, 109-110). This sense of ecocitizenship derives, in Massey and Bradford's analysis, from 'an awareness of relationships of interconnectivity and interdependence' and holds 'the possibility of ecocentric perspectives which reject the idea that the natural world exists in order to serve the needs of the human' (Massey and Bradford 2011, 110). Massey and Bradford's model of ecocitizenship suggests a nonhierachical or 'flat' model of agency that tempers human prerogative. Although they do not use the same ecofeminist vocabulary of embodiment as Curry, the parallel with Curry's monograph is clear. In Curry's work and that of Massey and Bradford, an emphasis on interconnection, holism and connectedness is offered as a check to the perceived alienation of the human from the nonhuman. However, drawing on Morton's deconstructive environmental aesthetics, this dissertation argues that this rhetoric of embeddedness in nature is fraught with irredeemable contradictions. That is to say, in what follows, I will suggest that even as the rhetoric of children's literature appears to suggest the collapse of the distinction between subject and environment, it simultaneously reaffirms this distinction.

Moreover, appeals to 'embodiment' on the part of ecofeminist scholars risk appearing as reactionary gestures. Colebrook in particular argues for the redundancy of critical manoeuvres faced with the possibility that we have now entered a geological epoch defined by man's activity. Colebrook notes that

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[7] Phillips observes that 'the claims of ecologists about the natural world have become both much more specific and a lot more tentative over the past forty years, which explains the whiff of paradox that seems to hang over the more startling of their claims. Those claims tend to cast doubt on the practical importance of values like harmony, balance, unity, and economy in the day-to-day functioning of actual natural systems; in fact, they even call into question the very idea that nature contains anything so self-regulatory and so thoroughly integrated as to justify the use of the word "system" to describe it in the first place (2003, 46).

> precisely when life, bodies and vitality have reached their endpoint and face extinction, and this because they have been vanquished by technology and non-living systems... precisely at *this* point in history — 'theory' has retreated into an affirmation of life. It is as though man might will away his own existence by becoming nothing more than an aspect of life in general, and by conceiving life as nothing more than fruitful, generative and always oriented towards meaningful becoming (Colebrook 2012, 194 emphasis in the original).

Curry's ecofeminism checks the exceptionalism of the humanist subject by dissolving agency into the body, a body that is implicated in a network of other embodied interests. However, as Colebrook argues, this is a critical gesture that, read in the current context of a manifestly enlarged human agency, appears as an act of containment. In affirming embodiment and embeddedness in nature, Curry's ecofeminism renounces any claim to articulate the hyperbolic agency of man at the beginning of the twenty-first century. As Colebrook argues, 'today's post-theoretical turns to life, affect, vitality, embodiment or living systems occur as *apparent* counter-Cartesian and counter-humanist gestures' but such thinking actually mistakes the 'literal truth of the Anthropocene', that is the fact that 'man is not a being within the world, not a fragment of life, but has existed as a geological force that has irrevocably altered a world that is no longer an earth' (Colebrook 2012, 198-199; emphasis in the original). The moment at which we might have reimagined our relationship with the nonhuman in terms of partnership, connectedness or embodied intersubjectivity has passed, if it ever existed. Theorising the environmental crisis requires an ability to articulate the hyperbolic agency of man coupled with an awareness of those reactionary critical gestures that seek to co-opt this new sense. Chapters Three and Four are addressed to precisely this problem. In contrast to Curry's ecofeminism,

which privileges an interconnectedness of human and nonhuman, chapters three and four argue that what is now needed is a thought which privileges our disconnectedness.

Primary Texts

The ecocritical reading methods introduced above will be applied, chiefly, to Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* books. The *Earthsea* cycle comprises of *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), *The Tombs of Atuan* ([1970] 1972), *The Farthest Shore* ([1972] 1973), *Tehanu* ([1990] 1992), *Tales from Earthsea* ([2001] 2003) and *The Other Wind* (2003). *A Wizard of Earthsea* resulted from a request made to Le Guin by Herman Schein of Parnassus Press (Le Guin 2012). Schein asked Le Guin to write a book for young adults. Le Guin returned to the world she had created in two short stories, 'The Rule of Names' and 'The Word of Unbinding', both published in 1964 by *Fantastic*. *A Wizard of Earthsea* was met with both critical acclaim and popular success. In 1968, the book won the Boston Globe-Horn Book award, which Donna White identifies as an award 'second only to the Newbery Medal in prestige and importance' (White 1999, 11). Later books in the series met with similar critical recognition. *The Tombs of Atuan* was awarded the Newbery Silver Medal in 1972 and *Tehanu* won the 1990 Nebula award.

A Wizard of Earthsea was published six years after Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, the work that galvanised the environmental movement in the United States (Carson [1962] 2000). Although Le Guin's text is not explicitly concerned with contemporary environmental issues, reviewers and critics have detected a more or less ecological aesthetic in *A Wizard of Earthsea* itself, and in the books which followed

it. Writing in 1977, T.A. Shippey characterised Le Guin's Earthsea universe as 'not anthropocentric' insofar as it emphasised 'an attitude of respect for all parts of creation' (Shippey 1977, 104). This intuition on the part of critics that Le Guin's fantasy universe was an oblique critique of industrial modernity was borne out by the author's critical writings. In her essays, to be discussed in greater detail in the next section of this introduction, Le Guin subjects the environmentally destructive practices of the mid- to late-twentieth century to scrutiny. However, apart from isolated comments such as Shippey's, and a small number of journal articles to be considered below, no sustained examination of the constructions of nature, animality and the nonhuman in Le Guin's fiction has yet been attempted. Further, the scholarship that does consider the environmental aesthetics of Le Guin's writing tends to be celebratory, rather than critical.

The recognition of Le Guin's *Earthsea* books as exemplary of literary fantasy for children, and their recognised investment in an environmental aesthetics justifies an analysis of these texts in what follows. Chapter Three will also establish a dialogue between the *Earthsea* cycle and Le Guin's 2004 text, *Gifts*. *Gifts* has been relatively neglected by scholars. This is despite the fact that it evidences a consonance with the themes of the *Earthsea* cycle, and a development of that cycle's formal structures, as Chapter Three will demonstrate. Moreover, Le Guin's own critical reflections on the state of nature in the twentieth century betray a Romantic humanism of the type discussed above. In this introduction, I have argued for the redundancy of an environmental aesthetics that draws on a Romantic tradition. Le Guin's texts, it will be demonstrated, are implicated in this tradition and thus warrant scrutiny in a time when received wisdom about what constitutes nature and culture is being reexamined.

Le Guin and Ecocriticism

The corpus of Le Guin's criticism, collected in *The Language of the Night: Essays on Science Fiction and Fantasy* ([1979] 1989), *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places* (1989), *Steering the Craft* (1998), *The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on The Writer, The Reader and The Imagination* (2004) and *Cheek by Jowl: Talks and Essays on How and Why Fantasy Matters* (2009) shows evidence of a consonance between Le Guin's concerns and those of ecocriticism. In her 1980 essay, 'Some Thoughts on Narrative', Le Guin draws a suggestive connection between narrative and life (1989). Calling narrative a 'strategem of mortality' and a 'means, a way of living', Le Guin signals an affinity with those branches of early ecocriticism that consider literature as an adaptive trait (1989, 39). Buell points to the work of Joseph Meeker, whose work *The Comedy of Survival* (1972) is credited by Buell as being 'the first significant ecocritical study' (Buell 2011, 90). An excerpt from Meeker's study is included directly after Le Guin's contribution, 'A Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction' in *The Ecocriticism Reader*, further suggesting an affinity between these early theorists of life and narrative (Le Guin 1996, 149-155). In Meeker's excerpt, 'The Comic Mode,' he argues that 'comedy grows from the biological circumstances of life' and is so structured as to 'maintain equilibrium among living things, and restore it once it has been lost' (Meeker 1996, 158). Meeker and Le Guin thus anticipate later efforts at formulating a 'literary Darwinism', exemplified by Joseph Carroll's 2004 *Literary Darwinism*.[8]

[8] As Buell observes, the suggestion that literature in general or specific genres might be reduced to adaptive behaviour 'has not won many adherents' (2011, 91).

Further, in a number of essays collected in *Dancing at the Edge of the World*, Le Guin places emphasis on place in a manner that anticipates the rhetoric and argumentation of ecocriticism inflected by Romanticism. In the 1982 essay, 'A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be', Le Guin reflects that 'at least the Spirit of Place is a more benign one than the exclusive and aggressive Spirit of Race, the mysticism of blood that has cost us so much blood' (1989a, 84). Le Guin's recourse to 'place' as a term of critique can be considered as part of the confusion of environmental activism, counterglobalisation sentiment and postmodern identity politics in the United States documented by Heise. In the same essay, Le Guin suggests that 'with all our self-consciousness, we have very little sense of where we live, where we are right here right now. If we did, we wouldn't muck it up the way we do. If we did, our literature would celebrate it' (1989a, 84-85). The anti-anthropocentric sensibilities of this statement, and the reliance on place as an antidote to the ills of a globalised, industrial world-culture prefigure much work in early ecocriticism.

In her suggestion that narrative might serve and be influenced by more or less Darwinian mechanisms, and in her mobilisation of a 'sense of place' as a term of environmentalist critique, Le Guin's critical writing evidences a resonance with themes and modes of analysis of early ecocriticism. Moreover, Le Guin shares with Romantic ecocriticism a suspicion of the Enlightenment tradition. The title of Le Guin's essay, 'A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be,' is indicative of these suspicions. In that essay, Le Guin juxtaposes the phenomenological intimacies that define a sense of place with the universal, abstract, or 'Euclidean' discourses of space by which modernity propagates itself. She couples this juxtaposition with a critique of technology and instrumental rationality:

> I have not been convincingly shown... how any further technological advance of any kind will bring us any closer to being a society predominantly concerned with preserving its existence; a society with a modest standard of living, conservative of natural resources, with a low constant fertility rate and a political life based upon consent; a society that has made a successful adaptation to its environment and has learned to live without destroying itself or the people next door (1989a, 96).

Le Guin's suspicion of technology and its roots in the Enlightenment project is more balanced than this quotation taken out of context might suggest. She thus reflects that 'technology remains... an endless creative resource' and celebrates the 'almost ethereal technologies promised by electronics and information theory' (1989a, 96). Nonetheless, Le Guin's valorisation of phenomenological, experiential knowledge at the expense of modes of knowing grounded in the Enlightenment tradition clearly situates her as an important early voice in Romantic ecocriticism. As Clark puts it, this early ecocriticism, which was dominant in the 1990s and early 2000s, was characterised by 'its opposition to the destructive tendencies of enlightenment ideals of the conquest of nature, the market-based economy and industrialism' (2011, 13).

Further, Le Guin's articulation of a counterdiscourse to the culturally privileged narratives of reason and science offered ecofeminists a foundation for their critique of what is and was perceived to be an environmentally destructive patriarchy. Glotfelty introduces Le Guin's contribution to *The Ecocriticism Reader* thus:

> Le Guin observes that the (male) activity of hunting has produced a tradition of 'death' stories having a linear plot, a larger-than-life hero, and inevitable conflict. She urges that an alternative (female) tradition of 'life' stories develop, which might look to seed gathering as

> its model, conveying a cyclical sense of time, describing a community of diverse individuals, and embracing an ethic of continuity (Glotelty 1996, xxix).

Glotfelty and Fromm thus frame Le Guin's essay as an exercise in ecofeminism. This early appropriation of Le Guin to ecofeminist discourse was furthered by Karla Armbruster. Armbruster, in her article 'Blurring Boundaries in Ursula Le Guin's "Buffalo Gals, Won't You Come Out Tonight": A Poststructuralist Approach to Ecofeminist Criticism' argues that Le Guin's text represents a 'world-view that resists boundaries and dualisms, neither choosing one side over the other or collapsing difference' (Armbruster 1996, 30). In the same article, Armbruster provides a useful characterisation of ecofeminist practice as it appeared in 1996. She writes, 'ecofeminist writers share a general conviction that there are important connections between the oppression of women and the destruction and misuse of nonhuman nature within male-dominated cultures' (1996, 17). Ecofeminism, then, configures itself in opposition to the putatively destructive triumvirate of science, reason and patriarchy. In her 1993 work, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, Val Plumwood offered a succinct summary of the ecofeminist project in that decade:

> Reason in the western tradition has been constructed as the privileged domain of the master, who has conceived nature as a wife or subordinate other encompassing and representing the sphere of materiality, subsistence, and the feminine which the master has split off and constructed as beneath him. The continual and cumulative overcoming of the domain of nature by reason engenders the western concept of progress and development (Plumwod 1993, 3).

Ecofeminism, in Plumwood's formulation, is nothing less than the critique of male reason and it is Descartes who figures in ecofeminism as the chief antagonist. The

Cartesian distinction between mind and body is a prime philosophical culprit guilty of inspiring the environmental crisis. Carolyn Merchant is another important voice in early ecofeminism. Her most significant work is a critique of Western science. In *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, she suggests an investigation of

> the roots of our current environmental dilemma, and its connections to science, technology, and the economy, [in which] we must reexamine the formation of a world-view and a science that, by reconceptualizing reality as a machine rather than a living organism, sanctioned the domination of both woman and nature. The contributions of such founding 'fathers' of modern science as Francis Bacon, William Harvey, Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, and Isaac Newton must be reevaluated (Merchant 1990, xxi).

Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places collects Le Guin's essays from the late 1970s and 1980s. Taken together, the essays in this volume clearly anticipate much of the tenor and content of later ecofeminist criticism. Many of the essays are explicitly addressed to issues of gender, and, in particular, representations of women in art and female authorship.[9] These exercises in feminist aesthetics are joined by essays which privilege experiential knowledge and subject the traditions of the Enlightenment to critique, as the chapters of this dissertation will illustrate. In this, Le Guin's thought preempts much later ecofeminism.

However, the promising resonance between Le Guin's essays of the 1970s and 1980s and early environmental literary scholarship has not borne much critical fruit. No sustained examination of Le Guin's environmental aesthetic is extant in the literature. Moreover, the articles that do read Le Guin's oeuvre from perspectives

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[9] See 'Is Gender Necessary? Redux' and 'The Princess' (Le Guin 1989j; 1989k).

informed by the environmental humanities tend to focus almost exclusively on her science fiction for adults. An important focus of ecocritical attention has been Le Guin's experimental 1985 work, *Always Coming Home*. Readings of this work tend to draw on the same ecofeminist assumptions that animate Le Guin's own critical writing. Douglas A. Vakoch, for instance, writes that

> *Always Coming Home*'s matriarchal Kesh society offers liberation through an intermingling of human and nonhuman natures. The ecological interconnectedness of life and the rest of nature is reflected in the Kesh's typology of entities, highlighting the kinship of the heavens and the earth, as well as humans, animals, and plants (Vakoch 2014, 5).

Here Vakoch appeals to familiar notions of harmony, equilibrium, and interconnectedness which, as this dissertation will demonstrate, are profoundly inadequate to articulating human agency in the Anthropocene. Ecocritical responses to Le Guin's writing from outside the ecofeminist tradition have emphasised the utopian impulse in her work. Christine Nadir's 2010 article thus interrogates the construction of an ecological utopia in Le Guin's celebrated 1974 novel, *The Dispossessed* (Nadir 2010). Nadir's is a philosophically and politically sophisticated articulation of the discourses of sustainability and utopia that frame Le Guin's novel. However, the degree of critical scrutiny brought to bear by Nadir has been relatively unmatched in ecocritical readings of Le Guin's *Earthsea* sequence. This is despite the fact that, as Millicent Lenz puts it, 'volumes could be written on the pertinence of Le Guin's Earthsea to present-day ecological concerns' (Lenz and Hunt 2003, 74). Two important exceptions are Katherine Buse's 2013 article, 'Genre, Utopia, and Ecological Crisis: World-Multiplication in Le Guin's Fantasy' and Mike Cadden's 2005 monograph, *Ursula K. Le Guin Beyond Genre: Fiction for Children and Adults*.

Buse's article is important in that illuminates the context in which Le Guin's *The Farthest Shore* was written. Buse draws attention to the generic and rhetorical resonances between Le Guin's text and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* [1962] to suggest that both works evidence what Buell names as 'toxic discourse'(Buell 1998, 639).[10] However, Buse's important contextualising work is compromised by the limits of the ecocritical methodology on which she draws. She writes that 'True Speech' in *The Farthest Shore* 'is explicitly ecological, not only in that it describes a natural world, but in Le Guin's evocation of its interconnectedness and embeddedness in the universe's ecology' (Buse 2013, 266). This emphasis on embeddedness is clearly mediated by the Romantic tradition in ecocriticism delineated above. Moreover, Buse shares with that tradition a reductive approach to the environmental crisis:

> In order to name something, a wizard must spend time with it and discover its name through intimacy and careful attention. This means that the subject-object relationship suggested by the idea of 'using something' is subverted by the logic of Earthsea's magic. To know the name that allows magic to be performed is to know the 'being' of a thing, to have a relationship with it that renders it an end in itself (Buse 2013, 268).

Here, Buse implicitly attributes the cause of environmental destruction to philosophical dualism and instrumental rationalism. In this, she shares a Romantic suspicion of the Enlightenment tradition with Le Guin. The claim that subject and object can be reconciled in the fashion she detects in Le Guin's True Speech is subject to contestation in chapters one and two of this dissertation.

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[10] In his article, 'Toxic Discourse', Buell defines the 'forms, origins, uses and critical implications of toxic rhetoric' that he conceives 'as an interlocked set of topoi whose forces derive partly from the exigencies of an anxiously industrializing culture, partly from deeper-rooted Western attitudes' (1998, 639). Toxic discourse, in Buell's words, is rhetoric that engages with our sense of a 'poisoned world' (1998, 639).

Cadden's monograph is not, primarily, an ecocritical study. However, it is a fellow traveller of that school of criticism insofar as it interrogates Le Guin's representation of the nonhuman in her writing. Cadden argues that Le Guin's fiction 'establishes a continuum that plots points on the line for humans, aliens, and dragon and then examines the spaces between those points' (Cadden 2005, 2). In articulating the challenge that Le Guin's fiction poses to anthropomorphism and humanism, Cadden draws on Bakhtin's theories of dialogism. Cadden writes, 'hailing the other across distance is important in Le Guin's work. The space between us is the most vital part of a relationship because it is what allows relationship to occur — it signifies the need for relationship and establishes a place for it' (2005, 2). However, Cadden significantly extends the remit of Bakhtin's theory by suggesting that animals engage in the dialogical process of individuation in Le Guin's work. Despite its theoretical sophistication, Cadden's reading nonetheless trades on the same Romantic, anti-Enlightenment assumptions which inform Buse's article. Like Buse, Cadden considers subject/object dualism the chief obstacle to overcoming anthropocentrism. Thus, Cadden suggests that Le Guin's writing is an exercise in mediation, that is, the successful rendering of the identity-in-difference that characterises human/nonhuman relationship. Or, in Cadden's words, 'Le Guin demonstrates in *Tehanu* that the continuum of self to other needs more careful mediation that represents the simultaneity of the human, animal, and alien (dragon) while it also acknowledges their separation at the same time' (2005, 9). Cadden's reading, like Buse's, is informed by a Romantic assumption of alienation. Moreover, it suggests that the alienation of human from the nonhuman might be achieved without contradiction. It is precisely this suggestion that this dissertation subjects to critique. Further, Chapter Three explicitly engages with the dialogical construction of identity that Cadden

offers as an antidote to anthropocentrism. It suggests that, rather than qualifying humanism, dialogism in Le Guin's children's fiction actually reaffirms a distinction between human and nonhuman.

This dissertation represents the first sustained ecocritical reading of Le Guin's fiction for children. Moreover, the argument presented in what follows differs in tone from extant ecocritical readings of Le Guin's work. Dana Phillips, in his polemical *The Truth of Ecology*, sternly indicts the tenor of that body of scholarship:

> Ecocriticism has been full of admiration and praise for the literature it likes best: nature writing and nature poetry. In effect, ecocritics have been saying to that literature, in one essay after another, 'You are beautiful.' They have often gone no further than this in their commentary, and have seemed distrustful of any literary analysis that dares to be forceful — that makes critical and philosophical distinctions, and isn't all bark and no bite (Phillips 2003, 138).

Likewise, Michael P. Cohen charges certain strands of ecocriticism as indulging in 'praise' rather than 'criticism' (Cohen 2004, 21). The tone of Phillips's argument has itself come in for much criticism, and Buell describes *The Truth of Ecology* as an exercise in shooting from the hip (Buell 2011, 96). Nonetheless, Phillips's work has provoked a reconsideration of the sometimes pious temper of early ecocriticism. This dissertation is prosecuted in the spirit of critique which Phillips's calls for. It distances itself from the occasionally moralising tone of earlier ecocritical scholarship on Le Guin. Tonia L. Payne, for instance, in an article exploring the representation of nonhuman animals in Le Guin's fiction, derives the following moral; 'contemporary Western society has cut itself off from the willingness, and thus the ability, to hear animal voices, and the lessons that might be

learned are lost along with the voices of those speaking others' (Payne 2007, 171). Payne's approach is more or less representative of the few ecocritical treatments of Le Guin in that it allows Le Guin's own critical writing to structure and shape the reading. Cadden also develops his argument by a relatively unproblematic application of Le Guin's critical writing to her fiction.[11] By contrast, this dissertation is conceived as an attempt at critique. Like the work of many other Le Guin scholars, it recognises the value of Le Guin's critical writing. However, it does not assume that a critical method adequate to the reading of her literary prose might be extrapolated from her essays. Rather, each chapter will invoke Le Guin's critical writing in an attempt to explore the contradictions in Le Guin's representation of nature, life and the human.

Framing the readerly position adopted in this dissertation is J. Hillis Miller's articulation of the role of the critic, in which the critical reader is configured as parasitical on the text. Miller writes,

> 'Para' is an 'uncanny' double antithetical prefix signifying at once proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority, something at once inside a domestic economy and outside it, something simultaneously this side of the boundary line, threshold or margin, and at the same time beyond it, equivalent in status and at the same time secondary of subsidiary, submissive, as of guest to host, slave to master. A thing in 'para' is, moreover, not only simultaneously on both sides of the boundary line between inside and outside. It is also the boundary itself, the screen which is at once a permeable membrane connecting inside and outside, confusing them with one another, allowing the outside in, making the inside out, dividing them but also forming an ambiguous transition between one and the other (Hillis Miller 1977, 441).

[11] See *Ursula K. Le Guin Beyond Genre* pages 2, 100, 107 (Cadden 2005).

In Miller's formulation, literary criticism inhabits a site of productive tension. It resides in a place of contradiction, both the equivalent and subsidiary of the text. The precarious location of criticism is enabling; both interior and exterior to the text, criticism refuses to allow its meanings to be circumscribed by its object of study. Rather, criticism is the evocation of contradiction in the text. It is the articulation of moments of incoherence and failing boundaries. Thus, this dissertation proceeds in part by mediating between Le Guin's critical writing and her literary fiction. In doing so, it does not attempt to assimilate Le Guin's fiction to her criticism, or vice versa. Rather, it establishes a parasitical relationship between these two bodies of writing. In doing so, this dissertation attempts to trouble the integrity and self-sufficiency of both corpuses.

Further, Miller offers a vision of the critic as a mediator between text and world. This vision is entirely appropriate to the new relationship that obtains between human and world in the Anthropocene. This is an era in which the agency of man is everywhere evident and no earthly phenomenon is untouched by human activities. On the one hand, then, the human/nonhuman distinction has been eroded and various theoretical and posttheoretical attempts have been made to locate man 'in' nature. On the other hand, however, our agency is entirely incommensurate with that of any other form of life. The human, as Colebrook observes in the quotation given above, cannot be subsumed by life, but must be assumed a rupture in the vital order. The Anthropocene thus configures the human paradoxically in relation to the nonhuman — at once interior to the nonhuman because everything that is is touched by our activity, and exterior to life because of our uniquely hyperbolic agency. This interiority-in-exteriority is recapitulated by the critic's relationship to the text in Miller's schema.

Structure of this Thesis

Chapter one argues for the impossibility of nature in Le Guin's *Earthsea* fictions. Drawing on Timothy Morton's concept of 'ecomimesis', this chapter articulates the contradictions and inconsistencies that haunt Le Guin's rhetoric. In particular, this chapter documents the prose strategies by which the *Earthsea* texts sustain an ideology of 'embeddedness' in nature. Focusing in particular on ekphrasis, parataxis, anastrophe, and compound epithets, Chapter One functions as a taxonomy of the tropes by which the fiction of 'nature' is sustained by Le Guin's writing. Further, the first chapter introduces the historicism that will frame the arguments of this dissertation. Greg Garrard characterises 'the mission of the environmental humanities, of which ecocriticism is a key part, in chiasmic terms, as the *historicization of ecology* and the *ecologization of history*' (Garrard 2014, 3; emphasis in the original). Chapter one thus documents the context from which Le Guin's ecological aesthetic emerges. It establishes a dialogue between Le Guin's critical reflections on the question of style, and contemporary theorists of style such as Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes. In doing so, this chapter attempts to obviate the reductionism that might result by suggesting that Le Guin's work is an act of ideological mystification. Le Guin's style, I argue, is shaped by and intervenes in an aesthetic which attempts to resolve philosophical dualism. Philosophical dualism, as has been noted in this introduction, is the implicit antagonist of much nature writing and ecomimesis employs various rhetorical strategies to mediate between subject and object. Thus, I argue that Le Guin's rhetoric of nature should be understood in the context of mid-century discussions of artistic style that are both an enabling condition of her writing, and a limit to how her prose imagines the nonhuman.

Although he makes reference to acoustic and visual art in *Ecology without Nature*, Morton reserves his most penetrating analysis for literary texts. The second chapter of this thesis significantly broadens the theoretical usefulness of the concept of ecomimesis by applying it to maps in children's fiction. Endpaper maps have become virtually *de rigeur* in children's fiction, especially in fantasy texts. The concept of ecomimesis is used to verbalise the ideological and ecological discourses that structure these maps. Further, Chapter Two continues the historicising work with which this thesis opens. It argues that the rhetoric of maps in children's literature is informed by the visual traditions of medieval *mappaemundi*. Maps in children's literature, it is argued, appropriate the language of these medieval maps in order to suggest 'embeddedness' in the world.

Chapters One and Two are addressed to the rhetorical strategies used by children's fiction in general and Le Guin's fiction in particular to sustain the conceit of nature. In *The Ecological Thought*, Morton summarises the logic of deconstructive ecocriticism. This logic is one that subscribes to the idea that 'ecology can do without a concept of something, a thing of some kind, "over yonder," called Nature' (2010, 3). Like 'nature', 'life' is a reification that structures much which would identify itself as ecological writing. Chapter Three thus proceeds to articulate the contradictions inherent to this reification, much as Chapter One and Chapter Two explored the inconsistencies in renderings of nature. Further, in keeping with Garrard's definition of the task of the environmental humanities, this chapter suggests that Le Guin's vision of life is informed by that of her near contemporary Erwin Schrödinger. Both Schrödinger's and Le Guin's understandings of life are couched in terms of relations. I draw on Quentin Meillassoux's provocative characterisation of post-Kantian thought as 'correlationism' to explore the implicit humanism of Schrödinger's and Le Guin's

writings of life. In establishing a consonance between Le Guin and Schrödinger, this chapter further suggests that a relationist understanding of life cuts across disciplinary distinctions in the twentieth century.

The final chapter of this thesis subjects the two terms in Garrard's definition of the environmental humanities, 'ecology' and 'history' to interrogation. As Bird Rose et al. argue, our current moment of environmental crisis 'unmakes the idea of the unlimited autonomous human and calls for a radical reworking of a great deal of what we thought we knew about ourselves and the humanities as a field of enquiry' (Bird Rose et al. 2012, 3). Invoking the concept of the Anthropocene, that is the idea that we now live in a geological epoch whose chief characteristics are defined by human agency, the final chapter explores the transformation of our sense of history in this new, unnatural and cyborg ecology. It argues that Le Guin's representation of metamorphosis is inflected by the awareness that the received distinctions between human and nonhuman histories have come undone in the Anthropocene. Where previous chapters suggested the redundancy of concepts such as 'nature' and 'life' in the face of the Anthropocene, the final chapter argues that extant conceptualisations of the human likewise require substantial revision. Finally, this chapter continues the project of critique introduced above. It documents the narrative strategies by which Le Guin's fictions ameliorate and contain the failure of distinctions occasioned by the Anthropocene.

Ecomimesis in Earthsea

Harold Bloom has written that, 'Le Guin seems never to have written a wrong or bad sentence' and 'one has only to quote some of her final sentences to know again her absolute rhetorical authority' (Bloom 1986, 2). Joyce Carol Oates, in her introduction to Le Guin's short story 'Texts' in *The Oxford Book of American Short Stories* calls Le Guin a 'brilliant stylist for whom the imagination is transcendent' (Oates 1994, 552). Spivack celebrates the prose of Earthsea as 'artful yet simple' (1984, 31) Likewise, the editors of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* credit Le Guin's prose with the power to elevate her fiction from the typical mediocrity of genre literature:

> Traditionally, science fiction writers have been at their best when... projecting alternative visions in which their satiric powers criticize contemporary tendencies gone bad in a nightmare future; utopias within this subgenre are more often declarative statements of what would be good and therefore less interesting and engaging as art' (Norton and Company 2003, 2225).

The consensus appears to be that Le Guin lends science fiction and fantasy a literary respectability that these genres otherwise sorely lack. However, this critical sense that Le Guin's prose transcends the humdrum language of genre fiction has remained precisely that, a sense or intuition. Nowhere in the extant scholarship on Le Guin's fiction has any reading been attempted of precisely what it is about her writing that enables her science fiction to transcend the doldrums of genre and aspire to that category dubiously named by the editors of *The Norton Anthology* as 'art'.

Moreover, no attempt has been made to suggest how this critical sense of Le Guin as a consummate stylist might intersect with readings that emphasise the

importance of 'nature', however understood, to her writing. This chapter is addressed precisely to this critical silence. In parsing Le Guin's celebrated style, it argues that the books of *Earthsea* are examples of what Timothy Morton has defined as 'ecomimesis'. Morton's concept is intended as a check to the kind of sanguine literary ecocriticism that so irks Dana Phillips, and of which Bloom's comments might be seen as exemplary. Ecomimesis is a 'pressure point, crystallizing a vast and complex ideological network of beliefs, practices, and processes in and around the idea of the natural world (Morton 2009, 33). As such, Morton's concept openly declares its provenance in a hermeneutics of suspicion from which traditional ecocriticism has been keen to distance itself (Morton 2009, 33).

In simplest terms, ecomimesis is a form of rhetoric that attempts to sustain a sense of a surrounding medium, an environment or a backdrop. As Morton argues, this 'ambient rhetoric' is

> supposed not just to describe, but also to provide a working model for a dissolving of the difference between subject and object, a dualism seen as the fundamental philosophical reason for human beings' destruction of the environment. If we could not merely figure out but actually *experience* the fact that we are embedded in our world, then we would be less likely to destroy it (2009, 64; emphasis in the original).

The evocation of a surrounding, ambient dimension is not, then, a politically neutral aesthetic effect. Rather, in conjuring up the image of nature as something that surrounds or environs the human, a utopian vision of human existence is offered. Indeed, Morton's critique might be understood as an attempt to expose precisely this utopian quality of such rhetoric. That is, by bringing to light the contradictions that animate ecomimesis, Morton exposes both the impossibility and the ideological

character of imagining nature as a passive, surrounding medium. Thus, ecomimesis is shown by Morton to be an authenticating device that attempts to offer the thing itself. In other words, ecomimesis goes to great lengths to convince us that what we are encountering is not art, but nature itself. Indeed, the emphasis on naming in *Earthsea*, and in particular names in the 'True Speech', which has attracted so much critical attention can be taken as exemplary of this authenticating process.

Critical treatment of Le Guin's use of names in the *Earthsea* books has pursued a nearly uniformly utopian reading, a fact due in no small part to the author's own tendency to invoke nomenclature as an authenticating device in her own critical writing. In 'A Non-Euclidean View of California', for example, she ties names to a sense of place:

> What the Whites perceived as a wilderness to be 'tamed' was in fact better known to human beings than it has been ever since: known and named. Every hill, every valley... had its name, its place in the order of things. An order was perceived, of which the invaders were entirely ignorant. Each of those names named, not a goal, not a place to get to, but a place where one is: a center of the world (1989a, 82).

The possession of a name is, in Le Guin's reading, the possession of something approaching subjectivity on the part of the land. She tasks names with preserving the peculiarities and idiosyncracies of particular landforms in the face of homogenising Europeans. Le Guin thus freights nomenclature with a localist ideology that turns on a sense of place. Names bespeak an authentic, native relationship to place. For the most part, Le Guin's readers have offered an unproblematic association of naming with a more or less ecological consciousness. Shippey, for instance, writes that 'in her imagined world, the devotion to the word rather than the thing is bound up with an

attitude of respect for all parts of creation' (Shippey 1977, 104). Christopher L. Robinson offers the most sustained reading of naming and names in *Earthsea* (Robinson 2010).

Robinson argues that in Le Guin's critical writing and *Earthsea*, 'sounds and associations' are 'two sides of the same coin' (2010, 94). Later, Robinson writes that, for Le Guin, 'the sound of a name is not merely the medium by which an association is called up; it is the very stuff of that association, in both substance and form' (2010, 95). Robinson's argument rests on the claim that names in Le Guin's writing are motivated names. In other words, names do not possess an arbitrary relationship with what they denote in *Earthsea*. Rather, they are sponsored by the physical characteristics of that which they specify and the intertextual associations they invoke. Robinson offers a speculative etymology of the name of the legendary queen of *Earthsea*, Elfarran, in defense of this claim. 'Elfarran' draws Robinson's attention because the name 'sounds right and fitting for the queen' (2010, 104). He speculates that Elfarran is derived from Alfarin, the name of a giant found in Snorri's *Edda* (2010, 104). However, the peculiar fit of 'Elfarran' is not exhausted by the range of mythic and intertextual associations that it conjures. There is, on Robinson's reading at least, something about the very phonemes of the name that suggests its appropriateness:

> In addition to the lexical association 'elf,' there is also a possibility of hearing or seeing in the name the words 'far' and 'afar'. Jasper actually speaks of the queen's bones as lying 'afar'. These words carry connotations of the antique, oneiric, and marvelous, as in the generic formula, 'far, far away' (Robinson 2010, 104).

Names, on this reading, do not stand in an arbitrary relationship with that which they name in Earthsea. They are, rather, motivated. Robinson's case is a persuasive one, and it is hard to resist the conclusion that the sounds arranged by Le Guin into names are not motivated by the attractive allusiveness of certain phonemes. However, if Robinson suggests that such names can 'revive experiences linked with various memories, sentiments, sensations, or sensibilities', I suggest that Le Guin's use of motivated names exemplifies her commitment to ecomimesis (Robinson 2010, 110). The motivated names of 'Sparrowhawk' and 'Elfarran' offer us not, as is usually the case with names, arbitrary linguistic representations of things. Rather, like onomatopoeia, they suggest a necessary connection between their constituent morphemes and the quality of that which they denote.

Morton suggests that this emphasis on an unmediated or nontropological relation between being and language characterises ecomimesis. He argues that ecomimesis

> appears with astounding frequency in a variety of ecological texts. In trying to evoke a sense of the reality of nature, many texts suggest, often explicitly, that (1) this reality is solid, veridical, and independent (notably of the writing process itself) and that (2) it would be better for the reader to experience it directly rather than just read about it. But in making their case these texts are pulled into the orbit of writing (2009, 30).

Thus, the proximity of language to being that ecomimesis attempts is never fully realised. Morton brings to light the rhetorical strategies which ecomimesis uses to effect this illusion of unmediated contact. Of course, in doing so, he opens himself to the charge that in exposing the rhetorical character of nature he is simply espousing a

familiar social constructivism. This is a charge that he anticipates.[1] However, the theoretical stakes are significantly higher than such a criticism might allow. This is because, in paying attention to ecomimesis,

> we discover how nature always slips out of reach in the very act of grasping it. At the very moment at which writing seems to be dissolving in the face of the compelling reality it is describing, writing overwhelms what it is depicting and makes it impossible to find anything behind its opaque texture. Even as it establishes a middle ground 'in between' terms such as subject and object, or inside and outside, nature without fail excludes certain terms, thus reproducing the difference between inside and outside in other ways. Just when it brings us into proximity with the nonhuman 'other,' nature re-establishes a comfortable distance between 'us' and 'them' (Morton 2009, 19).

Ecomimesis is, then, a species of writing that gives with one hand and takes away with another. It appears to dissolve the tired distinctions of subject and object, nature and culture even as it reinstates them. As Vince Carducci argues, ecomimesis is 'essentially a form of denial' which offers 'constructions of environment purporting to efface the aesthetic frame that in fact depend upon it' (Carducci 2009, 633, 635). James W. Bittner's comments regarding the structure of Le Guin's fiction suggest that Morton's critique can usefully be brought to bear on the author's writing. Bittner suggests that

> the plots of [Le Guin's] romances carry the protagonist and the reader from a situation in which the protagonist's world is fragmented and alienated, quite often because of something

[1] Morton writes, 'some will accuse me of being a postmodernist, by which they will mean that I believe that the world is made of text, that there is nothing real. Nothing could be further from the truth. The idea of nature is all too real, and it has an all too real effect upon all too real beliefs, practices, and decisions in the all too real world (2009, 19).

> he or she did, toward a momentary vision of harmony, balance, and identity of world as self and world as environment, an identity of Self and Other (Bittner 1984, 4).

Morton argues for the ideological character of such plots, and exposes the way a vocabulary of harmony, balance and identity actually reinstalls the distinction between self and environment. However, this chapter will not pursue a thematic reading, that is, it will not be concerned with the journey of Le Guin's various protagonists to coherent, integrated identities. These dramas have been exhaustively catalogued by critics since the 1970s and are couched in Jungian or Taoist terms.[2] Rather, this chapter will problematise the way Le Guin's prose constructs *Earthsea*'s vision of harmony, balance and identity of self and world.

Ecomimesis as a concept thus schematises the way the fiction of nature has been sustained by artists from the Romantic period to the present. In its formal composition, ecomimesis invokes a sense of environment, that is, a backdrop or medium against which culture is framed (Morton 2009, 32-33). Further, ecomimesis is an authenticating discourse that attempts to conceal evidence of its artificial or rhetorical character (2009, 31). Ecomimesis not only suggests the existence of a surrounding world or nature, it suggests the possibility of unmediated contact. Both aspects of ecomimesis, its evocation of a world and its authenticating discourse, aim to dissolve the subject/object dichotomy and thereby envision a more properly 'ecological' mode of existence. However, the fundamental contradiction of ecomimesis is that in apparently reconciling subject and object, ecomimesis ends up

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[2] Margaret P. Esmonde's article, 'The Master Pattern: The Psychological Journey in the Earthsea Trilogy' is a representative example of Jungian criticism of the first three books of the *Earthsea* trilogy (Esmonde 1979). Sneja Gunew synthesises Jungian psychoanalysis and Taoism in her article, 'Mythic Reversals: The Evolution of the Shadow Motif' (Gunew 1979). Charlotte Spivack suggests that the *Earthsea* cycle is informed by 'symbols and archetypes drawn from Jungian psychology' and a 'philosophical emphasis on the Taoist ideal of balance and the reconciliation of opposites' (Spivack 1984, 26).

reaffirming this distinction. This chapter thus proceeds by detailing the rhetorical techniques Le Guin uses to establish a sense of surrounding world or medium. Le Guin's prose not only invokes an environing world, it is suggestive of unmediated contact. Above I suggested that Le Guin's philosophy of names is one that turns on the idea of a one-to-one or natural correspondence between language and reality. Language, as configured by Le Guin's 'True Speech', appears to enjoy an unmediated contact with being. However, as my discussion of ekphrasis will demonstrate, this fantasy of unmediated contact with being is precisely that, a fantasy. Ekphrasis, instead of offering us the things themselves, thereby reconciling subject with object, is actually shown to interpose language between being and self. The chapter then considers the philosophical context that informs Le Guin's prose, a discussion that enables an analysis of the figure of the author which Le Guin's prose constructs. The vision of authorship constructed by Le Guin's writing is one that appears to resolve the problem of subject and object and is thus, invested in ecomimesis.

This chapter will then adopt a mode of reading that, if familiar from the zenith of theory in the 1980s, has only recently been embraced by literary ecocriticism, as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. This is a mode of reading, which, further, is almost entirely alien to the ecocritical study of children's literature. Thus, this chapter will attempt to complicate the received picture of Le Guin as a writer of ecological texts discussed in the introduction. It will introduce a note of qualification to such affirmations by calling attention to the way Le Guin's style, that very quality to which her readers have devoted so many encomia, works to reaffirm those distinctions her narratives would otherwise seem to efface. In doing so, this chapter will pursue a formalism, which, it is hoped, will lend the intuitions of Bloom and Oates regarding the virtues of Le Guin's prose a degree of concreteness. Morton's

taxonomy of the rhetorical devices deployed by ecomimesis will inform my argument in what follows. Morton identifies ekphrasis and parataxis as characteristic features of ecomimesis and my reading will demonstrate the salience of these constructions to Le Guin's prose (2009, 44; 61). However, he is somewhat cryptic as to how precisely ekphrasis and parataxis contribute to ecomimesis. This chapter, then, will seek not only to furnish a reading of Le Guin's style, but to increase the theoretical purchase of Morton's sometimes gnomic critique. Further, it will enlarge the taxonomy of rhetorical and poetic devices by which ecomimesis is seen to operate. Specifically, it will argue that Le Guin's use of anastrophe and compound epithets are central to her ecomimetic project.

Anastrophe and 'World-Building'

Morton suggests that ecomimesis 'involves a poetics of *ambience*. Ambience denotes a sense of circumambient or surrounding, *world*. It suggests something material and physical, though somewhat intangible, as if space itself had a material aspect' (2009, 33; emphasis in the original). Le Guin's critics justly celebrate her vivid rendering of fantasy universes. Spivack suggests that 'Earthsea is a convincingly authenticated world, drawn with a sure hand for fine detail' and this detail contributes to the 'realistic depiction of a fantasy world' (1984, 43). Similarly, Brian Attebery celebrates Le Guin's 'careful orchestration of prose rhythms and precise images' that deftly 'draw us into an altered reality' (Attebery 1982, 115). In this section, I want to focus on the rhetorical techniques Le Guin uses to sustain her authentic world, and suggest the implication of these techniques in a poetics of ambience.

The sense of ambience or a surrounding medium that ecomimesis conjures into existence depends on the existence of foreground/background distinctions. These

figure/ground distinctions help maintain the conceit of nature. As Morton writes, the 'history of the environment has been associated with a surrounding atmosphere, more or less palpable, yet ethereal and subtle. It is the job of ecomimesis to convey this sense of atmosphere' (2009, 34). Ecomimesis conveys this sense of atmosphere formally, and Morton points to 'the margins of a page, the silence before and after music, the frame and walls around a picture, the decorative spaces of a building (*parergon*)' (2009, 34) as examples of spaces in which ecomimesis operates. One of the ways by which Le Guin's prose achieves and sustains this figure/ground distinction is by way of anastrophe. Anastrophe, or hyperbaton, as defined by Chris Baldick, is 'a figure of speech by which the normal order of words in a sentence is significantly altered' (Baldick 2001, 119). Daniel Markovic defines the figure as a 'wider than necessary separation of two or more syntactically closely connected words or groups of words' (Markovic 2006, 127).

Le Guin's prose in *Earthsea* is peppered with anastrophic reversals. Examples from *A Wizard of Earthsea* include the following:

' a fort or castle it seemed, built of mighty grey blocks of stone' (1994, 43);

'Few and short as were the streets of Thwil' (1994, 50);

'Grim it stood above the northern cliffs, grey were the clouds over the seas of winter, endless the lists and ranks and rounds of names the Namer's eight pupils must learn' (1994, 59);

'Uncalled it came from a place where there are no names' (1994, 85);

'Narrow run the channels between the islets' (1994, 96);

'Lean as a hound he was and huge as a hill' (1994, 114);

'Always now he doubted his strength and dreaded the trial of his power' (1994, 99);

'Many years had the dragon sprawled on the island where golden breastplates and emeralds lay scattered among dust and bricks and bones' (1994, 117);

'A grim, swift ship she looked, and all in sea-trim, with all her crew aboard' (1994, 129);

'Seldom did any ship come to them even from Soders and Rolameny' (1994, 219).[3]

Examples from *The Tombs of Atuan* include the following:

'"Very few are the precious things that remain precious, or the tales that are still told"' (1972, 57);

'Not bright, but dazzling to the dark-accustomed eye, was the light that worked this wonder' (1972, 65);

'Farther than these steps she had never gone' (1972, 99);

'She dreamt of the souls of the dead on the walls of the Painted Room, the figures like great bedraggled birds with human hands and feet and faces, squatting in the dust of the dark places. They could not fly. Clay was their food and dust their drink' (1972, 103);

'She watched him, and never could she have said what was in her heart as she watched him, in the firelight, in the mountain dusk' (1972, 139).

For the most part, Le Guin uses anastrophe to describe aspects of landscape, or to render a character's relationship to space. These syntactical reversals contribute to the vividness of description that Spivack and Atteberry attribute to Le Guin's prose. Further, in the context of ecomimesis, Le Guin's use of anastrophe serves a

[3] Unless otherwise stated, references are to the 1994 Puffin edition of *A Wizard of Earthsea*.

performative function. In *Earthsea*, anastrophe is used not only to describe aspects of landscape. Anastrophe is also performative of the idea of landscape as a background or surrounding medium. This performativity derives from the relationship between anastrophe and the surrounding syntax, a norm from which anastrophe deviates.

By inverting conventional syntax, anastrophe not only emphasises particular syntactical units within the sentence in question, it also throws the conventional syntax of the surrounding prose into relief. Anastrophe is thus concerned with establishing a figure/ground relationship. It is a trope that throws the surrounding, syntactically conventional prose into relief. These anastrophic reversals introduce a spatial element to Le Guin's prose. Thus, anastrophe contributes at a formal level to a sense of ambience or the illusion of a world. As Morton writes, worlds so constructed have as their cognate terms such as 'environment' and 'nature' (2013b, 187). Nature is figured in ecomimesis as a surrounding medium or backdrop against which human drama is played out.

I have couched Le Guin's use of anastrophe in terms of foreground and background, but its function might also be usefully interpreted in terms of the formalist concept of defamiliarisation. Viktor Shklovsky explains defamiliarisiation as a basic operation of the aesthetic, suggesting that 'the technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar"... to increase the difficulty and length of perception' (Shklovsky 1965, 12). Susan Mandala cites the critical consensus that fantasy and science fiction operate by a formalist logic of defamiliarisation; 'making the familiar strange so that an audience can see and reflect on circumstances that are typically taken for granted' (2010, 29). She further suggests defamiliarisation is achieved primarily through effective inflection of style (Mandala 2010, 29). Le Guin anticipates and concurs with

this reflection in 'From Elfland to Poughkeepsie', claiming that fantasy is 'a different approach to reality... a heightening of reality' (Le Guin 1989b, 84).

As Mandala points out, then, defamiliarisation, which is a basic device of fantasy and science fiction, calls attention to the unacknowledged backgrounds of daily experience. Defamiliarisation calls attention to the background as background, and thereby evokes a surrounding world or medium. Le Guin's defamiliarising techniques thus establish, at a formal level, distinctions between foreground and background. As Morton points out such distinctions are fundamental to maintaining the conceit of a surrounding world, which he takes as synonymous with the ideological fictions of nature and environment (2009, 45). The ideological character and fragility of this foreground/background distinction has, however, been thrown into relief by the current ecological crisis. This crisis is not only a crisis of ecosystems and climate, but also a crisis of concepts. Most significantly for our purposes, the ecological crisis entails a collapse of the figure/ground distinction on which concepts of 'world', 'environment' and 'nature' rely. Symptomatic of this collapse is the current emphasis on nonhuman forms of agency which are becoming increasingly visible in theory and art. Thus, Matthew Griffiths writes that 'contemporary climate change emerges as an unexpected interaction of nonhuman natural processes and collective human practices' (Griffiths 2013, 83). Nonhuman objects, taken to form the backdrop for the human drama, appear newly enlivened and active in the twenty-first century.

Further, Mike Hulme couches the dissolution of the figure/ground distinction in meteorological terms, pointing to the fact that 'global climate and local weather have become mutually embedded categories' (Hulme 2010, 269). Morton also figures the failure of the foreground/background distinction meteorologically. Taking the

example of mundane conversations about weather as an example, he observes that 'a weather conversation provides a nice background to our daily affairs, nice to the extent that we don't pay too much attention to it. Precisely for it to be a background, it has to operate in our peripheral vision' (Morton 2013b, 191). However, given the fact that, in an age of climate change, we are more and more likely to treat the weather with suspicion as ambiguously related to greenhouse gas production, we can no longer speak of the weather as a neutral background to daily existence. As Morton puts it, 'the background ceases to be a background, because we have started to observe it' and 'weather, that handy backdrop for human lifeworlds, has ceased to exist' (2013b, 192,193).[4]

Le Guin's use of anastrophe thus contributes to a foreground/background distinction. This distinction is fundamental to the operation of ecomimesis, which seeks to maintain the conceit of a surrounding world, environment or nature. In the age of climate change, the failure of this distinction exposes the fraudulence of nature as a conceit. Climate change reveals the fact that this figure/ground distinction, on which the concept of nature relies, was never a convincing description of reality in the first place. As Morton puts it, it is not only the case that climate change has caused the idea of 'our world' to 'evaporate', it also entails the realisation that we never had a world in the first place (2013b, 189).

Ekphrasis

By way of syntactical innovation, Le Guin's prose establishes a dialectic of foreground and background, figure and relief. In doing so, it engages in 'world-building', that is, in cultivating a sense of a surrounding world or environment. This

[4] It remains somewhat open to question whether Morton's suggestion holds true for anyone other than those professionally engaged in the problem of climate change.

sense of a circumambient dimension is, as Morton suggests, definitive of concepts of nature. However, the security of these distinctions, and hence the viability of nature as a concept, rests upon the successful concealment of the rhetorical work that goes into sustaining their existence. However, this concealment is never fully achieved. As Morton writes, 'the more the narrator evokes a surrounding world, the more the reader consumes a potentially interminable stream of opaque scribbles, figures, and tropes' (2009, 30). In other words, precisely in those texts that appear most vivid, realistic and convincing in their description of forests, seas and archipelagoes, the figural quality of language is most pronounced. Vivid descriptions immerse the reader in the world being rendered, thereby suggesting the reconciliation of subject and object. However, this vividness relies upon emphatically figural and tropological discourse, thus reinstalling the distinction between subject and object that it appears to efface. In this section, I suggest that this contradiction animates the various ekphrases that populate Le Guin's Earthsea books.

In her reflection on the genesis of the *Earthsea* books Le Guin famously suggested that 'wizardry is artistry. The trilogy is then, in this sense, about art, the creative experience, the creative process' (Le Guin 1989c, 53). This is a view with which Millicent Lenz concurs, calling *Wizard* an 'artist novel', as does Patricia Dooley, who suggests that 'the central function of magic in the novels is as a metaphor for art' (Lenz and Hunt 2003, 47; Dooley 1980, 103). If we accept Le Guin's characterisation of her own work, then a particular reading strategy immediately suggests itself. This strategy, left unexplored by Lenz and Dooley in their examinations of Le Guin's writing, would emphasise the ekphrastic dimension of Le Guin's *Earthsea* books. A discussion of ekphrasis is, moreover, salient to the argument being developed here insofar as Morton identifies the trope as fundamental

to the rhetorical machinery of ecomimesis. Morton's articulation of the role of ekphrasis is couched in narratological terms:

> The narrative aspect of ecomimesis generates tone. Specificially, this is a strong form of ekphrasis (*descriptio*, vivid description). Ekphrasis exists when a narrator says 'picture this.' It often takes a visual form, but traditionally ekphrasis can embody any sensory input... Vivid description slows down or suspends narrative time... The effect on the reader is that the time of narration is held in stasis. In narrative, suspension occurs when the time of the plot (the events as they would have occurred in 'real time') diverges widely from the time of the story (the events as they are narrated) (2009, 44).

I follow Morton in arguing that ekphrasis is a rhetorical component of ecomimesis. Like anastrophe, ekphrasis, as Morton sees it, contributes to an ambient textual form. As he argues, 'ecomimetic ekphrasis sits in an oblique relation to the text. In its very form, then, it is ambient: it appears alongside the argument' (2009, 130). In its contemporary use, ekphrasis has come to mean, in James Heffernan's words, 'the literary representation of visual art' (Heffernan 1993, 1). Murray Krieger adopts a more holistic position, writing, 'even while deferring to the special connection between ekphrasis and works in plastic arts, I will broaden the range of possible ekphrastic objects by reconnecting ekphrasis to all "word-painting"' (Krieger 1992, 9). Krieger's more expansive definition is, in fact, licensed by the term's original meaning. As Ruth Webb explains, ekphrasis has its origins in classical rhetoric as a technique which 'brings the subject matter vividly before the eyes' (Webb 2009, 1). This capacity for visualisation in language, *enargeia*, was fundamental to the orator's art, as Webb explains:

> Quintilian provides much of the information missing from the extant Greek treatises, explaining how *enargeia* contributes to the overall persuasive effect of a speech. He shows how important the ability to 'place before the eyes' was for the orator who wished to make his audience feel involved in the events of the case. More than that, he explains how the orator should achieve *enargeia* through the use of mental images (*phantasiai*) (2009, 88).

For the purposes of this section, I adopt Krieger and Morton's understanding of ekphrasis as a tradition of vivid description rooted in classical rhetoric. This definition encompasses the modern definition of ekphrasis, offered by Heffernan, as the verbal representation of visual art (1993, 1).

Le Guin's vivid descriptions of landscape can be read in terms of the broad definition of ekphrasis offered by Krieger and its original meaning in classical rhetoric. Throughout the *Earthsea* cycle, Le Guin's prose hovers over landscapes, rendering the fantasy geography in precise detail, thereby contributing to Spivack's sense that 'Earthsea is a convincingly authenticated world' (1984, 43). *The Farthest Shore* introduces the island of Lorbanery as follows:

> Seen across ten miles of sunlit water, Lorbanery was green, green as the bright moss by a fountain's rim. Close to, it broke into leaves, and tree-trunks, and shadows, and roads, and houses, and the faces and clothing of people and dust, and all that goes to make up an island inhabited by men. Yet still, over all, it was green: for every acre of it that was not built or walked upon was given up to the low, round-topped hurbah trees, on the leaves of which feed the little worms that spin the silk that is made into thread and woven by the men and women and children of Lorbanery. At dusk, the air there is full of small grey bats who feed on the little worms. They eat many, but are suffered to do so, and not killed by the silk-weavers; who indeed account it a deed of very evil omen to kill the grey-winged bats (Le Guin 1973, 86).

Above I argued that Le Guin's use of anastrophe served a performative function. That is, Le Guin's use of syntactic inversion contributes, on a formal level, to the sense of an environing dimension. Her ekphrastic descriptions of landscape are similarly performative. As noted above, Morton argues that ekphrasis enjoys a peripheral relationship to the narrative proper. Ekphrasis, like anastrophe, is a device which constructs, at the level of textual form, a sense of a surrounding, ambient space. The ekphrastic descriptions *Earthsea* are thus performative of a sense of landscape and nature as something that surrounds or environs. However, as I will demonstrate below, the logic of ekphrastic description is such that it actually occludes the thing that it purports to render so vividly. These acts of occlusion are particularly pronounced in Le Guin's descriptions of works of illusion and craft, which embody the modern understanding of ekphrasis as the verbal representation of a visual art. A discussion of the ekphrastic dimension of these descriptions will serve to articulate the broader logic of ekphrasis. This logic is one implicated in ecomimesis.

Critical discussions of ekphrasis have, for the most part, reached a notable consensus on an identifying characteristic of the trope. Stephen Cheeke writes that 'almost all theorists of ekphrasis emphasise the paragonal aspect of the mode' (Cheeke 2010, 24). He argues that there is a 'rejection or denial of the artwork in the crucible of the poem' (2010, 6). Similarly, James Heffernan holds that ekphrastic works 'stage – within the theatre of language itself – a revolution of the image against the word' (1993, 7). W.J.T. Mitchell couches the word/image *agon* in terms of a confrontation with alterity, claiming 'ekphrastic poetry is the genre in which texts encounter their semiotic "others", those rival, alien modes of representation called the visual, graphic, plastic or "spatial" arts' (1994, 156).

This aesthetic antagonism characterises ekphrasis in the *Earthsea* texts. In *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Ged's antagonist Jasper works an illusion to impress a visiting dignitary:

> The Master Chanter had sung the *Deed of the Young King*, and all together had sung the Winter Carol. Now when there was a little pause before they rose from the tables, Jasper got up and went to the table nearest the hearth, where the Archmage and the guests and the Masters sat, and he spoke to the Lady of O... The lady smiled at what he said and the opals shone in her black hair, radiant. Then, the Masters nodding benign consent, Jasper worked an illusion-charm for her. A white tree he made spring up from the stone floor. Its branches touched the high roofbeams of the hall, and on every twig of every branch a golden apple shone, each a sun, for it was the Year Tree. A bird flew among the branches suddenly, all white with a tail like a fall of snow, and the golden apples dimming turned to seeds, each one a drop of crystal. These falling from the tree with a sound like rain, all at once there came a sweet fragrance, while the tree, swaying, put forth leaves of rosy fire and white flowers like stars (Le Guin 1994, 65).

Jasper's tree appears in one short anastrophe; '[a] white tree he made spring up from the stone floor'. The conventional order of 'subject – object – verb' is substituted for 'object – subject – verb'. As a result of this inversion, the illusionary tree appears to the reader before Jasper actually conjures it. The representation of the tree in language occurs before Jasper conjures it in his synaesthetic illusion. The unconventional syntax introduces an agonistic dimension to the relationship between language and the illusion it describes. Insofar as language gets to the illusion first, it arrogates creative power to itself. This antagonism is characteristic of ekphrasis in the *Earthsea* books.

On first arriving at the school of wizardry on Roke Island in *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Ged finds himself drawn into a contest of illusion making with Jasper and Vetch. Vetch's contribution to the competition is as follows:

> Vetch scratched his head and looked glum, but he took up a bit of earth in his hand and began to sing tunelessly over it, moulding it with his dark fingers and shaping it, pressing it, stroking it: and suddenly it was a small creature like a bumblebee or a furry fly, that flew humming off over Roke Knoll, and vanished (1994, 52).

Vetch coaxes his creature into being with a series of more or less onomatopoeic transitive verbs. The verbs used to describe his act of making take their shape and sound from his act of making. Broad vowel sounds, 'moulding', 'shaping', 'stroking', 'humming', 'vanished', require the mouth to adopt a hollow shape and give the impression of the earth that Vetch holds in the hollow of his hands. The series of transitive verbs, 'singing', 'moulding', 'shaping', 'pressing', 'stroking' is important for being precisely that, a series. The ekphrastic language that describes Vetch's act of making actually defers the completion of that act. Each verb that describes and embodies the creation of the creature also prolongs the wait until it appears before the reader. This deferral arrogates creative control to the word. In delaying the completion of the illusion, the language claims prerogative over when the creature will appear.

Above I cited a consenus in studies of ekphrasis that the trope is predicated on a tension between word and image. To lend theoretical nuance to these conclusions, I suggest that the tension between word and image dramatised by Le Guin's ekphrases can be read as adhering to a supplementary logic. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida

detects two competing significations in Rousseau's use of the word 'supplement'. The first signification has the character of a simple addition:

> The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence. It is thus that art, *techne*, image, representation, convention etc. come as supplements to nature and are rich with this cumulating function (Derrida 1997, 144; emphasis in the original).

The second signification, which 'cohabits' with the first (Derrida 1997, 144), insists on a more agonistic relationship between original and supplement:

> But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. Compensatory [*suppleant*] and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which *takes-(the)-place* [tient-lieu]. As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness. Somewhere, something can be filled up *of itself*, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself (Derrida 1997, 145; emphasis in the original).

Thus, the word supplements the image in the sense of adding something to it in the above quotation. Jasper's illusion is notably lacking in substance. Cheeke observes that the word is capable of bringing a material quality to the image that it may lack in what he suggests is a 'discursive embodying or "fleshing out" of language of the phantom of the image' (2010, 73). In the passage quoted above, the illusion quite literally partakes of this phantasmic immateriality. However, the language that describes the illusion substantiates the image in its conspicuously sensual effects. The

alliteration of 'green grasses' and 'water went running' and the assonance of 'felt wet' lends the image a corporeality otherwise noticeably lacking. The triple 'w' sound, with an almost tongue-twister texture, is perceptibly difficult to enunciate and evokes the resistance of matter. The ekphrastic description in this instance thus participates in the sense of the supplement as 'addition'. The word adds something to the image. It is a plenitude enriching and fleshing out another plenitude.

However, the word supplements the image in the second of Derrida's senses. In the above quotation, each verb prolongs the reader's wait for the realisation of the illusion. In this, the words supplement the illusion in the sense of 'intervening' or 'insinuating' *in-the-place-of* (Derrida 1997, 145 emphasis in original). In delaying the completion of Vetch's illusion, while ostensibly describing it, the words arrogate the power of creation to themselves. Language substitutes its own creative authority *in-the-place-of* Vetch's act of making. Language supplements the image in both the sense of adding to and substituting for. The image can 'accomplish itself' only insofar as it surrenders its representational privileges to language (Derrida 1997, 145).

Derrida's insight is that the supplement works to shore up an always already defaulted presence. The original depends absolutely on adulteration by the supplement. Ekphrasis as understood in classical rhetoric was predicated precisely on this absence as the orator's linguistic dexterity created the illusion that his audience was actually present to the events described. If classical ekphrasis was haunted by absent presences, so too is the modern understanding of ekphrasis as the verbal representation of visual art. As Mitchell puts it, 'the textual other must remain completely alien; it can never be present, but must be conjured up as a potent absence or a fictive, figural present' (Mitchell 1994, 158).

As Carducci defines it, ecomimesis is essentially a strategy of denial (Carducci 2009, 633). What it denies is the absence of any real thing to which its language refers. Managing this denial is an anxious business, and Morton argues that ecomimesis proliferates language in a frustrated attempt to give us the thing itself:

> The more I try to evoke where I am — the 'I' who is writing this text — the more phrases and figures of speech I must employ. I must get involved in the process of writing, the very writing that I am *not* describing when I evoke the environment in which writing is taking place. The more convincingly I render my surroundings, the more figurative language I end up with. The more I try to show you what lies beyond this page, the more page I have (2009, 30; emphasis in the original).

Morton's comment is addressed to the 'as I write' which characterises a species of American nature writing. However, I want to suggest that Le Guin's ekphrases are animated by a related urge to evoke, or perhaps, to put the matter more suggestively, invoke, the thing itself. However, as demonstrated, in attempting to render the ekphrastic object as vividly as possible, what results, is, of course, not the object itself. Rather, language itself proliferates and indeed frustrates the appearance of the ekphrastic object even as it attempts to bring it to realisation. This simultaneous desire and inability to escape language is characteristic of ecomimesis. Or, as Morton puts it, 'my attempt to break the spell of language results in a further involvement in that very spell' (2009, 30).

To further clarify this claim, I want to turn to another example of ekphrasis that is likewise characterised by a syntax of delay. In the following quotation from *The Other Wind*, a series of verbs once again sponsors the realisation of a visual artifact while simultaneously deferring its realisation:

> [Ged] watched Alder mend the pitcher. Fat-bellied and jade green, it had been a favourite of Tenar's; she had carried it all the way from Oak farm, years ago. It had slipped from his hands the other day as he took it from the shelf. He had picked up the two big pieces of it and the little fragments with some notion of gluing them back together so it could sit out for looks, if never for use again. Every time he saw the pieces, which he had put into a basket, his clumsiness had outraged him.
>
> Now, fascinated, he watched Alder's hands. Slender, strong, deft, unhurried, they cradled the shape of the pitcher, stroking and fitting and settling the pieces of pottery, urging and caressing, the thumbs coaxing and guiding the smaller fragments into place. While he worked he murmured a two-word, tuneless chant. They were words of the Old Speech. Ged knew and did not know their meaning. Alder's face was serene, all stress and sorrow gone: a face so wholly absorbed in time and task that timeless calm shone through it (2003a, 45).

Heffernan argues that ekphrasis turns on a characteristic ambivalence towards the spatial arts:

> Ekphrasis reveals a profound ambivalence towards visual art, a fusion of iconophilia and iconophobia, of veneration and anxiety. To represent a painting or sculpted figure in words is to evoke its power — the power to fix, excite, amaze, entrance, disturb or intimidate the viewer — even as language strives to keep that power under control (Heffernan 1993, 7).

Thus, Ged is 'fascinated' or fixed by the craftsman's art. He slips into reverie as he watches Alder work. The latter takes on a death-in-life disposition with a 'face serene, all stress and sorrow gone.' Cheeke suggests that this timelessness is commonly attributed to rival plastic modes in literary ekphrasis, arguing that 'it is one of the paradoxes of painting... that the immortality or timelessness of the image is a kind of death-in-life' (2010, 15). The 'timeless calm' that comes over Alder's face as he re-

makes the jug is evocative of the pall of death. As with Vetch's illusion, a series of transitive verbs describe the act of making. Here, these verbs display the characteristic iconophilia and iconophobia which Heffernan identifies. 'Cradled', 'stroking' and 'caressing' all have a clear erotic inflection and suggest iconophilia, that is, the desire of language to invoke the arresting capacities of the plastic arts. However, 'urging', 'coaxing' and 'reassuring' complicate the picture. Verbs of persuasion, they draw on the origins of ekphrasis in classical rhetoric. Further, they hold out the possibility that the jug will refuse to be fixed and realised in verbal representation. They thus manifest an iconophobia as they gesture towards the intransigence of a rival art.

As was the case with Vetch's illusion then, Le Guin's text offers an ekphrasis which turns on a supplementary logic. I argued in my discussion of Vetch's illusion that a series of verbs of making defer the realisation of the artifact that they purport to describe. Here the effect is even more pronounced. Once again, the text describes an act of making through a protracted series of verbs. It thus introduces the image to duration and acts as a 'plenitude enriching another plentiude' (Derrida 1997, 144). But, given the indicated emphasis on timelessness and stasis, the introduction of duration marks a competition between the temporality of narrative and the suggested atemporality of the plastic arts. The word supplements the image in both of Derrida's senses. Adding the dimension of time to an artifact associated with stasis and timelessness, the word also defers the act of making. This deferral produces 'no relief' (Derrida 1997, 145). Language protracts the wait for the accomplishment of the image and thus appropriates the power of making for itself. Thus, language once again supplements in the sense of interposing *in-the-place-of* (Derrida 1997, 145). As with Vetch's illusion, the rival art form is accomplished only by yielding its aesthetic

prerogative to language. In both cases, a rival art is marked with a conspicuous lack, either materiality or duration. Language steps in to supplement this lack.

Moreover, not only do the verbs used to describe Alder's craft defer the completion of the visual artifact, the rhetorical undertones to words like 'coax' and 'urge' imply a resistance on the part of the jug. They suggest that the object will refuse to be persuaded and will, instead, remain stubbornly withdrawn from presence.

Ecomimesis is, then, characteristically coy as a form of rhetoric. It suggests the eventual the appearance of that real thing which it describes. However, as the discussion of ekphrasis has shown, this coyness is a form of anxious denial. In attempting to render the thing as vividly and concretely as possible, what the text leaves us with is not the thing itself but simply more text, as Morton observes (2009, 30). The problem is that 'in making their case, these texts are pulled into the orbit of writing' and thus away from the thing itself (2009, 30). Further, as argued above, a patient deconstruction of ekphrasis and ecomimesis demonstrates the extent to which the thing is a perennial absence or fiction. Or, as Carducci argues,

> ecomimesis... by its myriad strategies of transparency, its attempts to dissolve representation and return to the thing itself... lays the ground for its own deconstruction. The thing, nature, is a fiction. It functions as a sign, the semiotic other of society and in particular of modern capitalist society. It is always already the absence of that to which it refers (2009, 637).

The 'without nature' in the title of Morton's epigraph is thus a double gesture. On the one hand, it is a polemical call for literary ecocriticism and the environmental humanities to do away with defunct understandings of 'nature'. On the other hand, it suggests that nature was never really present in the first place. Rather, it was conjured up by the rhetorical alchemy of ecomimesis. So, in a sense, we have always been

'without nature'. The reading of Le Guin's ekphrases has demonstrated precisely how ecomimesis sustains the conceit of nature. Ekphrasis points to the real thing even as it defers the realisation of that thing. Thus, ekphrasis in *Earthsea* acts to deny the absence of the thing, that is the fact that we are 'without nature'.

However, it must be stressed at this point that Le Guin's *Earthsea* books cannot simply be reduced to the ideological mystifications they perform. Rather, the rhetoric of Le Guin's prose is mediated by contemporary debates in literary criticism and philosophy on the nature of aesthetic style. Adeline Johns-Putra argues that the task of the ecocritic is, at least in part, the articulation of the generic conventions that structure our thinking about the nonhuman. She writes, 'because the literary critic's business is to understand how a given text might refer to the environment or how any given discourse has operated upon nature, our business is to understand the way in which cultural constructivism works' (Johns-Putra 2010, 746). In other words, ecocriticism is tasked with documenting and subjecting to critique the conventions that enable and constrain the way the nonhuman is written about. The next section begins from precisely this premise. I document the intellectual context in which Le Guin's celebrated style arose. I argue that if, indeed, her style is exemplary of ecomimesis, then this is due in part to the particular way style was framed by mid-century aesthetics.

Le Guin's Style in Context

In her essay 'From Elfland to Poughkeepsie', Le Guin offers the following account of aesthetic style:

> From the writer's point of view, the style is the writer. Style isn't just how you use English when you write. It isn't a mannerism or an affectation (though it may be mannered or

> affected). It isn't something you can do without, though that is what people assume when they announce when they intend to write something 'like it is'. You can't do without it. There is no 'is' without style. Style is how you as a writer see and speak. It is how you see: your vision, your understanding of the world, your voice (Le Guin 1989b, 80-81).

The assumptions which enable Le Guin to make this claim have a history which extends from the beginnings of literary modernism in the nineteenth century through to the reflections of critics such as Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes in the mid-twentieth century. In what follows, I will explicate these assumptions and suggest that they inform the ecomimesis that characterises the books of *Earthsea*. Ben Hutchinson argues that the question of style was the fundamental motive force of literary modernism (2011, 1). However, as Hutchinson argues, the apotheosis of style in modernist treatments of the topic shaded paradoxically into suspicion. Hutchinson identifies a 'double movement'; 'on the one hand, style is foregrounded as its own subject matter, rather than as a transparent window onto a supposedly "real" world; on the other hand, there is a concomitant suspicion of *mere* style' (Hutchinson 2011, 1; emphasis in the original). Dooley detects an echo of this suspicion in the Earthsea books. In a discussion of the magical acts of illusion in the books, she observes that

> [illusion] is first referred to almost disparagingly, as 'tricks and pleasantries'... Illusion is more explicitly 'artificial'; it represents art at a stage more sophisticated and frivolous on the one hand and potentially more dangerous on the other. It is art as intellectual and sensual entertainment, but also superficial, absorbed with form and technique, and morally hollow. In [*A Wizard of Earthsea*] it is associated with characters whose motives are double (Jasper, Serret) and reminds us of the power of art to conceal. 'Illusion' is part of the theme of appearance versus reality or aspect versus substance (Dooley 1980, 105).

This understanding of art as somehow superficial and absorbed in its own methods of meaning and communication is precisely that which Hutchinson traces from Kant to the modernists. As Hutchinson writes, 'the notion of "disinterest" as Kant develops it in the *Critique of Judgement* (1790), is the forerunner of Walter Pater's *fin-de-siecle* doctrine of *l'art pour l'art*' which helped occasion the modernist 'questioning of aesthetic "surfaces" as somehow detached from their ostensible referent' (2011, 2;5). If Dooley's reading is accepted, then the illusion magic of *Earthsea* can, then, be read, as a late modernist reflection on a certain vacuity on the part of twentieth-century aesthetics. Further, Dooley alludes in her reading to the crisis of representation in general and language in particular which, Hutchinson observes, would inform so much thought and art in the twentieth century (Hutchinson 2011, 4). She writes, *The Farthest Shore* 'centers upon the crisis of language, expressed in terms of the metaphor as "the failure of wizardry as a great power among men"'(1980, 109).

Moreover, the modernist paean to style was also an apotheosis of the signifier, achieved at the expense of the signified. As Hutchinson puts it, 'modernism is defined by the primacy of the signifier over the signified' (2011, 5). Susan Sontag's and Roland Barthes's critical reflections on style, written in 1965 and 1969 respectively, might be taken as two exemplars of this modernist celebration of style divested of any hesitation.

Sontag noted in her essay, 'On Style', 'it would be hard to find any reputable literary critic today who would care to be caught defending as an idea the old antithesis of style versus content' (Sontag 2001, 14). Indeed, Sontag's essay anticipates Le Guin's in much of its argument and tenor. In a vocabulary remarkably close to Le Guin's own, Sontag reminds the reader that 'the strongly individual style

of each important writer is... never something merely "decorative"' (2001, 14). Barthes for his part pointed out in 'Style and its Image' that the over-familiar distinction between style and content to which Le Guin and Sontag allude is inherited from classical rhetoric. The distinction between form and content, Barthes observes, 'derives... from one of the first classifications of classical Rhetoric, the opposition between *Res* and *Verba*':

> On *Res* (or demonstrative materials of discourse) depends *Inventio*, or research into what one can say about a subject (*quaestio*); on *Verba* depends *Elocutio* (or transformation of these materials into a verbal form; this *Elocutio* is, roughly, our "style". The relation of Form and Content is phenomenological: Form is reputed to be the appearance or garment of Content, which is its truth or body (Barthes 1986, 90-91).

Barthes' essay, in broad agreement with Sontag and Le Guin, proceeds to dissolve this opposition. It is not the case, he suggests, that in 'peeling off' layers of style we can reach some inner kernel of content, but, rather, that there is nothing but style all the way down; 'what this... peeling off reveals is not a content, a signified, but another form, another signifier... *which is never the last*' (1986, 92-93; emphasis in the original). Instead of a core of content supporting a crust of styles, the work of art is nothing but sedimented layers of style.

Sontag reaches a similar conclusion, arguing that 'practically all matters of style amount to placing matter on the inside, style on the outside. It would be more to the point to reverse the metaphor. The matter, the subject is on the outside; the style is on the inside' (Sontag 2001, 17). Again, Sontag's position is consonant with and anticipates Le Guin's. If, as Hutchinson argues, the modernist apotheosis of style occasioned a sense of increasing alienation of the signifier from the signified, mid-

century critics could point to a consensus that this distinction was meaningless in the first place. As Sontag puts it, 'even if one were to define style as the manner of appearing', then 'our manner of appearing *is* our manner of being. The mask is the face' (Sontag 2001, 17-18 emphasis in original).

What I want to suggest, then, is that Le Guin's prose is mediated by a literary aesthetic that, deriving from modernism, lends itself to ecomimesis. This is because like ecomimesis, style as articulated by Le Guin, Barthes and Sontag, is at once animated and troubled by an absence of content. Morton writes that '"nature" is an arbitrary rhetorical construct, empty of independent, genuine existence behind or beyond the texts we create about it' (2009, 22). There is a parallel between articulations of literary style in the mid-twentieth century and Morton's concept of ecomimesis. The modernist concept of style and the idea of nature entertained by ecomimesis both rely on the absence of any content independent of their expression in writing. In my discussion of ekphrasis, I demonstrated that Le Guin's prose sustains the conceit of a real thing that it nonetheless figures as an absence. I characterised this as ecomimesis. However, if this is indeed the case, then this should not be construed as an act of ideological mystification on the part of Le Guin. Rather, if Le Guin's rhetoric aspires to ecomimesis, this is because it is framed by contemporary articulations of literary style which share structural similarities with ecomimesis.

Further, if Barthes, Sontag and Le Guin share a conviction that there is no meaningful distinction between style and substance, then this might also be taken as an implicit claim to resolve the old problem of subject and object. This is so for two reasons. On the one hand, if there really is no content that lies 'beneath' or 'behind' style, as Barthes asserts, then the idea of content simply dissolves into its historical antithesis, form. Otherwise put, it is not the case that we have a subject speaking

about an object. Rather, all we have is speech with no object or referent. Thus, the 'object' pole of the dyad 'subject-object' is dealt with. However, the 'subject' pole is also undermined by the understanding of style documented above. If, as Le Guin puts it, 'the style is the writer,' then the subject, to use an overly familiar formulation, becomes an effect of discourse. Sontag clarifies the point thus: 'The visibility of styles is itself a product of historical consciousness. Were it not for departures from, or experimentation with, previous artistic norms which are known to us, we could never recognize the profile of a new style' (2001, 18). Style, on her argument, is constructed dialectically in opposition to other styles. No style has meaning in itself. Rather, like the sign in Saussurean linguistics, style has meaning only in relation to other styles.

The writer, on this view, becomes simply a vessel for a mobile army of mannerisms that she may alternately transform or resist, but not create. Or, in other words, the writer is less an authorial subject than a mediator. Inserting Le Guin's prose into its rhetorical and historical context thus points to a mode of writing in which the problem of subject and object appears to be resolved. In the next section, I will argue that this results in a species of prose that Morton characterises as 'Aeolian' writing. Briefly put, the Aeolian mood in which ecomimesis operates appears to offer writing without an author.

Ecology without a Subject?

Morton writes that 'the ultimate fantasy of [ecomimesis] is that we could actually achieve ecology without a subject' (2009, 183). To sustain this ideal, ecomimetic rhetoric indulges in what Morton identifies as the 'Aeolian' mood which 'establishes a sense of processes continuing without a subject or an author' (2009, 41). The

utopian vision of nature without subjects resorts to a poetics of rhapsody, that is, one which construes the author as vessel rather than creator. (2009, 54). Ecorhapsody attempts to dissolve the subject into nature by figuring the speaker or writer as simply the mouthpiece of the environment. Thus, ecomimesis attempts to resolve the old problem of subject and object that it sees as the implicit philosophical dogma motivating environmental destruction (Morton 2009, 63). As Morton puts it, ecomimesis is a form of 'automatic writing' by which 'the environment in general manifests in some specific element' (2009, 55-56).

In her most recent collection of essays, Le Guin couches a reflection on her creative process in a vocabulary of ecorhapsody:

> In any case, while I'm actually composing, I'm in a kind of trance state that isn't pleasant or anything else. It has no qualities. It is unconsciousness of self. While writing I am unconscious of my existence or any existence except in the words as they sound and make rhythms and connect and make syntax and in the story as it happens... Writing, I'm in power, I control, I choose the words and shape the story. Don't I?
>
> Do I? Who's I? Where's I while I write? Following the beat. The words. They're in control. It's the story that has the power. I'm what follows it, records it (Le Guin 2004, 283-284).

Here, Le Guin specifically resorts to a picture of the author as a vessel, and not a creator. She is, she claims, not an author, but a recorder. Moreover, later in the essay she performs an essentialising gesture as she grounds this sense of what she is recording in 'the body'. Thus she writes that 'to have a body is to be embodied. Embodiment is key. My plans for stories that don't become stories all lack that key, the person or people whose story it is... the embodied inwardness of a person' (2004, 286). Body, for Le Guin, is less a seat of identity than a site of convergence. It is a

point of mediation and transition between self and other, or self and environment. And it is from this point of transition between inside and outside that she understands her writing to flow. She concludes, 'body is story, voice tells it' (2004, 288). Further, over the long course of her career as an essayist, Le Guin has returned to the question of what defines poetry as poetry, and prose as prose. These reflections on the issue of genre construct Le Guin's authorship in a fashion that accords with the Aeolian voice of ecomimesis.

In 'Reciprocity of Prose and Poetry', Le Guin troubles the opposition between poetry and prose (1989d, 104-115). She insists that the two forms exist on a cline, rather than standing in mutual opposition. This continuum is mediated by rhythm. She introduces Gary Snyder in an attempt at a loose definition; 'poetry tends to be more rhythmic and denser in texture than prose. But clearly they aren't in [Snyder's] mind, "all that different" — the difference is of degree not kind' (Le Guin 1989d, 109). The perceptibility of rhythm in a work, then, defines it generically as either prose or poetry. Because of this, Le Guin understands the authorial position to be one mediated by rhythm. She admits that

> my concern here is personal. I also write both prose and poetry and move freely between them, and so am curious to know why and how I know that I write both, and how I know that they are not the same thing. And I am interested because, although I wrote and published poetry first, my reputation was made as a prose writer, and I find my poetry quite often dismissed on the sole ground that it was written by 'a novelist' and so cannot be taken seriously (1989d, 109).

Clearly, despite the apparent agreement with Snyder, the authorial identity of the poet and the prose author are distinct in Le Guin's thought. This distinction is installed and

preserved by rhythm. However, if some deconstructive pressure is applied to Le Guin's reflections, the authorial 'I' tends to disappear. In the above, Le Guin defines herself as an author of poetry and prose. She excludes from this definition of her authorial identity that of the essayist. This is odd given that she is as prolific an essayist as an author of science fiction and fantasy. The authorial 'I' is thus located provisionally and problematically in the forms of poetry and prose. Both are forms significantly absent from the essay, 'Reciprocity of Prose and Poetry'. The author's subject position is thus deferred until we read her poetry and literary prose. Indeed, a further and intractable deferral is entrenched even in the reading of her specifically literary works. Although the author herself claims a reciprocity for her poetry and prose, she concedes that the critical reception of her work in fact emphasises a mutual exclusivity. Moreover, in later essays, Le Guin herself moves away the idea that poetry and prose exist on a continuum of rhythm. She writes in *Steering the Craft*,

> prose can't rhyme and chime and repeat a beat as poetry can...The rhythms of prose — and repetition is the central means of achieving rhythm — are usually hidden or obscure, not obvious. They may be long and large, involving the whole shape of a story, the whole course of events in a novel: so large they're hard to see (1998, 54).

A similar point is made in her essay, 'Stress-Rhythm in Poetry and Prose';

> prose scrupulously avoids any noticeable regularity or pattern of stresses. If prose acquires any noticeable meter for more than a sentence or so (just as if it rhymes noticeably), it stops being prose and becomes poetry (Le Guin 2004a, 80).

Thus, the authorial 'I' is characterised by a certain incompleteness across her work. The poetic 'I' is always absent from her novels, and vice versa. Both the poetic 'I'

and the voice of the implied author of her literary prose are, further, absent from her critical essays.

What I want to suggest then, is that Le Guin's comments on rhythm tinge the authorial position of all her works with a certain absence. That is to say, the authorial voice of *Earthsea* is haunted by the traces of Le Guin's poetic voice and the voice of Le Guin the essayist. (Of course, this is obviously not to suggest that the the prose of *Earthsea* is completely bereft of 'poetic' constructions, however that word is construed). This compromised authorial subjectivity is consonant, I suggest, with that of the Aeolian voice with which ecomimesis speaks. As above, ecomimesis proceeds with an etiolated sense of authorship. It is a rhetoric which construes its own point of authorship as obscure or absent (Morton 2009, 41). Read in conjunction with her critical essays, the authorial voice which speaks the *Earthsea* books emerges as one which turns on the rejection of the voice of the essayist and poet. So interpreted, the implied author of the *Earthsea* books is defined, at least in part, by two voices which remain absent. Thus, the provenance of the narrative voice of Earthsea is partially obscure. In the next section, I argue that compound epithets tinge Le Guin's authorial voice with an impersonality which is consonant with the mystified authorship of ecomimesis.

Compound Epithets

In her essay, 'Telling is Listening', Le Guin echoes a reading of Homeric epic that has become orthodox since Millman Parry first formulated it:

> For centuries, those huge poems the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* did not exist in writing but only in oral performance. The version we have is the one that happened to get written down. We know now that a tremendous proportion of the language of the epics consists of stock phrases,

> repeatable terms, used where they were needed to fill out the meter or to take up slack while the performer thought of what Achilles or Odysseus did next. No performer could possibly remember the whole thing verbatim. Every performance was half recital and half improvisation, using that vast stock of ready-made phrases. So the wine-dark sea and rosy-fingered dawn are little metrical bricks, fitted in wherever the hexameter falls short. They are also, of course, beautiful images (Le Guin 2004b, 202-203).

Although she does not acknowledge him, Le Guin's reading of the compound epithets of Homeric epic is essentially a reiteration of Parry's. Writing in 1930, Parry summarised his findings thus:

> In my study of the traditional epithet in Homer, I dealt with those formulas in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey* which are made up of a noun and one or more fixed epithets, and showed that they were created to help set the heroic tale to hexameters. The noun has a metrical value which allows little change, but by adding to it an ornamental epithet one can make a phrase of the needed length which, since the epithet has no bearing on the idea of the sentence, can be used freely as the simple noun (Parry 1930, 73).

Le Guin's *Earthsea* texts are ornamented throughout with compound epithets. Examples from *A Wizard of Earthsea* include, 'storm-racked Northeast sea' (1994, 1), 'new-forged spears' (10), 'dragon-spoiled isle' (97), 'spell-woven sail' (169) and 'west-going stars' (184). Examples from *The Tombs of Atuan* include 'time-ruined coffer' (1972, 62), 'soft-winged owls' (67), 'earth-embedded rocks' (134) and 'black-haired rocks' (145). Examples from *The Farthest Shore* include 'sea-assaulted cape' (1973, 20), 'rock-fanged sea' (41) and 'ivy-grown housewalls' (57). Given her knowledge of classical literature and scholarship, it is likely that the stock phrases and formulae of Homeric epic bear a genetic relationship with Le Guin's own epithets. Le Guin thus stands in that tradition of English literature, and in particular poetry, which

appropriated the compound epithet form from classical Greek and reconstructed it to suit the needs of expression in English. As Kenneth Haynes has documented, the compound epithet proved singularly attractive in the Renaissance. Sidney, as Haynes observes, 'praised English,' in the *Defence of Poesie* 'because it almost approached Greek in its capacity for compounding words' (Haynes 2003, 107). Haynes also documents Keats's and Shelley's predilection for the form, and later, Hopkins's ambivalent negotiation of this pagan idiom (2003, 105). The compound epithet has thus been incubated, transformed and interrogated by a poetic tradition that seeks to appropriate a Greek capacity to form compounds for the English language. Le Guin's own inflection of the compound epithet is, then, mediated by her own reading of Homeric epic, an evident knowledge of Homeric scholarship and a poetic tradition, running through Sidney, Keats and Hopkins which wrests nouns and adjectives together to form compounds.

If we accept Le Guin's understanding of compound epithets, then there is a particular impersonality to the implied author of the *Earthsea* texts. As the quotation from *The Wave in the Mind* shows, Le Guin understands the compound epithets as, essentially, metrical filler. They are 'stock' or 'ready-made' phrases that have an ambiguous provenance. As such, they complicate the authority of the poet over his text and introduce a note of impersonality. Le Guin's intertextual appropriation of the compound epithet form compounds this sense of impersonality. The compound epithets in *Earthsea* are intertextual appropriations mediated by Homeric and English poetry. As such, they further complicate the question of originality. Le Guin's use of compound epithets are thus, I suggest, forms that are freighted by Le Guin with a doubly obscure point of origin. (Indeed, this question of provenance is further muddied by the fact that Le Guin's reading of such epithets is derivative of Millman

Parry's, whom she fails to acknowledge). If compound epithets are indeed constructed by Le Guin as forms with obscure authors or origins, then they resonate with the Aeolian timbre of ecomimesis as described above. As Morton puts it, the 'Aeolian... establishes a sense of processes continuing without a subject or an author' (2009, 41). The compound epithet form, originally a stock phrase from an oral tradition, is appropriated by Le Guin as an act of language with an obscure author. Thus, at those very moments when the implied author would appear to be at the height of her powers, arranging nouns, verbs and adjectives into new and defamiliarising combinations, an intertextual reading of those moments sees the implied author actually beat a retreat from visibility.

That the signature mark of punctuation of the compound is the hyphen is instructive. Once written, the hyphen is a mark always already on the way to disappearance. This is because, as John Saeed points out, novel compound forms can, eventually, 'be further integrated into the lexicon so their compound structure is obscured (along with their hyphens), as in "easygoing" or "thoroughbred"' (John Saeed, pers. comm.). So, the hyphenated compound epithet not only invokes a literary tradition with connotations of obscured authorship, it gestures towards its own future as an element of the vernacular in which the trace of its own creation is hidden. The hyphen, which registered the hand of the author manipulating elements into a new linguistic form, tends toward disappearance. Thus, the hyphen signals the future of the compound epithets as an Aeolian, ecomimetic element of rhetoric whose origin is obscured.

Parataxis, or, Ecology without a Subject

As indicated above, this apparent disavowal of authorial prerogative and presence is exemplary of the automatic quality which ecomimesis aspires to. However, as I have argued throughout, what ecomimesis offers with one hand it takes away with another. That is, even as it aspires to a condition of nature without the subject, it reinstalls that distinction rhetorically. Parataxis, as I argue in this section, is one of the ways Le Guin's ecomimetic rhetoric appears to dissolve the subject into the environment even as it reasserts a distinction between self and world.

Le Guin's prose is structured almost entirely in parataxis. Syntactic subordination is, in the *Earthsea* books, the exception rather than the rule as Le Guin overwhelmingly arranges her clauses in apposition. This predilection for parataxis could be read as performative of fantasy's concern to explore the oxymorons that critics of fantasy consider realism ill-equipped to entertain. As Rosemary Jackson puts it, fantasy literature 'holds together contradictions and sustains them in an impossible unity without progressing towards synthesis' (Jackson 1988, 21). Refusing to resolve the world into a logical syntax of subordination and qualification, Le Guin's parataxis enjoins the reader to entertain the contradictions that are generic to fantasy.

In critical attempts to arrive at an essence of modernism, parataxis names a peculiarly modern experience. Susan Stanford Friedman, for instance, writes that parataxis, 'the juxtaposition of things without providing connectives' is a 'common aesthetic strategy in modernist writing and art, developed to disrupt and fragment conventional sequencing, causality and perspective' (Friedman 2001, 494). Likewise, for Jewel Spears Brooker, parataxis is quintessentially modernist. In her analysis of T.S. Eliot's poetry, Brooker argues that 'like *Ulysses* and the *Cantos*, *The Waste Land*

remains triumphantly paratactic, and that is the hallmark of its modernism' (Brooker 1990, 207). Le Guin's eschewal of hypotaxis thus suggests a sense of disconnection and fragmentation as the defining features of modern experience. This sympathy is evident in Le Guin's reflections in 'Science Fiction and Mrs. Brown' (1989e). The essay amounts to an elegy for the disappearance of 'character' in the face of the disintegrating energies of modernity. Le Guin writes, 'there is, really, no Mrs. Brown anymore. There are only classes, masses, statistics, body counts, subscription lists, insurance risks, consumers, randomly selected samples, and victims' (1989e, 97). The autonomous individual of humanism has dissolved into just so many roles and performances. In an ironically performative gesture, Le Guin lists these roles in parataxis. Her own work is characterised as an attempt to resurrect character, the Mrs. Browns of literature, despite the encroachment of 'the technological arts', exemplary of which is photography:

> Click, the camera-eye — a moment, not a person, not a portrait, only a single moment implying nothing before or after, no continuity, click. And the whirr of the movie camera, catching the moment as it dissolves into the next, unrelated moment. These are our arts. The technological arts, dependent upon an incredible refinement of machinery and a vast expense of mechanical energy, expression of a technological age. There is poetry, still, but there is no more Mrs. Brown. There are snapshots of a woman at various moments. There are moving pictures of a woman in various places with various other persons. They do not add up to anything so solid, so fixed, so Victorian or medieval as a 'character' or even a personality. They are moments; moods; the poetry of flux; fragments of the fragmented, of the changing of the changed (1989e, 99).

Rendered almost entirely in parataxis, the *Earthsea* novels could be read as a late-modernist reflection on the fact that experience has become a series of unrelated

moments. Indeed, all of the novels of the sequence depict a crisis of continuity. Arha, sundered from her previous life and stolen to the Tombs, is torn from the history that would otherwise have been hers. Cob, in *The Farthest Shore*, threatens the normal flow of life and history itself.

The novels of *Earthsea* represent a paratactic elegy for a loss of continuity and a profound unease in the face of the various fragmentary energies of twentieth century experience. Indeed, the sequence as a whole is only ambiguously that. The very existence of Peter Hollindale's article, 'The Last Dragon of Earthsea', which attempts to establish thematic continuities and resonances between the books, suggests the difficulty of this enterprise. Hollindale writes that it was only in 2002, with the publication of *The Other Wind*, that 'the structure of the first four books... become easily "readable"' (Hollindale 2003, 186). Hollindale's article argues for a reading of the books that would separate the sequence into two trilogies. That Le Guin's works invite such critical endeavours is itself revealing. The books manifest, at best, an occluded and paratactic continuity, one that the reader must step in and supply. As I will demonstrate below, theoretical reflections on parataxis emphasise precisely this active hermeneutic presence on the part of the reader. However, most important for our purposes are the claims that have been made for the utopian potential of parataxis. These claims typically read parataxis as signalling the retreat of the author as a controlling presence in the text.

Thus, Laura Trantham Smith argues that 'parataxis... shifts attention away from the subjectivity of the writer and directs the reader toward finding connections and ultimately critically engaging with systems that organize images and information' (Trantham Smith 2010, 105). Smith goes on to conclude that parataxis 'keeps easy unities at bay' and names authorial subjectivity itself as one those constructions which

parataxis works to problematise (2010, 105). Likewise, David Hayman suggests that in modernist fiction, parataxis is a 'proclamation... of the reader's necessary and active, if sometimes unwilling presence' (1987, 150). Parataxis, then, would appear to signal a recalcitrance on the part of the authorial voice. In this, it is intrinsically bound up with an ecomimetic rhetoric if we consider that ecomimesis attempts a form of automatic writing, or writing without an authorial subject.

Hayman argues that 'the simpler the juxtaposition and the briefer the paratactic elements... the closer we are to the true list from which parataxis seems to borrow traits' (1987, 149). Indeed, Le Guin's prose in *Earthsea* can often be observed digressing into catalogues. Refusing to arrange or order items into syntactical patterns, Le Guin's prose is content, rather, to itemise. This is particularly evident when Le Guin takes the reader into the various huts of witches in the sequence. In, *Tehanu*, a witch's hovel houses a profusion of objects arrayed paratactically:

> The beams hung thick with dried and drying herbs, the fire banked under grey ash with one tiny coal winking like a red eye, a lithe, fat black cat with one white moustache sleeping up on a shelf, and everywhere a profusion of little boxes, pots, ewers, trays, and stoppered bottles, all aromatic, pungent or sweet or strange (Le Guin 1992, 148).

Further, in the opening pages of *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Duny is drawn into his aunt's home with the promise of learning and mastery. The witch's hut is described thus: 'It was low and dusky, windowless, fragrant with herbs that hung drying from the crosspole of the roof, mint and moly and thyme, yarrow and rushwash and paramal, kingsfoil, clovenfoot, tansy and bay' (Le Guin 1994, 4). The list of herbs includes real herbs, such as mint and thyme, herbs taken from myth (moly is given to Odysseus in the *Odyssey* as a prophylaxis against Circe's witchcraft) and plants entirely of Le

Guin's invention such as paramal and rushwash (*Od.* X, 305). The intertextual allusion to Homer signals the rhetorical function of the list. As Francis Spufford observes, lists register the 'absence of any straightforward authorial presence... where would there be room for one, between any element and element?' (Spufford 1989, 4). Benjamin Sammons's analysis of Homeric catalogues reaches a similar conclusion. He suggests that although 'a poet or author may... strike a particularly authoritative, objective or reliable pose by presenting facts in bare form' the list also means that the author 'is least active in other important ways, for example as a storyteller because the catalogue form excludes most of the work normally belonging to a storyteller' (Sammons 2010, 16). Le Guin's list, which makes an explicit intertextual gesture to Homeric compositional practice, can thus be read as a recalcitrance on the part of the author. Again, this is a rhetorical manoeuvre that defines ecomimesis insofar as ecomimesis constructs itself as a form of writing without a subject or an author.

Indeed, the fact that the list alludes to Homeric myth solicits an intertextual reading of the text. The figure of the author offered by theories of intertextuality is one which sees the writer not as a writer/creator but, rather, as one which mediates a tradition of texts. Barthes characterises the text as

> woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages... antecedent or contemporary, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony. The intertextual in which every text is held, it itself being the text-between of another text, is not to be confused with some origin of the text: to try to find the 'sources', the 'influences' of a work, is to fall into the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable (Barthes 1977, 160).

The compromised picture of authorship offered by Barthes is a good analogue of the implied author of ecomimesis, who, as Morton points out, is rendered as a rhapsode or mediator of the environment (2009, 54-55). However, as Morton points out, ecomimesis at once closes the distance between author and environment even as it reasserts the distinction between subject and object.

To demonstrate this, I want to consider a scene early in the pages of *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Ged is brought to the Port of Gont by Ogion. The hustle and bustle of the port is a novel experience for the former shepherd:

> So to Ged who had never been down from the heights of the mountain, the Port of Gont was an awesome and marvellous place, the great houses and towers of cut stone and waterfront of piers and docks and basins and moorages, the seaport where half a hundred boats and galleys rocked at quayside or lay hauled up and overturned for repairs or stood out at anchor in the roadstead with furled sails and closed oarports, the sailor shouting in strange dialects and the longshoremen running heavy-laden amongst barrels and boxes and coils of rope and stacks of oars, the bearded merchants in furred robes conversing quietly as they picked their way along the slimy stones above the water, the fishermen unloading their catch, coopers pounding and shipmakers hammering and clamsellers singing and shipmasters bellowing, and beyond all the silent, shining bay. With eyes and ears and mind bewildered he followed the Harbourmaster to the broad dock where *Shadow* was tied up, and the Harbourmaster brought him to the master of the ship (Le Guin 1994, 33).

Ged's experience at the port is represented in one long paratactic sentence. The length of the sentence is not incidental; the sheer quantity of accumulated clauses means that the final clause is only tangentially connected to the first. This is the essence of the Aeolian mood in which ecomimesis is couched. That is, ecomimesis configures itself as a form of writing without a point of origin or authorship. Here, the long sentence

means that by the time we reach the final clause, it is so distant from the start of the sentence that it is only with difficulty we can establish a relationship with the opening clause. As Morton points out, ecomimesis hesitates between an '*obscure* source and *no* source at all' (2009, 43 emphasis in original). Here, the quantity of clauses tends to obscure the very start or source of the sentence. Arriving at the last clause, we have traveled a long and twisting path from that subject, Ged, to whose impressions those clauses refer. Ecomimesis aspires towards a form of writing without an author, and sensations without a subject. The length of the sentence is performative of that desire.

Moreover, Ged himself is swept up by the paratactic momentum of the paragraph. The second sentence begins, 'with eyes and ears and mind bewildered', as his body and senses are assimilated to the paratactic logic of the port scene. Again, this is an ecomimetic gesture. Parataxis here dissolves the distinction between the subject who views the scene and the scene itself, catching the viewer up in that which he surveys. This paratactic fantasy sponsors ecomimesis. As Morton argues, 'ecological writing keeps insisting that we are "embedded" in nature' (2009, 4). Here, parataxis insists on this embeddedness by refusing to organise Ged's impressions into a hypotactic hierarchy of subject and scene. Rather, it suggests that Ged's eye and ear and mind are simply elements of a list that include all the other constituent parts of Gont port.

Maebh Long offers a suggestive analogy between parataxis and the hyphen, writing, 'like the hyphen, parataxis names a conjoining interruption, as it brings together only to separate, placing clauses side by side... over the abyss of the absent conjunction' (Long 2014, 86). Long's analogy is particularly evocative of Morton's claims for ecomimesis. Like parataxis, ecomimesis wants to have it both ways. That is, ecomimesis brings subject and environment together even as it specifies an abyss

between these two terms. As above, Ged's eyes and ears and mind are assimilated to the parataxis. Thus, Le Guin's prose appears to refuse any distinction between subject and scene. However, eye and ear and mind are precisely those faculties that conspire in the paragraph to offer the reading subject a means to recover himself. That is, pronounced alliteration serves to bind and organise the proliferation of images that the parataxis would otherwise disperse as just so many disconnected fragments. Repeated sounds suggest to the reader a means to organise the disparate and fragmented impressions presented by the long, convoluted sentence. If eye and ear and mind are jumbled up with the environment by parataxis, the same eye and ear and mind, through their capacity to recognise alliteration, reinstall a distinction between subject and scene.

As Kevin Hutchings puts it, ecomimesis is a fantasy which imagines 'the subject as fully immersed in, and therefore as an integral and unalienated part of, the circumambient objectal world' (Hutchings 2008, sixth paragraph). As I have shown, Le Guin's parataxis aspires to an unalienated relationship between subject and world by dissolving the evidence of its authorship. However, even as it suggests that self and environment have dissolved into one another, Le Guin's parataxis nonetheless preserves a difference between these two terms.

Conclusion

In 'Science Fiction and Mrs. Brown', Le Guin asks the following:

> What good are all the objects in the world, if there is no subject? It isn't that mankind is all that important. I don't think Man is the measure of all things, or even of very many things. I don't think Man is the end or culmination of anything, and certainly not the center of anything ... All I know is that we are here, and that we are aware of the fact, and that it behooves us to

> be aware — to pay heed. For we are not objects. That is essential. We are subjects, and whoever among us treats us as objects is acting inhumanly, wrongly, against nature. And with us, nature, the great Object, its tirelessly burning suns, its turning galaxies and planets, its rocks, seas, fish and ferns and fir trees and little furry animals, all have become, also, subjects. As we are part of them, so they are part of us. Bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. We are their consciousness. If we stop looking, the world goes blind (1989e, 99-100).

The somewhat tortured thinking of Le Guin's pronouncement here has motivated my reading of her *Earthsea* books. Indeed, this quotation is exemplary of the kind of ecomimesis I have attempted to articulate and, further, problematise in the course of this chapter. On the one hand, the claim that objects are 'bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh' is consonant with the ecomimetic aspiration to dissolve the subject into the object. This kind of thinking deals summarily with that familiar antagonist of ecological thought, philosophical dualism. Indeed, in the above, Le Guin is more than happy to substitute description for argument in making her point. Chaining together clauses in apposition ('And with us, nature, the great Object, its tirelessly burning suns, its turning galaxies and planets...'), Le Guin's prose refuses to entertain any ontological hierarchy between the entities of each clause because it refuses to entertain a syntactic hierarchy. Much as this sentence refuses to subordinate its clauses, Le Guin's prose seems to be saying, the universe does not order its elements hierarchically. By the end of this sentence, Le Guin can conclude that the sun and all the little furry animals have also become 'subjects'. This conclusion is not, however, reached by argument but is pressed home by description.

If, on the one hand, Le Guin suggests an equivalence between human and non-human, on the other, she is clearly uncomfortable with the idea that there is no ontological distinction between humans and the rest of creation. As she asks, 'What

good are all the objects in the world, if there is no subject?' Thus, although Le Guin gestures towards the dissolution of subject and object, she nonetheless preserves this difference on balance. In the course of this chapter, I have suggested that this kind of 'both/and' thinking surfaces in Le Guin's *Earthsea* books in ekphrasis, parataxis and compound epithets. Further, I have suggested that these rhetorical devices not only appear to effect the dissolution of the subject. They are also, in fact, those rhetorical devices that sustain the idea of nature. By bringing critical pressure to bear on these conceits, I have suggested that these conceits are haunted by an absence that they work to conceal. This absence is the 'nature' to which parataxis, ekphrasis, compound epithets claim to refer.

Cartography and Ecomimesis in Children's Books

Chapter One invoked Timothy Morton's concept of 'ecomimesis' to effect a critique of Le Guin's rhetoric in *Earthsea*. The second half of that chapter drew in particular upon Morton's articulation of the Aeolian character of ecomimetic rhetoric, that is, the active occlusion of origins or sources by a work of art. This chapter will add to the range of rhetorical devices and conceits identified in chapter one as exemplary of ecomimesis. It will argue that Le Guin's paratextual maps contribute to the ecomimetic tenor of her work. Chapter One, even as it engaged in a project of critique, signalled a refusal to reduce Le Guin's writing to an act of ideological mystification. It attempted to obviate such reductionism by documenting the philosophical and literary context which framed Le Guin's writing, and in which her work intervenes. Johns-Putra argues for the necessity of understanding the generic conventions that inscribe limits to what can be thought and written about the nonhuman:

> As soon as I seek to tell of the environment, of its rocks or otherwise, I rely on conventions with which to do this telling. In order to gain an immediate understanding from my listener or reader, I am aware of, and respond to, his or her existing expectations about rocks, and I depend on his or her prior understanding of other rocks (2010, 746).

Ecocriticism is, in part, the critique of these conventions and the limitations they place on our ability to conceptualise the nonhuman. This chapter thus explores the cartographic conventions that inform Le Guin's aesthetic. In arguing that Le Guin's maps contribute to the ecomimetic rhetoric of her work, this chapter will also evoke the traditions of literary cartography and medieval *mappaemundi* that, it will be demonstrated, inform her own cartographic imagination.

The chapter begins by briefly documenting the history of maps included with works of fiction and by introducing the critical debates that these maps have fostered. Proceeding to a discussion of cartographic toponymy, I argue that the epistemology that informs place-names on maps anticipates both the shape of Le Guin's prose and the philosophy of naming thematised in her narratives. Following sections will suggest that many maps in children's literature draw on the visual conventions of medieval *mappaemundi* to suggest the 'embeddedness' of the subject in the world. The embedded subject cultivated by medieval cartography is consonant, it will be argued, with the tenor of ecomimesis. In a discussion of the omission of lines of longitude and latitude in maps included with children's books, I connect the rhetoric of embeddedness sustained by medieval cartography with the persistence of a Lockean paradigm in children's literature which insists on the child's immediate, unmediated contact with nature. Having established the origins of maps included with books for children in the tradition of medieval *mappaemundi* and suggested a consonance between the embeddedness of the medieval religious subject in his world and the ecological rhetoric of Le Guin's text, the chapter proceeds to articulate the Aeolian rhetoric of children's literary cartography. Focusing on the fundamental units of maps, that is, lines and forms, as well as the publication histories of Le Guin's map and that of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, I argue that maps efface their own origins. In so eliding their own genesis, maps included with children's fiction contribute to the sense of a work that figures the artist as mediator, and not creator.

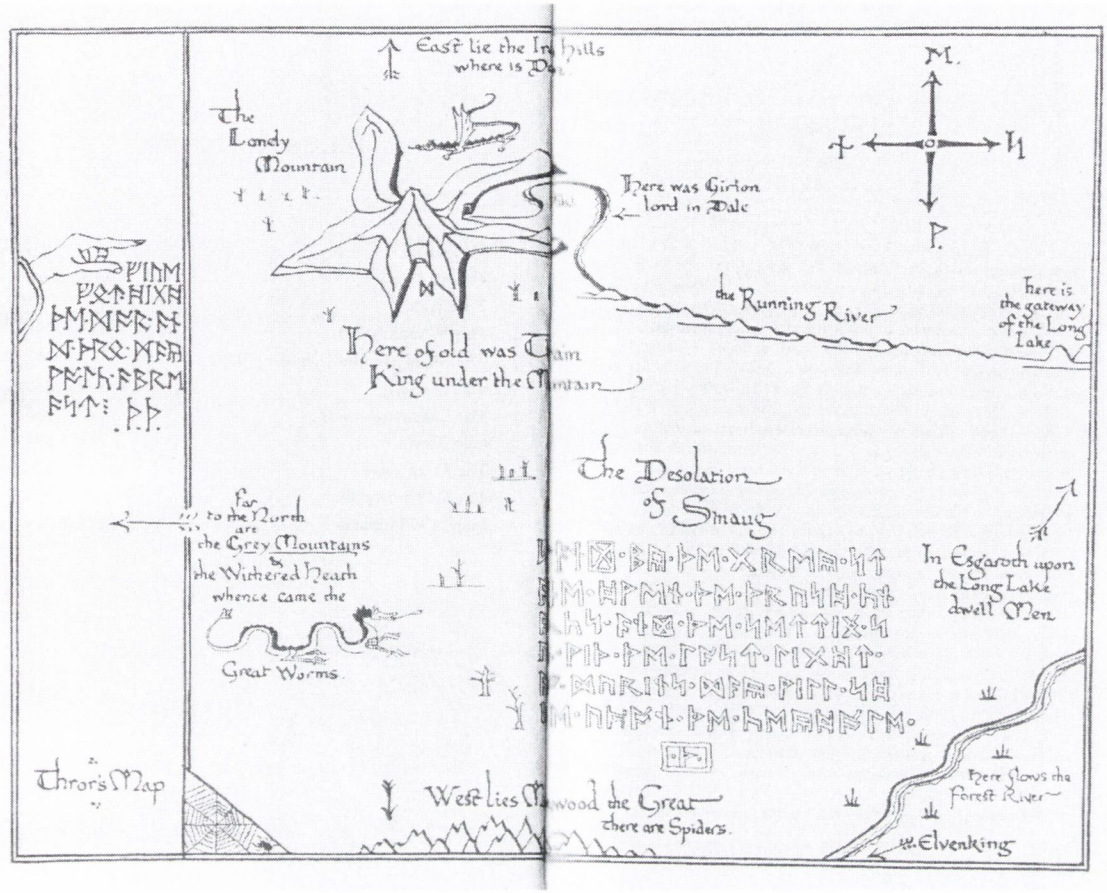


Figure 1: 'Thror's Map' from *The Hobbit*, first published in 1937. (Tolkien 1996, x-xi).

Farah Mendlesohn suggests that it was Tolkien who 'set the trend for maps and prehistory', thereby 'establishing a pattern for the quest narrative in which the portal is not encoded solely in the travelogue of what lies ahead, but in the insistence that there is past and place *behind*' (Mendleson 2008, 14; emphasis in the original). If Tolkien set the trend for the incorporation of maps in fantastic literature for children, he was by no means the first to include a map with a work of fiction. The map included with Thomas More's 1516 *Utopia* is important insofar as it establishes a precedent for the mapping of an imaginary, literary space.



Figure 2: Woodcut from the first edition of *Utopia*, published 1516 (More 2008, 130-131).

Further, as Eric Bulson observes, 'the editors for the third edition of *Don Quixote* superimposed a squiggly line over a map of Spain to indicate the direction of Don Quixote' (Bulson 2006, 20). A rudimentary map was also included with the fourth edition of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719. More, de Cervantes and Defoe constitute three important precursors for the explosion of literary cartography in the twentieth century. Of these three, this chapter will focus on Defoe's map as the most important literary precedent for Le Guin's own cartographic imagination. This is

because *Robinson Crusoe*, more so than either *Utopia* or *Don Quixote*, has been appropriated to the canon of literature for children.[1]

Critical treatment of maps in literature has tended to be overwhelming functionalist. The extant literature has focused in particular on how literary cartographies alternately contribute to and problematise the mimetic function of the narrative. Christina Ljunberg's essay is representative of this mode of enquiry. She argues that maps

> appear in literary texts as strategic visual devices that not only supply readers with a referential guide to the text, assisting their movement within its fictional space, but also draw attention to the representational problem posed by both geographical and fictional space (Ljunberg 2003, 159).

Other scholars, wary of what they understand as contemporary cartography's implication in a tradition of Enlightenment rationalism, have argued that literary maps are complicit in maintaining regimes of power. Peta Mitchell thus argues that 'knowledge in the Enlightenment tradition is represented metaphorically as a territory that can be unproblematically encompassed, mapped and viewed empirically' (Mitchell 2011, 2). Further, for Mitchell, cartography encodes the 'rational surface of Euclidean space' that perpetuates a violent erasure of 'barborous topology' (2011, 44). Postmodern literary cartographies have, on Mitchell's argument, devoted themselves to the interrogation of the rationalist principles that underlie cartography. Similarly, Graham Huggan is suspicious of the reductionism implicit to cartography

[1] Obviously, *Robinson Crusoe* was not conceived by Defoe as a work of children's fiction. For a consideration of the novel's complicated evolution into a children's classic, see David Fishelov's article, 'Dialogues with Great Books: With Some Serious Reflections on Robinson Crusoe' (Fishelov 2008, 344) and Thomas Keymer's introduction to the 2007 Oxford University Press edition of the text (Keymer 2007, ix). Melissa Free suggests that it was Rousseau's *Emile* that was the chief contributor to *Robinson Crusoe*'s eventual place in the canon of children's literature (Free 2006, 107).

and understands mapping as fundamental to colonial discourse. Postcolonial literary maps, argues Huggan, explore and interrogate the implication of cartography in the colonial project: 'The metaphoric function of maps in literature is addressed first and foremost to the issue of how the land is *controlled*' (Huggan 1994, 31; emphasis in the original).

Important as these critical interventions have been, no articulation of literary maps as forms of specifically environmental rhetoric has yet been offered. The maps included with children's literature constitute a potentially fruitful research object in that critics have tended to consider them as contributory to a sense of place. Peter Hunt, although he claims that his argument exclusively pertains to English fantasy, writes that 'not only do the complex layers of history embedded... in the landscape enrich the texture of the stories, but the meaning of the landscapes themselves provide a subtext for the journeys: places *mean*' (Hunt 1987, 11; emphasis in original). Contributing to this evocation of meaningful places in children's literature are those maps included as paratexts. As Hunt writes, maps 'stabilize the fantasy, while releasing greater imaginative potential... they also symbolize the tension that exists for the writer between the real landscape and the fantasy which inhabits it' (1987, 11).

Maps in children's literature are thus, on Hunt's view, fundamental to the celebrated sense of place in that body of literature. Anne Lundin extolls the geographic imagination of children's literature writing, 'children's books are the site of adult re-creation of an earlier geography' (Lundin 2004, 116). With the flowering of environmental literary criticism, critics of children's literature have seized upon this consensus that it is a genre with a unique attachment to place to suggest that children's literature is capable of nurturing an 'ecological' sensibility. Catherine Posey thus argues that 'many works of children's literature engage with the multi-

faceted connection between humans and the environment by situating characters within the beauty of the natural world' (Posey 2011, 95). The connection between human and environment in children's literature posited by Posey promises to foster 'conversations' with young readers which 'might focus on issues relating to care and appreciation for the earth as well as young readers' spirituality and their perceptions of the natural world' (2011, 95).

In extrapolating assumptions from this summary of the extant literature concerning maps in children's literature, we arrive at the position to be interrogated in this chapter. These assumptions might be rendered as follows: children's literature is uniquely concerned with a sense of place; this sense of place can contribute to an 'ecological' sensibility; maps in children's literature contribute to a sense of place and, therefore, nurture 'environmental' sensitivity. Building on the argument of chapter one that ecological rhetoric is invested in sustaining a concept of embeddedness in place, this chapter will thus articulate how maps are implicated in the ecomimetic rhetoric of Le Guin's texts. Further, it will articulate the contradictions implicit in the rhetoric of embeddedness in place to which literary maps contribute.

J.B. Harley insists that cartographic analysis must proceed from the awareness that all maps are intertextual. He argues that a 'major interpretative question to be asked of any map concerns its relationship to other maps' (Harley 2001, 41). This interpretative question informs the methodology of this chapter. I establish a dialogue between Le Guin's maps and others included in important children's texts. Prefacing much critical reflection on the nature of cartography in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century is an emphasis on the necessary partiality of maps. Christian Jacob, for instance, writes that 'every map selects its object and rejects anything that

draws attention away from the essential' and suggests further that a 'map thus constantly requires choices, exclusions, movements, equivalences inside classes of permutable objects' (Jacob 2006, 23). Indeed, this necessary partiality is the subject of Jorge Luis Borges's satire in the vignette, 'On Exactitude in Science' whose brevity admits quotation in full:

> ... In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers' Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography.
>
> Suárez Miranda, Viajes de varones prudentes, Libro IV, Cap. XLV, Lérida, 1658 (Borges 1999, 325).

This chapter thus shares something with the cartographer himself insofar as the texts selected for discussion necessarily require the omission of perhaps equally pertinent fictions. Le Guin's maps, and in particular her first, large map of Earthsea form the focal point of what follows. I establish a dialogue between Le Guin's maps and others included in books for children, as well as the tradition of medieval *mappaemundi*. The texts I have selected for analysis range across both genre and history. I consider maps included with fantasies, historical fiction and adventure novels, from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* to Michael Scott's *De Dannan Tales*. In the main, however, I have

reserved extended analysis for those texts in which cartography is constructed as more than just an ornament or generic convention. As I document below, Le Guin's work is paradigmatic in constructing cartography as a governing presence in her narratives.

The other texts discussed below were chosen on the basis that they evidenced a similarly intimate relationship between literary geography and cartography. Thus, an account is offered of the importance of map-making to the genesis of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and I consider scenes of map-making as described in Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons*. Texts such as Rosemary Sutcliff's *Outcast*, which include a map as paratext but do not engage with cartography either in their genesis or in the course of their narrative, receive more cursory mention. However, it must be admitted that the selection of texts here adumbrated is necessarily subject to confirmation bias. Again, this is a flaw which can be attributed to the act of map-making itself. Indeed, it is a shortcoming without which the mapping of a terrain, either geographical or literary, cannot proceed, as Borges's short fiction makes clear.

Toponymy

Jacob suggests that there is a fundamental homology between lists and cartographic place names, going so far as to claim that 'toponymy is a list spread out over a space of representation' (2006, 229). As noted in chapter one Hayman posits a connection between novelistic parataxis and the list form (1987, 149). Le Guin's map, which she saturates with place-names, thus anticipates the paratactic organisation of her prose.

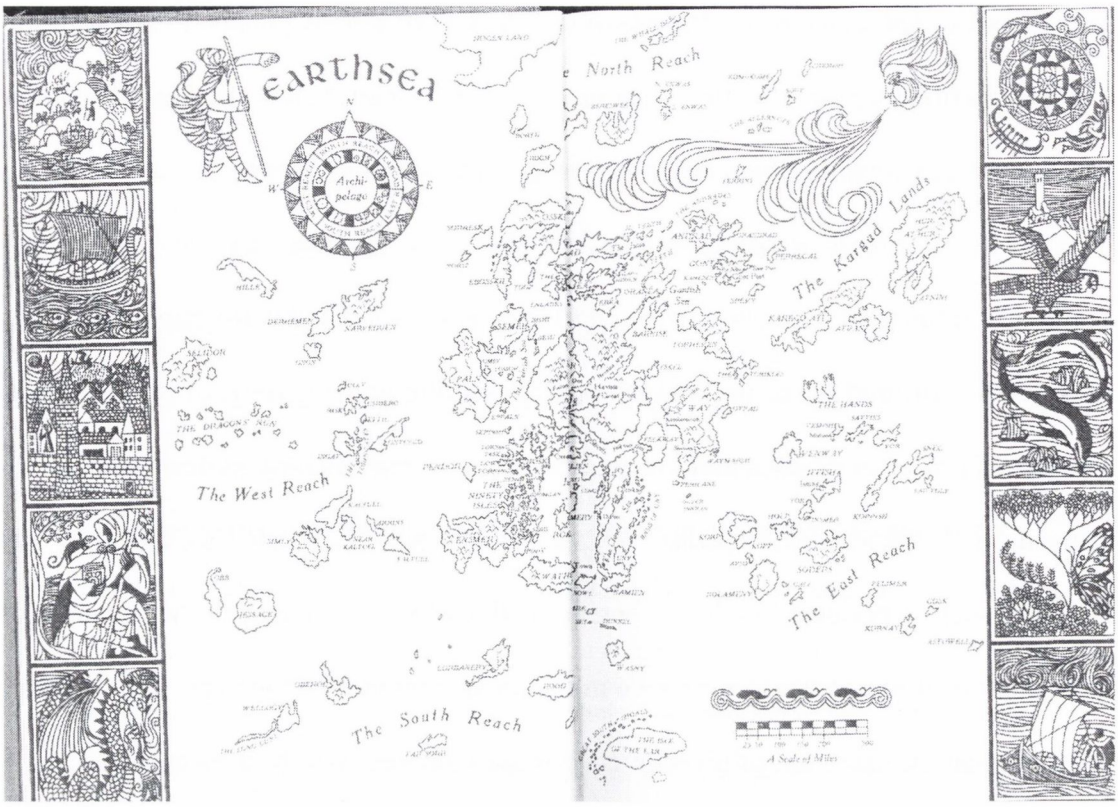


Figure 3: 'Earthsea', published in the 1968 edition of *A Wizard of Earthsea* (Le Guin 1968, 8-9).

The connection between cartographic toponymy and lists is suggested early in *A Wizard of Earthsea*. On Roke, Ged is sent to study with the Master Namer. Here, apprentice wizards spend their time memorising lists of names and the places to which they pertain:

> No farm or dwelling lay within miles of the Tower. Grim it stood above the northern cliffs, grey were the clouds over the seas of winter, endless the lists and ranks and rounds of names that the Namer's eight pupils must learn. Amongst them in the Tower's high room Kurremkarmerruk sat on a high seat, writing down lists of names that must be learned before the ink faded at midnight leaving the parchment blank again. It was cold and half-dark and always silent there except for the scratching of the Master's pen and the sighing, maybe, of a student who must learn before midnight the name of every cape, point, bay, sound, inlet,

> channel, harbor, shallows, reef and rock of the shores of Lossow, a little islet of the Pelnish Sea. If the student complained the Master might say nothing, but lengthen the list; or he might say, "He who would be Seamaster must know the true name of every drop of water in the sea." (Le Guin 1994, 58-59).

Ged commits lists of place-names to memory in an act of mental cartography, thus confirming the association between cartography and the list form. If Le Guin's toponyms, in their association with lists, anticipate the paratactic organisation of her prose, cartographic toponymy also foreshadows the assumptions that inform the construction of names in the *Earthsea* texts.

Jacob points to the coincidence between language and landscape, signifier and signified that names on maps construct (2006, 201). Written on the landforms to which they refer, toponyms appear to serve as natural signs. Or, as Jacob puts it, 'with the toponym, the space of representation and the space represented are identical' (2006, 203). The natural sign is one that enjoys a necessary relationship with what it denotes. As Hazard Adams explains, the concept of the natural sign refers to 'the idea that a word has a fixed, unambiguous relation to a denoted object' (Adams 2000, 45). Thus, the natural sign is opposed to the arbitrary sign of post-Saussurean semiotics. In Chapter One, I argued that Le Guin's motivated names constituted a form of ecomimesis. I suggested that instead of giving us more or less contingent representations of the thing they name, motivated names appear to offer the thing itself. In this section, I will expose cartographic toponymy to the same critical pressure. Indeed, it might be argued that Le Guin's thematic emphasis on naming is conditioned from the first by cartography. The map of Earthsea, and the natural signs which it harbours, comes before any narrative. As such, it can be read as a precedent for the way the act of naming is constructed in the text that follows. Le Guin's map,

then, prefigures not only the landscape through which the reader will journey, it also anticipates and to an extent determines the understanding of language and onomastics that informs the narrative.

Further, on Le Guin's map of *Earthsea*, not only do the place names adhere to the landforms they denote, collective nouns follow the contours of the geographies they designate. Thus, 'The Kargad Lands' and 'The Andrades' in the northeast of the map, 'The Toringates' in the West, 'The Whale Isles' in the north and 'The Great South Shoals' in the south of the map also deviate from the horizontal axis to skirt the shapes of the landscapes they name. In so deviating, the names become icons. Deriving from the Greek *eikon* meaning 'likeness' or 'image', 'icon' is defined by Chris Baldick as a 'sign that stands for its object mainly by resembling or sharing some features (e.g. shape) with it' (2001, 120). This iconic relationship between noun and denominated is fundamentally ecomimetic. Ecomimesis, as argued throughout, is a species of rhetoric which attempts eschew any signs of arbitrariness in representation. It promises a natural or 'one-to-one' correspondence between writing and nature. Le Guin's toponyms occupy the same axes as that which they denote. They thereby suggest a relationship with geography grounded in and sponsored by the very profiles of nature itself.

Further, Le Guin's map encourages the reader to turn and reorient the page in order to read the place names. This act of reorientation has proven particularly attractive to ecophenomenological attempts to repair the supposed split between subject and object. Edward Casey takes the example of portolan or coastal charts, writing, 'whereas the reading of modern maps presumes a fixed position on the part of the viewer — just beneath its lower (and typically "southern") edge — no such cartographic Archimedan point is provided by portolan charts' (Casey 2002, 178). Le

Guin's map, like the portolan charts Casey analyses, appears to foreclose on any external readerly position. Turning the chart to read the landscapes and the toponyms that name them, readers are required to dispose themselves so as to meet the demands of the space represented. Thus, unlike the Archimedan readerly position that Casey suggests characterises maps from the seventeenth century on, Le Guin's maps appear to embed readers in the landscapes represented on the map. The embeddededness of the subject in the landscape is characteristic of ecomimesis.

Ecomimesis, however, cannot sustain the fantasy of a language completely determined by or immersed in nature. That these iconic contours are reserved for collective nouns is suggestive. The collective nouns aggregate discrete landforms into groupings established by history and convention. In contrast to the toponyms that refer only to individual islands, common nouns refer less to units of geography and more to the human tradition of grouping landforms into clusters. By so following the contours of the geographies they nominate, these collective nouns anxiously conceal their motivation by convention and history. In other words, the implicit claim made by Le Guin's toponymy to be natural signs becomes most pronounced in those very regions that would most trouble that claim.

Ecomimesis, even as it appears to offer us the thing itself and not a representation of the thing, cannot help but disclose its status as a species of aesthetics. As Jacob observes, 'one of the paradoxes of toponymical nomenclature... means occupying a position — even if infinitesimal — of the space that it claims to name' (2006, 202). In thus collapsing the 'space of representation and the space represented', Le Guin's cartographic toponyms achieve two contradictory effects (Jacob 2006, 203). On the one hand, toponyms appear as motivated or natural signs. On the other hand, however, toponyms actively obscure that which they denote. This

contradiction is the very same which animates ecomimesis. Morton thus argues that 'at the very moment at which writing seems to be dissolving in the face of the compelling reality it is describing, writing overwhelms what it is depicting and makes it impossible to find anything behind its opaque texture' (2009, 19).

Le Guin's cartographic toponyms thus anticipate the rhetoric of her prose in two important and related respects. In the first instance, cartographic toponymy approximates the paratactic coordinating conjunctions of Le Guin's prose. Secondly, the place names on Le Guin's map of Earthsea are motivated names. In this, they prefigure the construction of True Names as natural signs as discussed in Chapter One. Both features of toponymy contribute to a rhetoric of ecomimesis. The next section will elaborate on the panoply of visual tropes employed by Le Guin's maps to sustain this rhetoric. It will argue that Le Guin's map draws on the genre of medieval *mappaemundi* to sponsor ecomimesis.

The Ecomimetic Gaze

Peta Mitchell juxtaposes medieval maps with those that followed innovations in visual apparatuses in the Renaissance. Lacking frames and scales, medieval maps, argues Mitchell, do not turn on an external Archimedean perspective. Instead, medieval maps exemplify the ""absorption" of the medieval subject into the religious medieval world-space' (Mitchell 2011, 41). By contrast, later maps, which incorporated the early fifteenth-century discoveries of scale and linear perspective, sunder the viewing subject from the world (Mitchell 2011, 42). Or, in Mitchell's words, these advances in visual representation posited a 'fixed, objective, and exterior viewpoint' (2011, 42). This section will argue that Le Guin's maps draw on the visual conventions of medieval *mappaemundi* to suggest the absorption of the cartographic

subject in a world-space. However, if Le Guin draws on the visual lexicon of medieval maps, this is not to suggest that she appropriates the religious world-view that was its original matrix. Rather, it is the argument of what follows that Le Guin's map employs these conventions to suggest the kind of ecological embeddedness that characterises ecomimesis.



Figure 4: The Hereford *mappamundi*, c. 1300. East located at the top of map. Currently on display at Hereford Cathedral.

Mitchell's is a familiar narrative insofar as it traces a disenchantment of space with the advent of scientific modernity. His argument results in an absolute distinction

between the cartographic space of medieval *mappaemundi* and those that deploy the innovations of scale and linear perspective. The former is sponsored by the absorption of the religious cartographic subject, the latter trades on a disenchanted and putatively scientific observer. The secular subject of ecomimesis, by contrast, cannot appeal to such rigid epistemological and existential certainties. Or, as Morton puts it,

> even as it establishes a middle ground 'in between' terms such as subject and object, or inside and outside, nature without fail excludes certain terms, thus reproducing the difference between inside and outside in other ways. Just when it brings us into proximity with the nonhuman 'other,' nature re-establishes a comfortable distance between 'us' and 'them' (2009, 19).

Put in cartographic terms, ecomimesis suggests the absorption of the viewing subject by the space of representation even as it maintains him or her in a position exterior to the cartographic plane.

To substantiate this claim, I want to begin by considering the wind-head on the Parnassus 1968 and Puffin versions of Le Guin's map of Earthsea. The wind-head is ambiguously situated. Jacob details the ambiguity of wind-heads thus: 'Their positions, like their meaning, are paradoxical, remaining both within the image and yet outside, since they are its spectators. What are they looking at? The world, or its image?' (Jacob 2006, 112). Le Guin's wind-head is thus possessed of a curiously stereoscopic vision; it looks both downwards at the landscape it shapes and outwards to confront the viewer's gaze. The viewer is subjected to the gaze of the map as much as the map is subjected to the gaze of the viewer. It is tempting, then, to consider the wind-head as an intermediary between the viewer situated outside the map, and the geographical realities depicted inside the map. However, it is equally possible to read

the wind-head as another representational 'level' interposed between the viewer and the map, much as the compass rose interposes itself between the wizard figure and the landscape. As such, the wind-head marks a non-negotiable distance between the map viewer and the reality depicted on the cartographic space. The figure paradoxically invites the viewer into the cartographic reality and situates her definitively outside of that same geographic space.

Jerry Brotton offers a succinct analysis of the kind of perspective solicited by the wind-head; 'the viewer is positioned simultaneously inside *and* outside (the map). In the act of locating themselves on it, the viewer is at the same moment imaginatively rising above (and outside) it in a transcendent moment of contemplation' (Brotton 2012, 9; emphasis in the original). Brotton further concludes that 'if the map offers its viewer an answer to the enduring existential question "Where am I?", it does so through a magical splitting which situates him or her in two places at the same time' (2012, 10). The magical splitting which Brotton details is precisely that which sponsors ecomimetic rhetoric. As above, ecomimesis turns on the suggestion that we are somehow embedded in nature. However, even as it attempts to dissolve the distinction between subject and object, or inside and outside, ecomimesis reinstalls a distance between these two terms. The split viewing subject suggested by Le Guin's wind-heads is thus an exemplary effect of a visual rhetoric of ecomimesis.

This visual rhetoric of ecomimesis is one that characterises many of the maps included with celebrated children's books. By placing Le Guin's maps in dialogue with these other texts, I hope to demonstrate that the author's investment in ecomimesis is at least in part attributable to generic conventions. This dialogue will also help to situate Le Guin's maps in a tradition of literary cartography informed by medieval *mappaemundi*. Thus, maps in children's literature are replete with devices

that effect a fragmentation of the cartographic gaze. Steven Spurrier's map of Wild Cat Island included with Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* also represents a wind-head (Ransome 2012, sixth opening). Like Le Guin's, Spurrier's wind-head appears to possess material efficacy as it is shown blowing a small boat across the cartographic space. Like Le Guin's, it too meets the gaze of the reader.

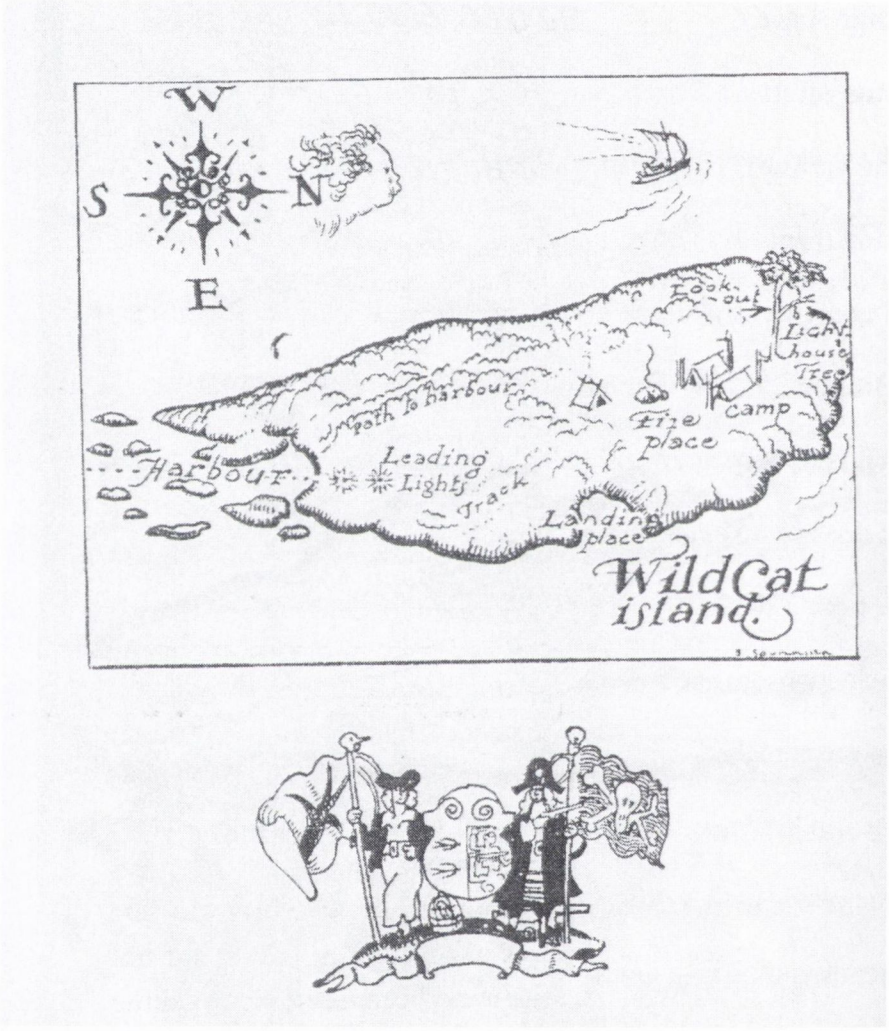


Figure 5: 'Wild Cat Island', by Steven Spurrier. Printed in 1930 in *Swallows and Amazons* by Arthur Ransome (Ransome 2012, sixth opening).

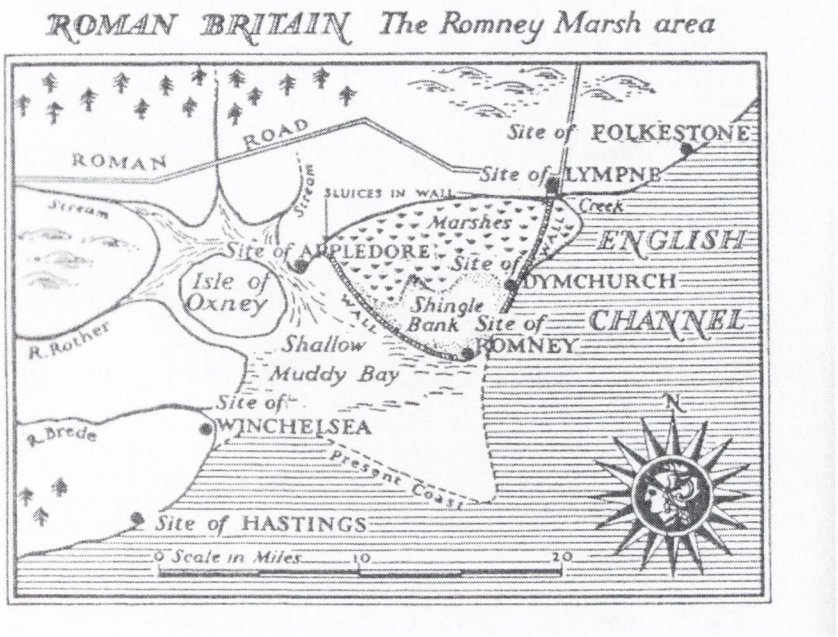


Figure 6: Map included with Rosemary Sutcliff's *Outcast*, first published 1955 (Sutcliff 1998, third opening).

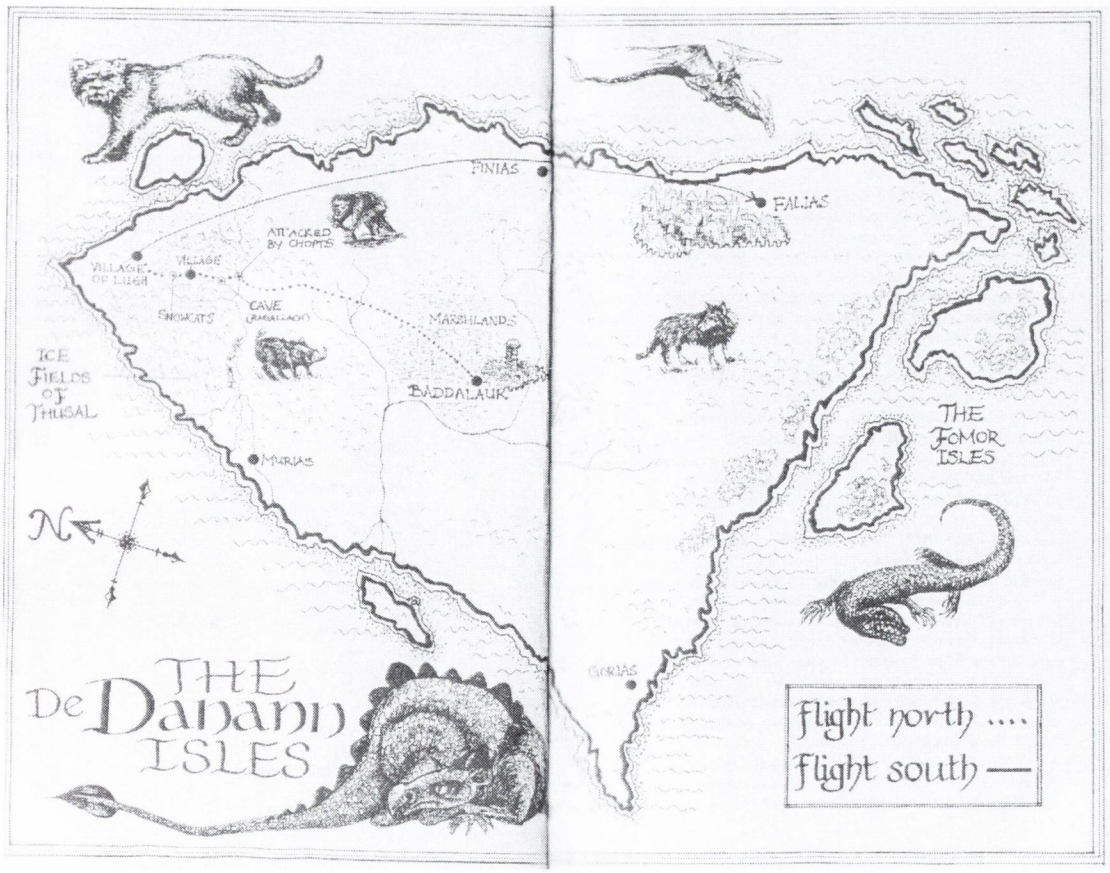


Figure 7: Aileen Caffrey's map for *Earthlord*, by Michael Scott (1992, 4-5). Map first printed in 1991 for Scott's *Windlord*.

In the map accompanying Rosemary Sutcliff's historical fiction *Outcast*, a Grecian bust is placed in the centre of the compass rose (Sutcliff 1998, third opening). Like the wind-head on Le Guin's map, it too looks both down at the landscape and out to confront the gaze of the viewer.

Larger than their animal counterparts on the interior of the island, the monstrous figures on Aileen Caffrey's map which accompanies Michael Scott's *De Dannan Tales* books appear to occupy an ambiguous foreground which lies in threatening proximity to the viewer (Scott 1992, 4-5). The dragons, lizard and wild-cat protrude from the geographical reality of the map and threaten to occupy the reader's position. Further, as above, monstrous iconography contests and complicates the cartographic gaze. On the northwest corner of the map, for instance, the sabre-toothed cat ignores the landscape and confronts the viewer's gaze directly. The lizard in the west looks out at the viewer too as it appears to prepare to prowl through the cartographic frame to whatever lies outside. In the west at the bottom of the map, the dragon ignores both the landscape and the viewer entirely and focuses its attention instead on the title of the map. In this, it claims authority not so much over the geography represented by the map, but rather asserts its sovereignty over the map itself.

The iconography of Caffrey's map threateningly protrudes into a reality external to that mapped on the cartographic plane. Brotton suggests that cartography subjects the viewing subject to a fragmentary logic in which the viewer is both 'inside' and 'outside' the map (2012, 9). On the *De Dannan Tales* maps, this confusion of inside and outside is given a threatening twist as cartographic representation itself appears to intrude on a reality external to it. This survey of maps included with children's literature and the analysis of their visual rhetoric is hardly

exhaustive. However, it does begin to suggest that if Le Guin's maps are invested in ecomimesis, this is in part informed by the visual vocabulary of the genre. This vocabulary is one which emphasises the embeddedness of a subject in a world, even as it appears to reinstall the distinction between inside and outside, or subject and object. As Mitchell points out, medieval maps turned on precisely this presumption of absorption of the subject in the world (2011, 41). In what follows, I suggest that *mappaemundi* furnish Le Guin's maps in particular and children's literary maps in general with visual traditions that define the genre of many maps included with children's books. Moreover, these traditions, it will be argued, fund the ecomimetic rhetoric of Le Guin's maps.

Clearly, the sheer diversity and number of maps included with children's books frustrates any impulse to identify any one point in the history of cartography to which all such literary cartographies might refer. With that obvious but necessary qualification in mind, I do, however, want to suggest that maps in children's literature share a number of functional and aesthetic principles with *mappaemundi*. This contiguity between *mappaemundi* and the literary cartographies of children's literature can in part be explained by reference to genre. Although maps are included with books for children across the spectrum of genres, they are associated most with the fantasy tradition. Fantasy, as numerous scholars of the form have noted, historically cultivated a medievalism as a form of reaction against modernity. Thus, C.N. Manlove argues that nineteenth-century fantasy should be understood as part of the Romantic tradition. Authors of fantasy in the nineteenth century, Manlove argues, 'looked to the past, and particularly to an imagined medieval past for an alternative society' (Manlove 1983, 10). As Manlove points out, this medievalism was sustained by twentieth-century fantasy literature (1983, 10). Further, Farah Mendlesohn and

Edward James suggest an affinity between fantasy literature and the medieval trappings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. They argue,

> the movement which most contributed to the look and feel of the kind of fantasy that would dominate in bookshops in the later twentieth century was the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. As its name suggest, the Brotherhood was devoted to 'restoring' the supposed ideals of medieval craftsmanship (before Raphael), and in the process provide a visual response to the much broader cult of the medieval which flowered in northern Europe in the nineteenth century (James and Mendlesohn 2012, 20).

Thus, at least in the case of fantasy, the contiguity between medieval *mappaemundi* and literary cartography is unsurprising. If maps in children's books gesture back to that earlier tradition of cartography, this can be understood as part of the generic reaction against modernity traced by Manlove, Mendlesohn and James. However, it is the argument of what follows that the visual conventions which maps in children's books appropriate from *mappaemundi* also contribute to the celebrated sense of place in that body of literature.

Mappaemundi and Ecomimesis

David Woodward calls *mappaemundi* a 'genre of world maps or map-paintings originating in the classical tradition but adopted by the Christian church' (Woodward 1987, 286). *Mappaemundi* form a 'reasonably coherent group' and were created in the period from 'about the fifth to the fifteenth century after Christ' (Woodward 1987, 286). Maps in children's literature adopt a number of visual and cartographic conventions from *mappaemundi*.

Most prosaically, *mappaemundi*, like the literary cartographies of children's books, are animated by their paratextual situation in a book. Woodward observes that although, particularly in the later Middle Ages, 'large and detailed *mappaemundi*' were 'conceived and drawn as independent documents', the 'vast majority of the maps that survive were produced as ipso facto book illustrations' (Woodward 1987, 286). As Juergen Schulz notes, 'by the Early Middle Ages, a comprehensive, albeit much simplified world map seemed a necessary part of any comprehensive history' (Schulz 1978, 447). The function of *mappaemundi* in these comprehensive history books parallels that of maps in children's literature. Jacob suggests that literary maps 'help the reader imagine the events of the narrative within their topographical framework' (2006, 285). *Mappaemundi* served a similar function; 'in the late Middle Ages of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there was a tendency to place maps on the first or second page of a codex, which may reflect the growing importance of maps in giving the readers an overview of the text' (Woodward 1987, 186). Both *mappaemundi* and maps in children's books thus function to provide a synoptic image of information furnished by the accompanying text and to aid the reader in situating that information geographically.

The paratextual relationship between map and narrative in children's literature, one that they share with *mappaemundi*, sponsors a rhetoric of ecomimesis. Gerard Genette, in his seminal study of paratexts, draws on an environmental vocabulary to characterise the relationship between narrative and paratext:

> Although we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text, in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption in the form... of a book (Genette 1997, 1, emphasis in the original).

The paratext constitutes a circumambient dimension for the narrative much as nature writing figures various landscapes and ecologies as environing human subjects. This sense of environment or ambience is fundamental to ecomimesis. Chapter One pointed to the circumambient quality of ecomimesis, that is, its tendency to evoke surroundings and a sense of environing space. As observed in chapter one, Morton specifically points to paratexts as contributory to the ambient rhetoric of ecomimesis (2009, 34). The paratextual location of maps in children's books thus evokes that sense of an environing dimension on which ecomimesis trades.

Further, as Genette points out, paratexts limn the narrative as points of transition between textual and extratextual reality. Genette writes that the paratext is an ""undefined zone" between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text)' (1997, 2). The paratextual site is that of a threshold or liminal dimension. It is precisely this sense of both/and or 'inbetweenness' that ecomimesis attempts to convey. As argued in Chapter One, ecomimesis is committed to the idea that the Cartesian distinction between subject and object is at the root of environmental crisis. To suture this split, nature writing offers various permutations of a medium, in the specific sense of a substance or dimension that intervenes between these two supposedly polar terms. Or, as Morton puts it, 'subject-object dualism depends upon a distinction between inside and outside. The subject is "this," "over here," inside; the object is "that," "over there," "outside" (2009, 64). Paratexts, as a threshold space intervening between inside and outside the text thus share with ecomimetic rhetoric a concern to evoke an in-between space or medium. Situated at a point of transition between inside and outside, maps included in

books for children trade on their paratextual site to suggest a dimension of 'in-betweenness' consonant with that articulated by Morton. The paratextual situation of maps in children's books has the similar positioning of medieval *mappaemundi* as its clearest antecedent.

There are more explicit suggestions that maps in children's literature are informed by the visual and epistemological conventions of *mappaemundi*. A small but nonetheless suggestive number of maps included with children's books locate east, and not north, at the top of the map. Steven Spurrier's map which accompanies Arthur Ransome's *Swallow and Amazons* is oriented with east as the top of the map (Ransome 2012, fifth opening). Other examples of easterly oriented maps include Aileen Caffrey's maps that accompany with Michael Scott's *Windlord, Earthlord, Firelord* (Scott 1991; 1992; 1994), J.R.R. Tolkien's map drawn for *The Hobbit* (Tolkien 1996, x-xi), and that which accompanies Richard Adams's *Watership Down* (Adams 1978, 12-13).

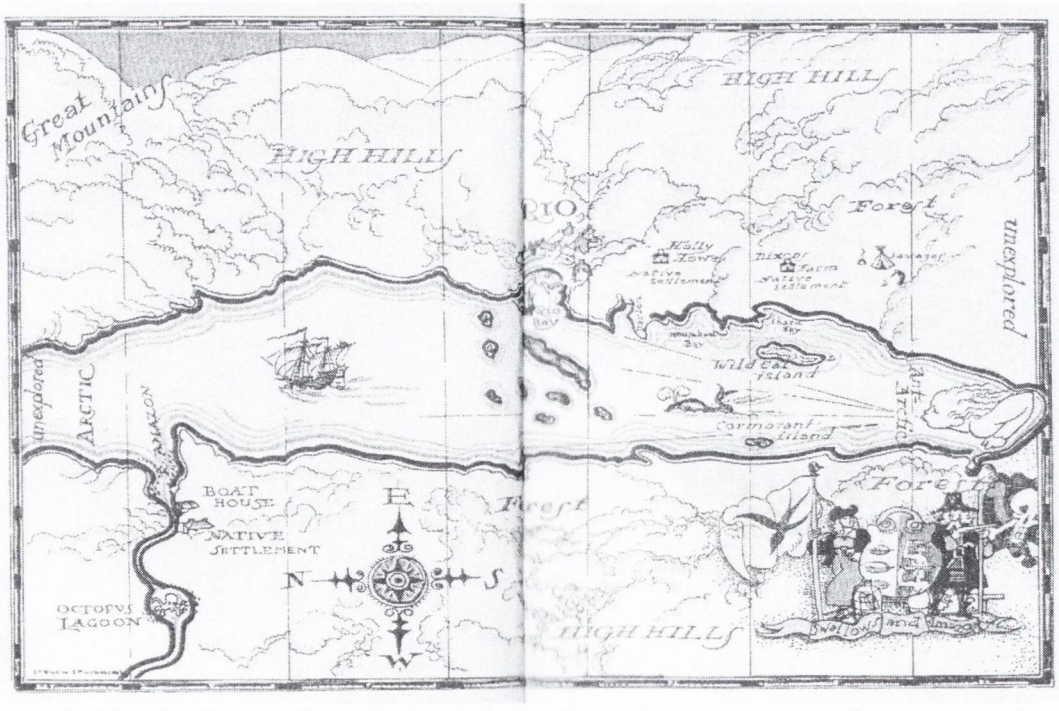


Figure 8: Map by Steven Spurrier included with Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons*, first published 1930 (Ransome 2012, fifth opening).

Maps with north at the top appeared relatively late in the history of European cartography. B.L. Gordon observes that 'about A.D. 1250, the monk Matthew Paris drew a map of Great Britain, the first map in western Europe with north at the top' (Gordon 1971, 226). As Casey notes, 'North at the "top" of a map (replaced) East in this upper position only comparatively recently' (2002, 226). Prior to the standardisation of north at the top of the map at the start of the seventeenth century, east was privileged with this position (Casey 2002, 179). Gordon suggests that east had sacred connotations that were ecumenical in their scope. Citing Ezekiel in the Old Testament, Gordon notes that for the 'ancient Jews... East is the favored direction, as was generally the case among the Semitic peoples' (Gordon 1971, 212).

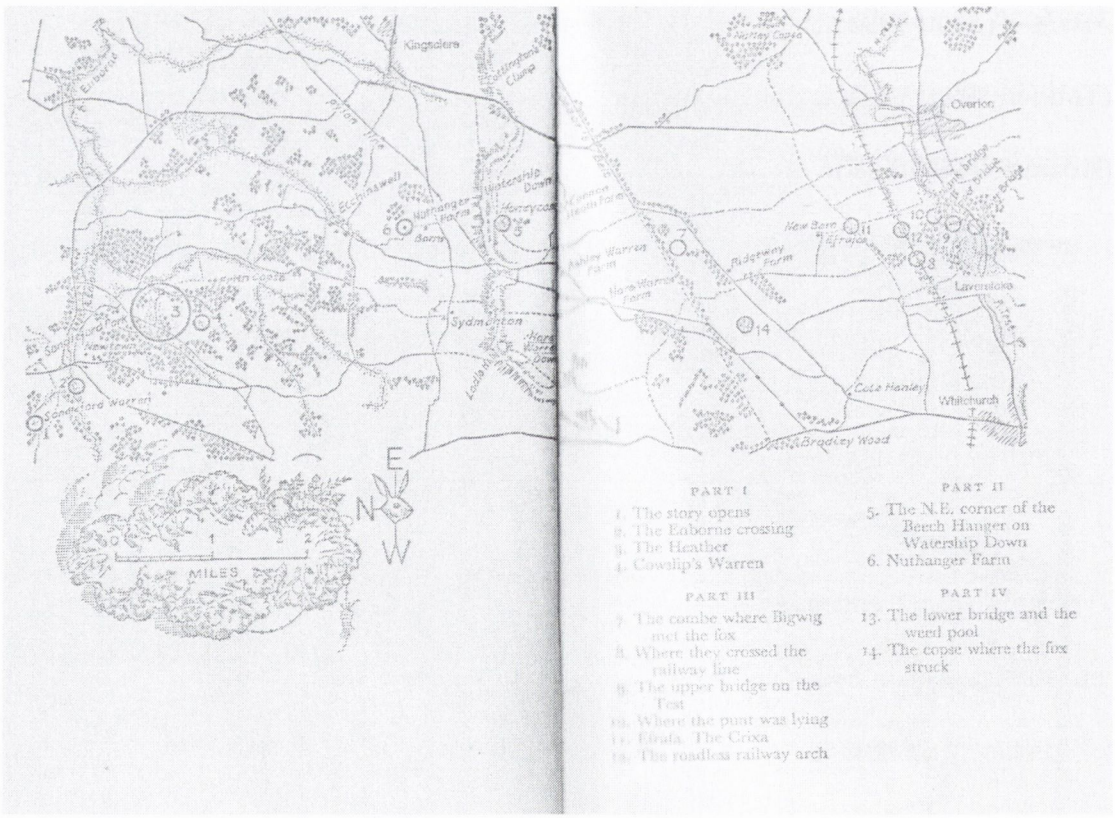


Figure 9: Map included with Richard Adams's *Watership Down*, first published 1972 (Adams 1978, 12-13).

East also has obvious numinous connotations in Christian mythology, with paradise located squarely in the east. Western cartography began to reflect the Christian emphasis on east as a divinely privileged direction around the sixth century A.D. R.V. Tooley notes that the Madaba Mosaic, constructed around A.D. 550 'is the earliest example of a map with east at the top' (Tooley 1952, 13). Although examples of *mappaemundi* with north, south, east or west at the top are found, east is the favoured direction of orientation.[2]

Most salient to our discussion, however, is the propensity of medieval cartographers to reconcile mutually exclusive temporal and spatial perspectives on the same cartographic plane. As Anthony Pavlik notes, 'on most maps included in children's fiction, there is no indication of the rules of transformation between representation and represented' (Pavlik 2010, 33). However, Pavlik understands this omission only insofar as it 'contradicts or subverts notions of Cartesian spatial certitude' and fails to acknowledge the medieval precedent for the incorporation of multiple perspectives on one map (2010, 35). Woodward suggests that *mappaemundi*

> may thus be seen as analogous to the narrative medieval pictures that portray several events separated by time and included within the same scene. Instead of being presented as in a frieze or cartoon, they are placed in their logical positions in the picture. For the *mappaemundi*, this meant the approximate geographical or topological location of the event (Woodward 1987, 290).

Clark and Pine's illustration for the third of Daniel Defoe's Crusoe novels, *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe with his*

[2] '*Mappaemundi* are found oriented in all four directions, but east, north and south are the most common in that order. An eastern orientation is usually, but by no means exclusively, found on the tripartite *mappaemundi*, and it follows the late Roman Sallustian tradition adopted by the Christian world' (Woodward 1987, 337).

Vision of the World, first published in 1720 exhibits this concertina logic (Defoe 2007, 262-263). David Blewett observes that, in a practice 'still common in the eighteenth century' 'various events' are compressed 'into a single picture... in order to emphasise the work's meaning and unity' (Blewett 1995, 29). Blewett notes that the 'island conspectus is diachronic and synoptic and is intended to sum up the experience of Crusoe' (1995, 29). Blewett likens the effect to that of a 'Sienese primitive' but, considered as a species of cartography, Clark and Pine's illustration also bears a resemblance to the narrative geography of the *mappaemundi* described by Woodward and Schulz. As the latter notes, *mappaemundi* 'provided a synoptic image for the syncretic view of world history' (Schulz 1978, 447).



Figure 10: Synoptic view of Crusoe's island by John Clark and John Pine. Published 1720 as frontispiece to *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe (Defoe 2007, 262-263).

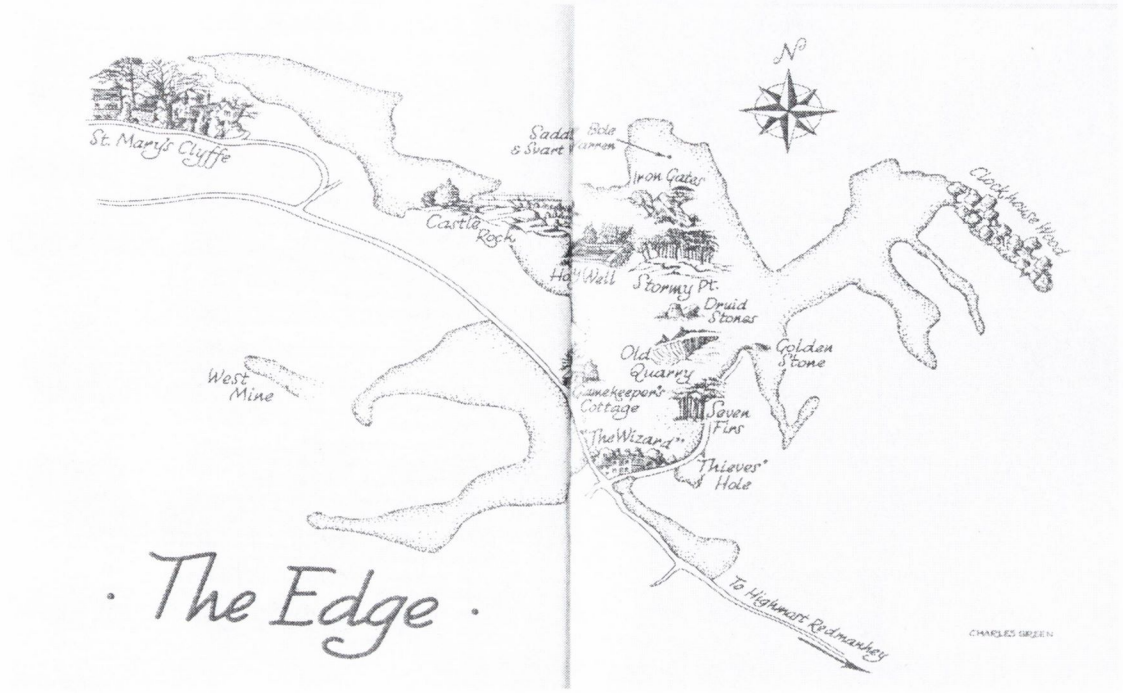


Figure 11: 'The Edge', by Charles Green. Included with *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* by Alan Garner, first published 1960 (Garner 2002, 6-7).

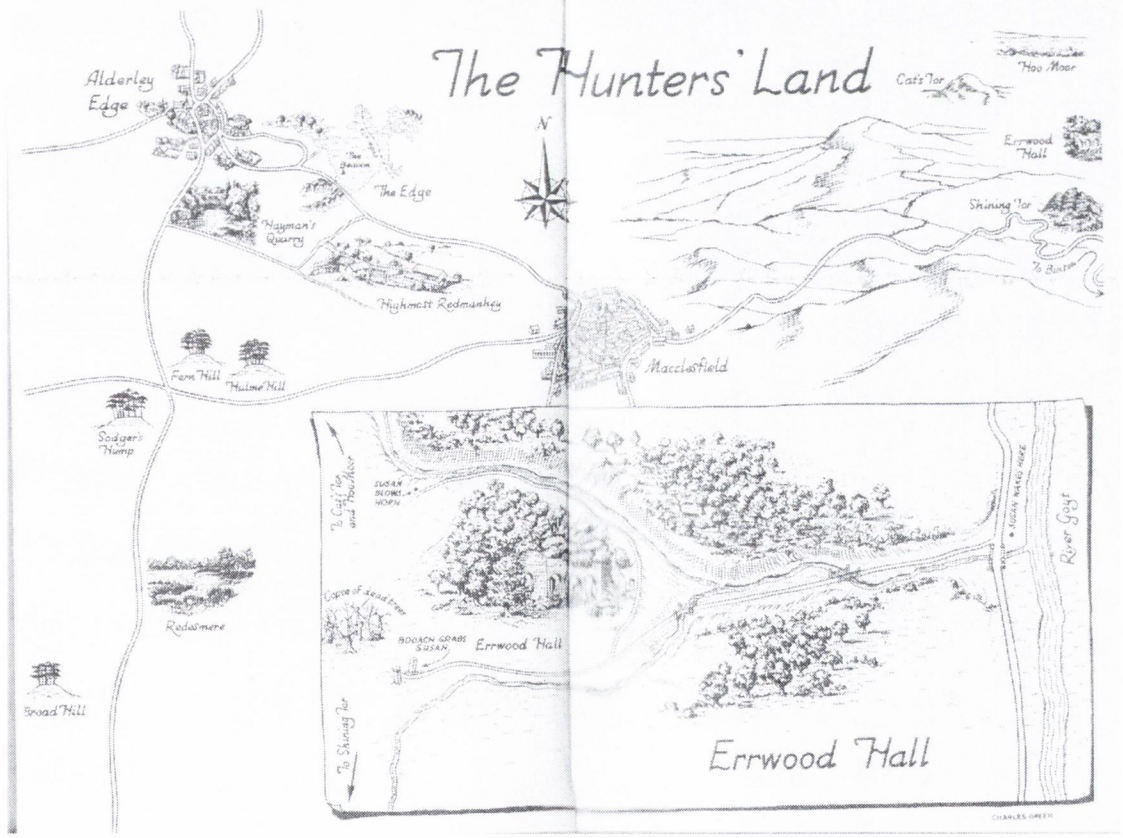


Figure 12: 'The Hunter's Land,' by Charles Green. Included with *The Moon of Gomrath* by Alan Garner, first published 1963 (Garner 2010, 6-7).

Charles Green's maps for Alan Garner's *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* and *The Moon of Gomrath* share this propensity to incorporate and synthesise what should be mutually exclusive on the one cartographic plane. Above I argued that decorative and ornamental iconography effected a complication of the reader's position. Green's map brings together contradictory perspectives in the same cartographic space. That is, instead of offering a representation of landscape from a fixed position, Green's map depicts the topography from a diversity of competing perspectives. Thus, mountains in the northeast of the map are presented from an oblique elevated perspective while Sodger's Hump, Fern Hill and Hulme Hill are presented in profile in the west. The towns of Alderley Edge and Macclesfield are presented from an oblique elevation higher than that which views the mountains in the northeast. Further, Pavlik observes of a particular map included with A.A. Milne's *The House at Pooh Corner* that

> Shepard's map of the Hundred Acre Wood, for example, not only abandons the concept of scale, with characters larger than life and distances distorted, but offers a point of view that can either be looking down on from above, or down on from an oblique angle, or across at the same level (2010, 35).

Pavlik concludes that the multiple perspectives entertained by maps in children's fictions 'mean that the eye is always moving, and so the landscape is never fixed, controlled or delimited' (2010, 35). However, this celebration of fluidity and mobility is precisely that which characterises the subject of ecomimesis. If the map is exercised by a logic of both/and, both oblique and profile, both 'a' and 'not a', this is exemplary of ecomimetic rhetoric. On the one hand, in its refusal to submit to any unified perspective, Green's map appears to dissolve what Peta Mitchell would call an Enlightenment fantasy of the objective, unified and exterior subject (Mitchell 2011,

2). Thus, the viewing subject is invited to become a mobile, perceptive inhabitant of the cartographic space. This kind of immersive and perceptually authentic reading is precisely that celebrated by phenomenologically inclined theorists who are suspicious of the Enlightenment project. Edward Casey is representative. Juxtaposing 'earth maps,' maps made on the surface which they represent, with 'Western notions of mapping prevalent since the Renaissance', Casey argues that earth maps do not privilege any 'sense of looking on from above' (Casey 2005, xv). Rather, 'the viewer of such a map is drawn in rather than encouraged to hover above' with the result that 'one experiences oneself as with the landscape instead of apart from it' and thereby is privy to the 'withness of the environing earth, which is to say the circumambient landscape' (Casey 2005, xxi). It is precisely this sense of 'withness', circumambience and embeddedness which ecomimesis evokes. However, as has been argued throughout, ecomimetic rhetoric cannot, ultimately, sustain this fantasy. Green's map is an impossible reconciliation of mutually exclusive perspectives. This impossibility reinstalls the distance between inside and outside which the dissolution of the 'objective', exterior subject of post-Enlightenment cartography putatively achieved.

Thus, the subject/object dualism entertained by Enlightenment thought is the antagonist that continues to frame the construction of maps in children's literature. Literary cartography for children draws on visual conventions that predate the triumph of the scientific method in an attempt to frustrate the inevitability of Cartesian dualism. The next part of my analysis brings greater focus to this argument. Tracing the erasure of lines of latitude and longitude from maps in children's literature, it argues for a connection between the rhetoric of embeddedness sustained by maps in children's literature, and the continued influence of the Lockean paradigm of childhood.

Robinson Crusoe and the Graticule

As Woodward notes, '*mappaemundi* rarely had a graticule or an expressed scale' (Woodward 1987, 286). Likewise, maps in children's literature uniformly refuse to include lines of latitude and longitude. As Pavlik notes,

> the map for Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883) has a nautical feel that may seem to convince the reader of a certain maritime reality, but the lack of a framing border suggests unboundedness, a sense increased by the absence of the expected longitude and latitude lines (2010, 35).

However, Pavlik fails to situate the omission of the expected longitude and latitude lines in the tradition of cartography. In exploring the assumptions that sponsored the emergence of the graticule, we can better understand the significance of its omission in texts for children. It will be argued that omitting lines of latitude and longitude contributes to a rhetoric of embeddedness or unmediated contact with a landscape which ecomimesis sustains.

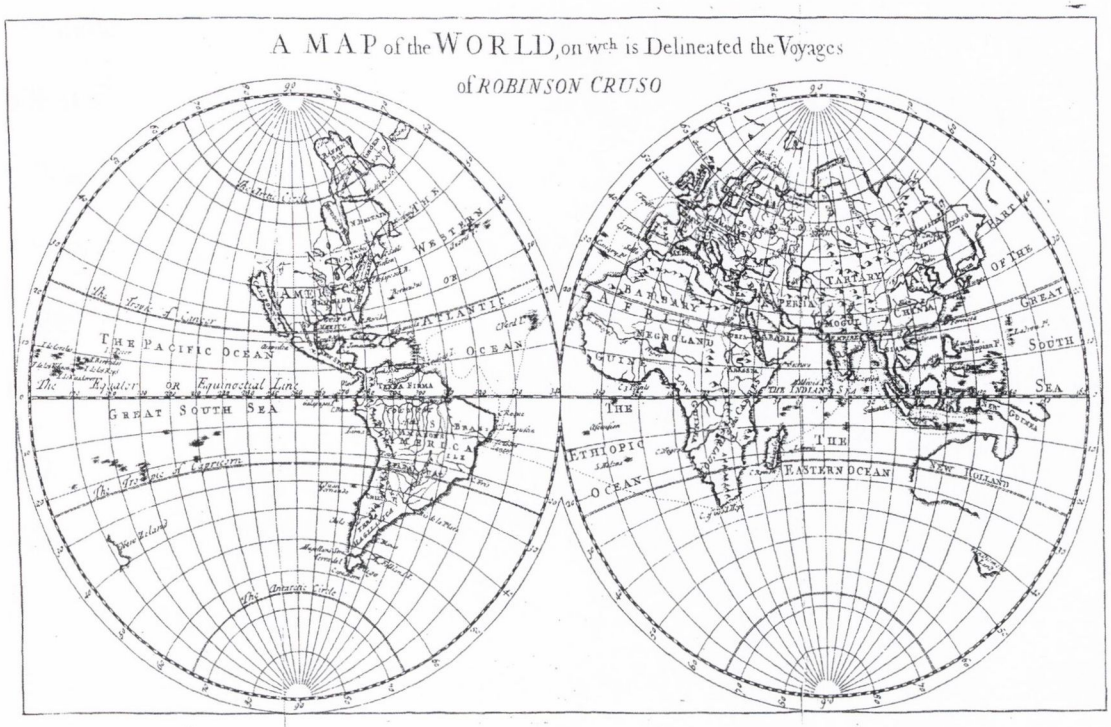


Figure 13: Map printed 1719 in the fourth edition of *Robinson Crusoe* (Defoe 2007, liv-lv).

Published in August 1719, the fourth edition of Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner* included a map of the globe by Hermann Moll which was reprinted in later editions. Of all the maps in children's literature discussed in this chapter, the map included with Defoe's novel is the only one that includes a graticule. I want to explore why this might be the case. The graticule on Moll's map troubles the cartographic gaze. Instead of furnishing a clear matrix by which to structure a reading of the map, the graticule actually obscures the landscape it claims to represent and organise. The full title of the map is 'A Map of the world on which is Delineated the Voyages of Robinson Crusoe'. However, the line that traces Crusoe's voyage is barely discernible in the maze of longitude and latitude lines. The lines of the graticule are also harder and more confident than the frequently broken lines that delineate landforms.

I suggest that these aesthetic considerations are informed by developments in perceptions of cartography in the eighteenth century and Defoe's relationship with the new science that emerged from the European Enlightenment. Isle Vickers suggests that the shadow of the Royal Society looms over *Robinson Crusoe*; 'Defoe endows his hero with the Baconian mentality of observation and experiment' (Vickers 1996, 4). Vickers concludes that 'in Defoe's travel books we have perhaps the most practical applications of the fundamental tenets of the New Sciences' (1996, 5). Ann van Sant concurs with this argument; 'Robinson Crusoe's description of the processes of doing and making — and of experiments failed and successful — crosses the border between georgic and the transactions of the Royal Society' (van Sant 2008, 127). Similarly, Keymer suggests that 'voyage writers... responded to the calls of the Royal Society scientists' (2007, xix). For instance, 'Crusoe's table of climactic patterns and his call on 'the Naturalists' to explain a physical phenomenon that leaves him baffled are two conspicuous instances of a pervasive tendency in the text' (Keymer 2007, xix).

I suggest that the principles that govern the appearance of the map that accompanies the novel likewise derive from contemporary discourses about the proper methodology and ambit of cartography as geographical science. Jeremy Black argues that in the period 1650 to 1800, there was a 'move, in the case of European cartography, from what might be termed... the symbolization of knowledge to cartography understood as crucial element in accumulation and display of information' (Black 2008, 95). However, the disentanglement of geography from cosmography had begun probably about a century earlier in continental Europe. As Schulz notes, 'in the second half of the fifteenth century... the appetite for simple geographical intelligence began its rise to ascendancy over what might be called

integrated cosmography, at least in Italy' (1978, 454). This Renaissance impetus towards uncoupling geography from cosmology was spurred by 'the importation from Constantinople of complete manuscripts of Ptolemy's *Geography* and their divulgation through manuscript copies, translations and... printed editions' (Schulz, 1978, 454). Black traces the ascendancy of a quantitative spirit in cartography to the Enlightenment project and notes that 'precision was increasingly a key aspect of cartography, reflecting the widespread prestige and practice of mathematics' (Black 2008, 99). For the cartography of the Enlightenment, the graticule was *the* organising principle for visual representation of the earth's surface. Indeed, the graticule was fundamental to eighteenth-century definitions of geography. Robert Mayhew thus writes that 'geography was centred on acquiring knowledge about the situation of places in terms of their latitude and longitude' (Mayhew 1998, 390). Matthew Edney notes that 'in the construction of maps, (practical geometry) was seen as dependent on the fitting of itinerary data and observed positions (theoretical geometry) to the world's graticulate (terrestrial geometry) (Edney 1994, 102).

The aesthetic privileging of the lines of latitude and longitude on the map included with the fourth edition of *Robinson Crusoe* is thus informed by a cartographic culture that emphasised the graticule as an organising principle, a principle to which the world was made to fit. Indeed, Lynn Festa suggests that the eighteenth-century novel is concerned with exactly this act of making the world fit a principle. Discussing description in *Robinson Crusoe*, Festa writes that 'eighteenth-century descriptive practices... all grapple with matters of fit and misfit, as they question how — or whether — it is possible to align the empirical... with the ideal' (Festa 2011, 448).

Why, though, does the graticule disappear from later maps included with children's books? I suggest that the graticule is excised from the tradition of children's literary cartographies precisely because of its ability to conceal the landscape. There is a complex historical logic at work here that needs to be made explicit. It is precisely because the graticule can conceal topography that, on a diachronic view, it comes to be concealed. The graticule is at once both an agent of concealment and, historically speaking, an object of concealment. There is more at stake here than the simple disappearance of something that confuses the cartographic view. The disappearance of the graticule is, I suggest, informed by a Lockean understanding of the child as an unreconstructed creature with unmediated access to the material things of the world. As Jacqueline Rose notes, the 'earliest writers took from Locke the idea of an education based on the child's direct and unproblematic access to objects of the real world' (Rose 1993, 8). This fetishisation of unmediated access still informs modern developmental narratives. Ingrid Leman Stefanovic, for instance, writes of the 'unstructured' and 'unaffected' visions of the child (Stefanovic 2004, 56). If the graticule on the Crusoe map conceals or mediates between the child viewer and the landscape, it is quickly excised from the literary tradition it helps inaugurate. Indeed, the excision is so thorough that in Blewett's otherwise exhaustive monograph on the subject of the illustration of editions, abridgements and adaptations of the Robinson Crusoe story over the centuries, he completely neglects to discuss the map (Blewett 1995). In doing so, literary cartographies are made to conform with a Lockean idea of the child which possesses a (relatively) unstructured access to the things of material reality.

The graticule disappears, I have suggested, because of its ability to obfuscate the landscape that lies beneath it. I have further suggested that this disappearance can

be read as symptomatic of a Lockean paradigm that constructs the child as a creature with unmediated access to the world. However, as Jacqueline Rose notes, 'children's fiction emerges out of a conception of both the world and the child as knowable in a direct and unmediated way' and suggests that the child constructed in and by children's fiction is a 'pioneer' who can restore the 'lost world' of immediacy to us (Rose 1993, 9). In expunging the graticule from subsequent literary cartographies, authors and publishers engage the origins of their own works in a complex logic. On the one hand, by so expunging the graticule, they restore the Lockean vision of the child with a direct unmediated access to the world. Removing the graticule is thus an imaginative act of return on the part of literary cartographers in which they imaginatively make recourse to a world prior to the rational affectations of adulthood.

The absence of lines of longitude and latitude on Le Guin's maps is informed by a literary tradition that emphasises the embeddedness of the subject in the world. Children's literature, as Rose argues, turns on precisely this phenomenological conceit of embeddedness. To sustain this conceit, maps in children's literature appeal to the visual vocabulary of *mappaemundi*. This vocabulary is one that refuses to countenance the separation of subject and object attributed to Enlightenment rationalism by critics such as Mitchell. If, as I am suggesting, Le Guin's maps contribute to her ecomimetic rhetoric of 'ecology without a subject', then this rhetoric is sponsored by the assumptions and visual traditions of both children's literature and *mappaemundi*.

If these cartographic traditions sponsor a fantasy of the dissolution of the subject into the world, they also, underwrite the Aeolian tone of ecomimetic rhetoric. As documented earlier, the Aeolian is a vatic poetics that construes the author not as a creator, but as a mediator. Ecomimesis achieves this condition of Aeolian rhapsody

by actively concealing its origins. Or, to hazard a Heideggerean vocabulary, it reveals the origin of the work in its concealment. If maps in children's literature invoke *mappaemundi*, this is, I suggest, in part due to the fact that medieval cartography provides a visual idiom consonant with this Aeolian rendering of origins.

Thus, Jerry Brotton writes that

> from the ninth century both visual and written *mappaemundi* began to appear not just in texts illustrating authors like Macrobius and Isidore, but also in school manuals, geographical treatises used in universities and monasteries, literary compositions in epic and romance poems, and in public spaces like monasteries and churches for more political and didactic purposes... All this was done in the name of Christianity... On most of these *mappaemundi*, viewers could trace the passage of biblical time vertically from its beginning at the top of the map in the Garden of Eden in the east, to its conclusion in the west, with the end of time taking place in an eternal present of the Final Judgement (Brotton 2012, 102-103).

Further, as Brotton astutely observes of the Hereford *mappamundi*, such maps prefigure their own destruction in the eschatological west at the bottom of the map (Brotton 2012, 108). However, we might also consider the Hereford *mappamundi* as an anaphoric reference to those biblical events that led to the creation of the map in the first place. That is, the Hereford map, with paradise located in the east at the top of the map, charts man's expulsion from paradise into the world. As such, the Hereford map recalls the event that would lead to man's gradual spread throughout the earth, and the production of maps, including the Hereford *mappamundi* itself, which would result from this fall into geographical knowledge. In ca. 1126, Hugh of St. Victor detailed the guiding functional and aesthetic principles which informed *mappaemundi* in his *Liber de Tribus Maximis Circumstanciis Gestorum*

> We must collect a brief summary of all things — almost a foundation of the foundation, that is a first foundation — which the mind may grasp and the memory retain with ease. Three things they are, in fact, by which the mind chiefly esteems events: i.e. the persons by whom deeds were done, the places in which they were done, and the times when they were done (quoted in Schulz 1978, 447).

As Schulz points out, Hugh of St. Victor articulated the understanding of *mappaemundi* as a 'mnemonic aid in the teaching of history' (Schulz 1978, 447). *Mappaemundi* reconstruct the entire known world as a memory palace. But, Hugh of St. Victor also names the map 'a foundation of the foundation' and 'a first foundation'. Thus, not only is the map concerned with the representation of its own origins, in the expulsion from Eden in the east at the top, it is also conceived as a point of origin itself. That is, as a first foundation, the *mappaemundi* is constructed as the origin of a mind shaped through the cultivation of biblical memory.

However, if *mappaemundi* invoke their origins, they construe these origins as obscure. Or, again, they reveal these origins in their hiddenness. This act of obfuscation is one that Michel de Certeau argues is fundamental to the act of mapping itself. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, he argues,

> the map, a totalizing stage on which elements of diverse origin are brought together to form the tableau of a "state" of geographical knowledge, pushes away into prehistory or into its posterity, as if into the wings, the operations of which it is the result or the necessary condition. It remains alone on the stage. The tour describers have disappeared (de Certeau 1984, 121).

Cartography itself is thus, on de Certeau's view, an irremediably Aeolian and ecomimetic project. That is, maps actively mystify and conceal the operations that

lead to their production. In what follows, I will call attention to the figurative and schematic conventions of *mappaemundi* which, appropriated by maps in children's literature, exemplify the Aeolian timbre of ecomimesis. In particular, I will suggest that the blank spaces on Le Guin's maps are subject to the same anxieties that attended unmarked geographies in medieval maps. Having demonstrated the indebtedness of Le Guin's maps to *mappaemundi*, the remainder of this chapter will proceed to articulate how the basic operations of literary cartography are invested in a rhetoric of ecomimesis. Building on the suggestion that lines and forms are the basic, irreducible units of maps, more or less analogous to morphemes in language, I will argue that these fundamental units of cartography obscure their own origin. Moreover, I will couple this analysis to a speculative reconstruction of the publication history of Le Guin's map, and that included with Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. From conception to publication, both maps follow trajectories which result in obscured and obfuscated authorship.

Cartography and Authorship

J.B. Harley argues that

> with respect to authorship... the historian (of maps) is frequently confronted with disentangling authorship. Most maps are the product of a division of labor. As we enter the long transition from the manuscript to the age of printing, the cartographic division of labor is accentuated, the author becomes a shadowy figure, and the translation from mapped reality to map is more complex. The question arises, "To what extent was a particular map the work of a surveyor, an editor, a draftsman, or an engraver?"" (Harley 2001, 38).

The complicated association of agencies involved in the production of a map troubles any easy identification of author. In Harley's argument, cartographic space is a palimpsest of variously collaborating and competing authors. Its completeness is, for Harley, both illusory and ideological. The smooth lines and forms of the map space elide any dissonance between authorial practices intrinsic to the act of mapping. Harley's work is important in that it exposes the competing authorial claims that traverse the map space. I suggest that his insight might be extended to maps in children's literature, and, in particular, Le Guin's maps. Le Guin's map of Earthsea, more so than any other element of her text, has been subject to pronounced editorial intervention.

Le Guin's map of the Earthsea archipelago has been through a number of major iterations. The first iteration was included in the original publication of *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Parnassus Press in 1968. In 1971, the first Puffin edition of the text was published. Victor Gollancz published an edition of the book in the same year. Both versions included significant revisions to the map first published in the Parnassus edition. The most recent iteration is that included with the (provisionally) final book of the *Earthsea* cycle, *The Other Wind*, published by Harcourt in 2001. Again, this latest version introduces subtle changes to the design and layout of the map. In what follows, I will focus on those aspects of Le Guin's map of Earthsea which have been subject to revision across the three major iterations of her map, and suggest that these revisions problematise the authorship of the cartographic text.



Figure 14: Puffin version of 'Earthsea' map. First published 1971 (Le Guin 1994, fourth opening).

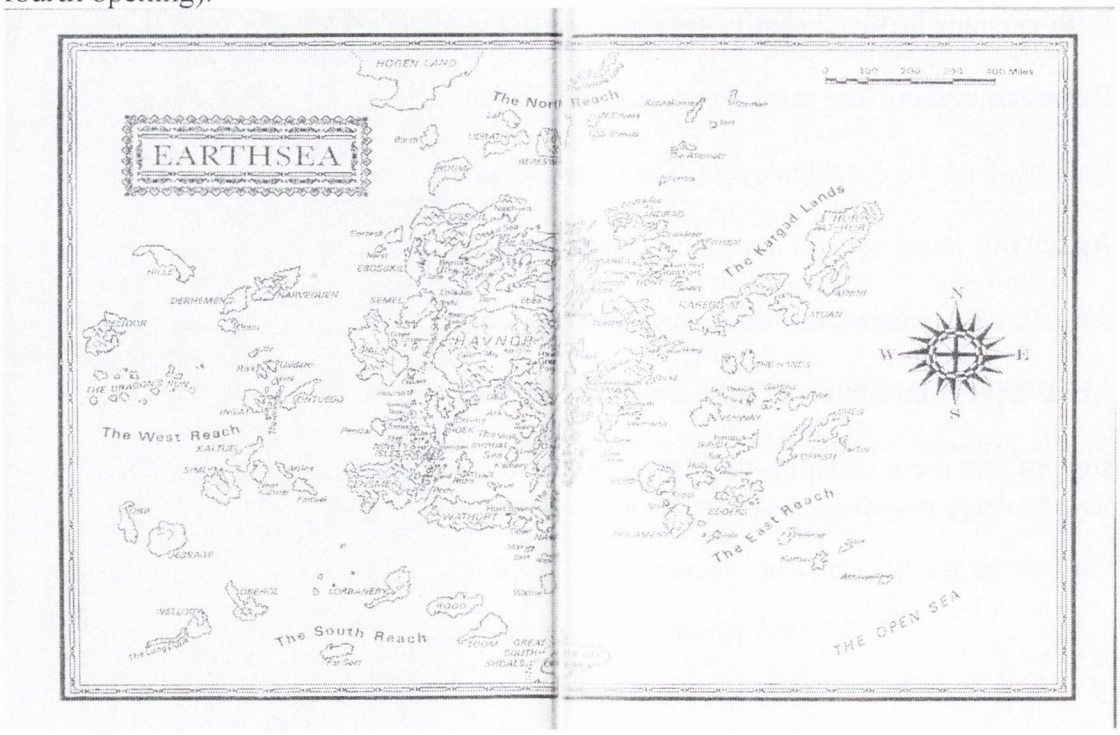


Figure 15: 'Earthsea' map first published 1971 in Gollancz edition of *A Wizard of Earthsea* (Le Guin 1989i, 8-9).

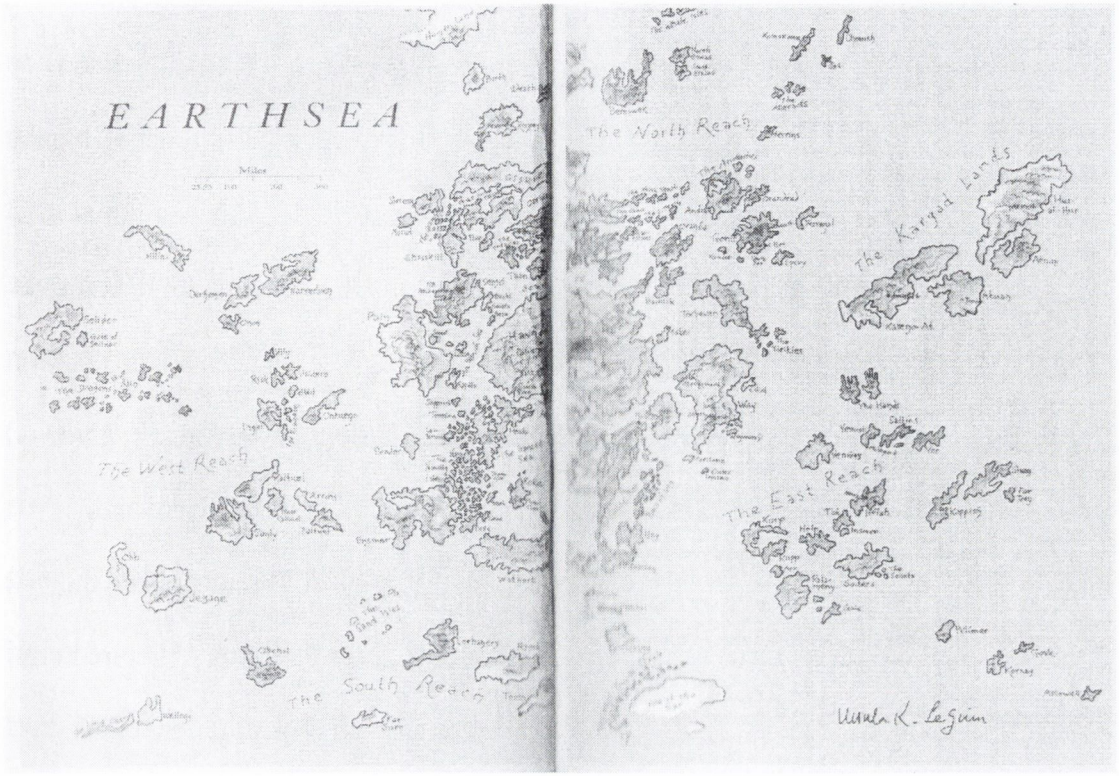


Figure 16: Earthsea map included with *Tales from Earthsea* (Le Guin 2003, viii-ix).

Most significantly for the purposes of my argument, those cartographic elements that allude to or symbolise authorial agency are precisely those elements of the Earthsea maps most subject to revision. The first edition of *A Wizard of Earthsea*, published in 1968 by Parnassus Press, included a map drawn by Le Guin which was ornamented by illustrations. It is likely that the illustrations are the work of Ruth Robbins, who is named as illustrator for that edition. Both the wind-head and the representation of the wizard mark intrusions on the cartographic space of another authorial power. They might be read as symptoms of an anxiety familiar to creators and consumers of medieval maps, one which is shared with the tradition of illustration of children's books.

Blank spaces in children's book illustration and the history of cartography are locations of desire. As Victoria de Rijke and Howard Hollands argue, 'the form and power of the blankness is defined by what went before and what is to come... it will

be for the reader-viewer to erase, lose or undo this blank canvas' (De Rijke and Hollands 2006, 56). In other words, the blank spaces of children's book illustration are always on the way to becoming filled. As Denis Cosgrove argues of maps, 'blank spaces... generate and reflect aesthetic and epistemological anxiety; they are thus favoured spaces of cartouches, scales, keys, and other technical, textual or decorative devices' (Cosgrove 1999, 10). With the 'development of a culture awash with imagery and framed by overloaded reading', the blank space must eventually give way to a pressure to admit figuration and pictorial representation (De Rijke and Hollands 2006, 56). It marks, at best, a hiatus, pause or intake of breath before the introduction of positive visual assertions. The blank spaces of children's picture book illustration testify to the inevitability of visual representation. Cartographic blank spaces, likewise, construe blank spaces as always already dissolving silences on their way to the representation of something.

Iconography, including wind-heads, pictures of beasts and vessels, banderoles and elaborate frames are symptomatic of the oft-noted distaste of the cartographer for blank spaces. Afred Hiatt notes that 'the blank space of the map is... a space onto which various forms of fantasy can be projected' (Hiatt 2002, 223). Wilma George, considering iconographic representations of beasts and monsters on maps notes that the 'geographer attributes this to the desire for decoration or to fill in otherwise blank spaces of unknown continents' (George 1969, 21). The most striking example of the cartographer's propensity to fill blank spaces comes to us in the form of the *mappaemundi*. J.H. Andrews notes that *mappaemundi* 'purported to embrace the whole surface of the globe, though unknown areas, instead of being first defined by Ptolemaic coordinates and then left agnostically blank were now brought to life with various kinds of verbal and pictorial misinformation' (Andrews 2009, 10)

This practice of filling in the blank spaces on maps was continued in the late twentieth century by J.B. Harley. He writes, 'that which is absent from maps is as much a proper field for enquiry as that which is present' (Harley 2001, 86). Harley focuses on what he terms 'silences' in early modern maps (2001, 83-109). Such silences, Harley argues, represent an effacement of those historical and political realities that would otherwise contest the hegemonic world-view encoded by the map (2001, 84). For Harley, blank spaces on maps must be filled. If medieval and early modern cartographers filled unexplored blank spaces on their maps with pictorial figuration, Harley too feels the need to 'fill in' cartographic gaps with his critical history. As Hiatt argues 'all blank spaces... look particularly inviting' and this is as true of the critical historian of cartography as of the cartographer himself (Hiatt 2002, 223).

The figures of the wind-head and the wizard are, then, summoned into existence by the particular pressure which attends blank spaces in the histories of cartography and illustration for children's books. However, these figures are not merely ornamental. In filling in the spaces Le Guin left blank on the map of Earthsea, the editors and illustrators of the 1968 first edition of *A Wizard of Earthsea* also complicated, and, as I will now argue, compromised the figure of the author constructed by the text.

The wizard and the wind-head are positioned at the top of the map, as if to indicate a position of vertical command over the landscape that they frame. Their disproportionate size is an obvious visual marker of their importance. More important, however, is the fact that the wizard and the wind head trouble the universality of Le Guin's original scale. They cannot be assimilated to the scale of the author's original cartographic vision, and suggest fault lines in the author's authority over her

cartographic space. Indeed, so prominent are both representations that they threaten to distract attention from the landscape that lies beneath them. The islands and the names that refer to these geographies are miniaturised by the introduction of these two figures as the easy legibility of the wizard and wind-head stands in contrast with the small typeface used for the toponyms.

This visual prominence is coupled with the suggestion that both figures are possessed of authorial agency. In particular, the wizard's proximity to the title of the map and the proprietorial arm he casts over it suggests that the wizard is a symbol of authority over the archipelago which the title 'Earthsea' names, and indeed, over the language in which it is imagined. The figures of the wizard and the wind-head thus compromise the authority of Le Guin over the map. This suggestion is borne out by their excision from the 1971 Gollancz version of the map. The 1971 Gollancz version of the map is a more sparse imagining than either the original 1968 Parnassus version or the 1971 Penguin iteration. The wizard and wind-head are excised from the map-space. These revisions and excisions can be read as expressions of the editorial agenda of the Gollancz publishing house. Sheila Hodges recounts a speech given by Victor Gollancz, the founder of Gollancz, to the Double Crown Club, in 1928 (Hodges 1978, 28). In that speech, 'Victor set forth his ideas of what constituted good book production' (Hodges 1978, 28). Hodges quotes from that speech as follows:

> The aim, he believed should always be 'the beauty which is inherent in the perfect fulfillment of function' rather than 'the sort of beauty which obtrudes itself... The better section of the public wants a book bound in an inoffensive cloth — a thing remarkably hard to find — with the title stamped on that cloth in a size which allows it to be read... Then again this more discriminating section of the public wants paper neither so thin that the next page can be read through, nor so thick that it cannot be turned over... Margins neither too small nor too large [and] a type of such

> cut, such size and so arranged that the book can be read with real ease and without having the mind distracted by any special peculiarity, even though it may be a particular beauty... To my mind the essence of good book production is that it shouldn't hit you in the eye; it should be the perfect but entirely unobtrusive vehicle for conveying the author's thought... to the reader' (1978, 28-29).

The Gollancz iteration thus excises those figures which compromise the map as a medium where the reader might encounter, unobstructed, the vision of the author. In excising Robbins's illustrations in line with the editorial policy of the press, the Gollancz edition constructs the wizard and the wind-head as intrusions that complicate and obfuscate the author's prerogative over her text. Moreover, the 1968 Parnassus edition of the map was framed by Robbins's illustrations. These illustrations depicted scenes from the narrative. Jacob suggests that the cartographic border 'focuses and frames the viewer's gaze and imbues it with certain expectations and specific values' and 'fulfills a function of mediation and transition between two worlds, but also between two ways of seeing and interpreting' (2006, 110). The framing illustrations of the 1968 edition are thus possessed of an ability to mediate interpretation and, as such, compromise the cartographer's authority over her map.

Further, the images in the frame restructure the organisation of the map space. Robbins's principal technique for establishing distinctions between forms is an economic one. Figures are distinguished from backgrounds by the amount or degree of lineation with which they are treated. In the image at the top left corner, sea is distinguished from sky by a greater density of lineation. Three cells down, the folds of the wizard's garment stand out against a more profusely lineated background. Robbins's images thus turn on a calculative principle, one that they extend across the map space. On both sides, the frame is divided into five cells of more or less equal

size. As such, the frame introduces a subtle calculus or economy of countability to the map space. The subdivision of the frame is suggestive of a graticule; the eye is encouraged to extrapolate the dividing line between each image out across the map space. Denis Cosgrove identifies the managerial function of the graticule as follows:

> The abstract lines of graticule and grid, whether left visible on a map or erased in its final appearance, act both to secure a consistent semiotic connection between sign and signified (map and territory), and to contain, distribute and coordinate the internal signs and spaces of representation (1999,10).

This rational, linear organisation serves to contain and manage the irrational profusion of landforms of which the Earthsea archipelago is comprised. Moreover, the images in the frame encourage the eye to move vertically, from top to bottom, down the map. In doing so, they introduce a hierarchy to the image as a whole, with top given precedence. Thus, the images further consolidate the authority of the figures of the wizard and the wind-head, which are located at the top of the map. Major later iterations of the map, such as that printed in the 1971 Puffin edition of *A Wizard of Earthsea*, and the 2001 *The Other Wind*, remove the framing illustrations. In these iterations, the gaze is allowed to wander more freely across the map space, and the hierarchy between top and bottom is less pronounced.

The additions made to Le Guin's map of Earthsea in the 1968 edition of *A Wizard of Earthsea* thus bear out Harley's claim given above. The 1968 map of Earthsea is an archive of the competing authorial and editorial agencies that intervened in its construction. As Harley puts it, 'within the frame of one map, there may be several texts — an "intertextuality" — that has to be uncovered in the interpretative process' (2001, 38). Moreover, in the Puffin edition, details from the maps are interpolated throughout the narrative, thereby altering the rhythm of the text.

The Earthsea map is thus a palimpsest of the activities of diverse cartographic imaginations. Further, this process of revision is continued with the map included in Le Guin's 2001 text, *The Other Wind*. Most significantly, the figures of the wizard and the wind-head are excised from this version. In their place, Le Guin's signature is found on the bottom right corner of the map. Replacing the wind-head and the wizard, the signature marks an assertion of Le Guin's prerogative as author and cartographer. Located at the bottom right corner of the map, the signature also marks a final way-point before the reader encounters the narrative itself. If one were to read the map according to the sequential logic of text, top to bottom and left to right, then the signature emerges as a final transition or zone of mediation between map and narrative. Thus, Le Guin's ability to mediate the reader's access to the text is reaffirmed. Moreover, the script in which the place-names on the map are written is altered in this final iteration of the Earthsea map. Place-names on the 2001 map appear hand-written, in much the same style as Le Guin's signature. By contrast, place names on the 1971 Puffin map appear in typeface. The authority of Le Guin's signature is thus carried across the entirety of the map. Given the similarity of the scripts, the place-names of 'Earthsea' appear as necessarily connected to Le Guin's name. They are the work of individual craft, and thus stand in contrast to the anonymity and uniformity of the typescript of the 1971 iteration. Further, Le Guin's signature is balanced by the title of the map in the northwest corner of the map. In the 1968 Parnassus and the 1971 Puffin editions, Ruth Robbins's wizard asserts its priority over the title. In the 2001 version, Le Guin's name claims authority over the title by virtue of the visual association between signature and title suggested by their location on the same diagonal axis.

Further, read alongside the 2001 map, the 1968 version betrays a stylistic similarity with this later transformation. The 2001 map constructs blank space not as a visual silence, but as a form of ellipsis that invokes without naming. Blank spaces on the 2001 map are not, then, just empty space, but active acts of erasure of the figures of wind-head and wizard. This similarity between the 1968 and 2001 version might encourage the map reader to interpret the blank spaces of the former not, simply, as the absence of representation, but rather as the active covering over or silencing of some alien authorial presence.

Thus, the maps included with Le Guin's *Earthsea* books are traversed by the claims of competing authorities. They are representational spaces that possess no clear or unambiguous authorship. Indeed, in the unfolding of its publication history, the Earthsea map actively mystifies points of origin and clear causal lineages. In tracing the transformations of the map of Earthsea, I have sought to demonstrate that historical circumstance and editorial practice result in a text which, to use Harley's terms, constructs the author as a 'shadowy figure' (Harley 2001, 38). Almost despite itself, then, the Earthsea map construes its authorship in a manner that resonates with the Aeolian character of ecomimesis. To reiterate, the Aeolian is that aspect of environmental rhetoric that effaces evidence of unambiguous authorship. The figures of the wizard and wind-head in the 1968 version, and Le Guin's signature in the 2001 iteration can be read as pronouncements of authorial control. However, in making these pronouncements, the map discloses the extent to which its authorship is a fragile fiction in need of constant reinforcement. The publication history of the Earthsea maps thus joins with the paratactic organisation of Le Guin's prose to occlude and problematise the figure of the author. In the following section, I will develop the association between Le Guin's parataxis and the practices that underlie cartography.

The Line

Perhaps the most striking feature of Le Guin's first map of the entire Earthsea archipelago is the author's preference for jagged lines. Sharply undulating lines trace the coast of each island and fluvial lines are represented with equal irregularity. Christian Jacob writes that 'Earthsea' offers a 'profusion of forms with jagged contours, a dusting of islands' (Jacob 2006, 289). Jacob suggests poetically that 'the jagged edge of the coastline suggests many bays and coastlines welcoming landings and explorations' and hence, narrative (2006, 281). Indeed, Le Guin's comments on prose writing seem to admit such an interpretation. For Le Guin, the rhythms of prose refuse uniformity; 'the sound-effects of prose are usually subtle and always irregular' (1998, 19). However, this irregularity is not limited, for Le Guin, to the relationship between sounds at the level of the sentence. Le Guin also couches the structure of the novel as a whole in terms of rhythmic irregularity. In *Steering the Craft*, she writes

> the rhythms of prose — and repetition is the central means of achieving rhythm — are usually hidden or obscure. They may be long and large, involving the whole story, the whole course of events in a novel: so large they're hard to see, like the shape of the mountains when you're driving on a road. But the mountains are there (Le Guin 1998, 54).

In her essay 'Stress Rhythm in Poetry and Prose' she suggests that 'prose rhythm is made up of many elements, repetitions of sound, parallels in syntax and construction, patterns of imagery' and that 'prose refuses to give us predictability' (Le Guin 2004a, 80). For Le Guin, then, the rhythm of prose at the level of the sentence and the structure of the narrative is defined by its unpredictability and irregularity. It is this irregularity that I want to stress. What I want to suggest is that the jagged rhythms of

the lines that describe Earthsea are somehow related to the irregular rhythms of Le Guin's prose. However, the nature of this relationship is ambiguous.

In an interview with the publisher, Simon and Schuster, Le Guin states clearly that she drew her map of Earthsea before writing *A Wizard of Earthsea*:

> I had written a couple of short-stories — very light short-stories — that took place on these islands where there were wizards and dragons. And when I sort of began thinking about a book (*A Wizard of Earthsea*), these islands grew... just, boom!... this is a whole archipelago of islands! And now I draw the map. And so the first thing I did for the book was the map (Le Guin 2012; my transcription from video interview).

However, she also offers an important qualification to this chronological account of the origins of *Earthsea*:

> The map is never complete, or even accurate. You read it over and it may be beautiful but you realize that you have fudged here, and smeared there, and left this out, and put some stuff in that isn't really there at all, and so on — and there's nothing left to do then but say OK; that's done; now I come back and start a new map, and try to do it better, more truthfully (Le Guin 1989g, 175).

Here, although the map again appears to precede the narrative in Le Guin's mind, she offers a cyclical or, better, reciprocal understanding of the relationship between map and narrative. The map precedes the narrative. It appears as a founding term from which the narrative is derived. However, 'derivation' alone does not have the conceptual potency to represent Le Guin's thought.

The narrative returns to the map to reshape and reorganise it. Having more thoroughly explored the archipelago in her narrative, Le Guin returns to the map to

reformulate it with these explorations in mind. Thus, the narrative returns to reconfigure its own ground. This cyclical or reciprocal model admits no easy predication of temporal priority to either map or the narrative; origin and originated are confused. Otherwise put, the map derives from the narrative and the narrative derives from the map. Indeed, Le Guin repeats this process later in the life-cycle of the *Earthsea* sequence. In the foreword to *Tales from Earthsea*, she details the writing process behind the short-story collection, noting that 'I... redrew the geographical maps for this book, and while doing so, happily discovered a very old one in the Archives in Havnor' (Le Guin 2003, xiii). Again then, Le Guin returns to her maps to redraw them in the light of developments over in the narratives of *The Tombs of Atuan, The Farthest Shore* and *Tehanu*. This act of cartographic revision in turn enables her to write the various narratives of *Tales from Earthsea*. As such, we cannot predicate priority of either map or narrative. Map and narrative engage in a furtive dance as they exchange places and functions in the genesis of the *Earthsea* cycle.

It is, perhaps, ultimately impossible to decide whether the irregular coast and fluvial lines anticipated the irregular and episodic character of *A Wizard of Earthsea*, or whether, having elaborated an episodic quest in language, Le Guin returned to the map to subject previously smooth lines to indentation. The dialectical exchange between cartographic line and narrative invention I have attributed to Le Guin is, admittedly, somewhat speculative. However, in reading Le Guin's cartographic lines in conjunction with her reflections on the genesis of her novels, I have sought to demonstrate that it is only with difficulty that one can point to the origins of the author's lineation.

Casey describes the line as 'at once the simplest means of graphic representation and yet arguably the most dynamic' insofar as the line 'has the peculiar

property of representing landscape in terms of dyadic pairs of exclusive alternatives: inside/outside, this side/that side, above/below' (2002, 180). If the line is the basic unit of cartography, it is also a form of representation that occludes its provenance. The most powerful articulation of the fundamental ambiguity of the line is given by Merleau-Ponty. In 'Eye and Mind', Merleau-Ponty addresses the 'prosaic conception of the line as a positive attribute and property of the object in itself' (1993, 142). In the positivist assumption which Merleau-Ponty subjects to critique, 'it is the outer contour of the apple or the border between the plowed field and the meadow, considered as present in the world, such that, guided by points taken from the real world the pencil or brush would only have to pass over them' (1993, 142). By contrast, in Merleau-Ponty's aesthetic,

> there are no lines visible in themselves... neither the contour of the apple nor the border between field and meadow is in *this* place or that, they are always on the near or the far side of the point we look at. They are always between or behind whatever we fix our eyes upon; they are indicated, implicated and even very imperiously demanded by the things, but they themselves are not things. They were thought to circumscribe the apple or the meadow, but the apple and the meadow 'form themselves' from themselves, and come into the visible as if they had come from a pre-spatial world behind the scenes (1993, 143; emphasis in the original).

I introduce Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological reflections on lines in the visual arts to illustrate a contiguity with the kind of aesthetic I attribute in this chapter to Le Guin's cartography. The line, in the above quotation, appears pregnant in the things themselves. Such an aesthetic is deeply Aeolian — art lies in wait in the forms of nature and announces itself to those human vessels capable of its realisation. Indeed, Le Guin seems to consider the work of the artist in precisely these terms. She writes,

'to make something is to invent it, to discover it, to uncover it, like Michelangelo cutting away the marble that hid the statue... To discover something is to make it' (Le Guin 1989g, 47)). Merleau-Ponty writes that lines furnish 'the blueprint of a genesis of things' (1993, 143). Thus, things are possessed with an autonomous faculty of expression; they 'form themselves from themselves' (1993, 143). It is the privilege of the line to catalyse this genesis. This phenomenological aesthetic might appear far removed from the more mundane operations of cartography. However, both projects, art and cartography, take the line as their basic unit of representation. In the traditions of both cartography and visual art, the origins of the line appear to retreat from view. Lines gesture towards an Aeolian aesthetic in which lineation appears less the result of human activity than to inhere in the things themselves.

Cartography results from an interaction between two visual statements, lineation, which describes forms, and negative spaces. Both of these basic units of cartography are implicated in an Aeolian aesthetic — they obfuscate points of origin and mystify their provenance. I want to consider one further act of cartographic lineation in children's fiction, described in Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons*, to consolidate this point. After meeting the crew of the Swallow, Captain Nancy draws a sketch map on the ground to demonstrate the principle of leading lights that allows sailors to navigate a harbour in the dark:

> Captain Nancy squatted on the beach and drew a half circle. 'Suppose this is the harbour,' she said, 'and these are the rocks outside.' She put some big stones in about the position of the rocks outside the harbour. 'You want to come in. Well a straight line like that brings you clean through the rocks without touching any of them. Draw the line a bit longer, right into the harbour, and up on the beach. Your marks must be on that line. Take this for your first mark.' She planted a twig. 'That's the stump with the cross on it. Now you find anything else that you can see over the first mark and also on the same straight line. It can be anything. There's

> no need to mark it if you know it. Then when you want to come into the harbour from outside all you have to do is keep the two marks one behind the other' (Ransome 2012, 164-165).

Nancy's act of mapping oscillates between drawing the map and an explanation of the drawing. She either draws or constructs a part of the map, then explains it in speech, or she prefigures the construction of the map in speech and then proceeds to draw it. However, a hiatus is introduced to this alternation between narration and mapping when Nancy comes to mark the line. When the line appears, Nancy's drawing of the line and her description of it are conflated into one act; 'well a straight line like *that* brings you clean through the rocks' (Ransome 2012, 164; emphasis mine). The *that* which I have emphasised is the crux of the problem here. 'That', here, is used anaphorically. It assumes a line that has already been drawn. However, unlike the other elements of the map, the circle or the rocks for instance, the line has no existence prior to Nancy's description of it in speech. Thus, the anaphoric 'that' assumes a line that has already been drawn, but actually constitutes itself. That is, 'that' refers anaphorically back to a line which it posits but actually creates.

What I want to suggest then is that Nancy's line is motivated by the same ambiguity concerning origins that I have argued for throughout this chapter. The anaphoric 'that' has no founding moment which gives it meaning. It deceptively points to a source of meaning external and prior to itself which does not actually exist. The line, anaphorically summoned into existence by the 'that', clearly obfuscates the moment of the line's constitution. Michael Hvid Munchow writes that the 'line depicts, but it also hides' as it 'installs itself diacritically between viewer and world and testifies to an invisibility' (Munchow 1994, 68). Part of what is concealed by the line, then, is its very origin.

In the above, I have read Le Guin's maps in conjunction with the publication history of her texts. This act of historicisation resulted in a reading of Le Guin's maps that emphasised the Aeolian nature of the fundamental units of her cartography. Lines and forms, the visual morphemes of Le Guin's cartography, obfuscate the hand of the author. Moreover, it was suggested that cartographic lineation, even if read without such publication history in mind, tends to obscure its own origin. Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* was taken as exemplary of this fact. The following section will serve to flesh out the context into which Le Guin's cartography is written. Like that of the *Earthsea* books, the publication history of Robert Louis Stevenson's map for *Treasure Island* is one that resulted in the obfucastion of authorship. Moreover, the final published version of the map included in the space of representation visual suggestions of an occluded genesis.

Metalepsis

In his essay 'Philosophy, Literature, Topography: Heidegger and Hardy', J. Hillis Miller couches the relationship between literary maps and their attending narratives in *Gestalt*-theoretical terms:

> The placing of a story in a certain setting, like the building of a house, a wall, or a road, makes that place habitable, but the place gives solidity, continuity, and perdurability to the life that is lived within it, as well as to the records of that life. According to the alogic of figure and ground relations, the landscape around, behind, or beneath the novel must both pre-exist the novel as what is outside it, prior to it, giving it solidity, and be incorporated within it. The landscape exists as landscape only when it has been made human in an activity of inhabitation that the writing of the novel repeats or prolongs. *Causer and caused, first and second, change places in a perpetually reversing metalepsis... novel and map; real map and imaginary map; landscape and map. Each is both prior to the other and later than it, causer and caused, inside it and outside it at once* (Miller 1995, 21; emphasis mine).

The 'perpetually reversing metalepsis' that obtains between map and narrative has the effect, as Miller's quotation makes clear, of obscuring points of origin. Laura Eidam argues that illustration played a 'strategic role' in the 'genesis and reception' of *Treasure Island* (Eidam 2012, 48). In his reflection on the writing of *Treasure Island*, 'My First Book', Robert Louis Stevenson detailed the genesis of his enduringly popular adventure novel. Stevenson drew a map of an island before conceiving the narrative and characters that would populate his imaginary landscape:

> I made the map of an island; it was elaborately and (I thought) beautifully coloured; the shape of it took my fancy beyond expression... it contained harbours that pleased me like sonnets; and with the unconsciousness of the predestined, I ticketed my performance 'Treasure Island.' I am told there are people who do not care for maps, and find it hard to believe. The names, the shapes of the woodlands, the courses of the roads and rivers... here is an inexhaustible fund of interest for any man with eyes to see, or twopence worth of imagination to understand with (Stevenson 2011a, 187).

So successful was the writing process thus pursued, that is, of drawing a map and then mining its imaginative resources, that Stevenson was led to remark 'I never write now without... an almanac, and the map of the country and the plan of every house' (Stevenson 2011a, 191). In this he anticipates Le Guin's own writing process who, in an interview with *The New Yorker* claims, 'I always draw a map' (Le Guin 2009a). Stevenson calls the map drawn prior to the writing of *Treasure Island* 'the chief part of my plot' and, he suggests, the shape of the story was cut according to the measure of the map (2011a, 190). Jacob offers an unproblematic reconstruction of the chronological relationship between map and narrative. Generalising from the case of *Treasure Island* and its map, Jacob writes 'the map imposes a set of constraints upon

the story that in itself remains to be written' and he calls maps a 'novelistic tool [which] most often predates the writing itself' (Jacob 2006, 281) However, the historical reality of the publication of *Treasure Island* troubles Jacob's reconstruction. Stevenson reminisced:

> I sent in my manuscript and the map along with it to Messrs. Cassell. The proofs came, they were corrected, but I heard nothing of the map. I wrote and asked; was told it had never been received, and sat aghast. It is one thing to draw a map at random, set a scale in one corner of it at a venture, and write up a story to the measurements. It is quite another to have to examine a whole book, make an inventory of all allusions contained in it, and with a pair of compasses painfully design a map to suit the data. I did it, and the map was drawn again in my father's office, with embellishments of blowing whales and sailing ships (Stevenson 2011a, 190).

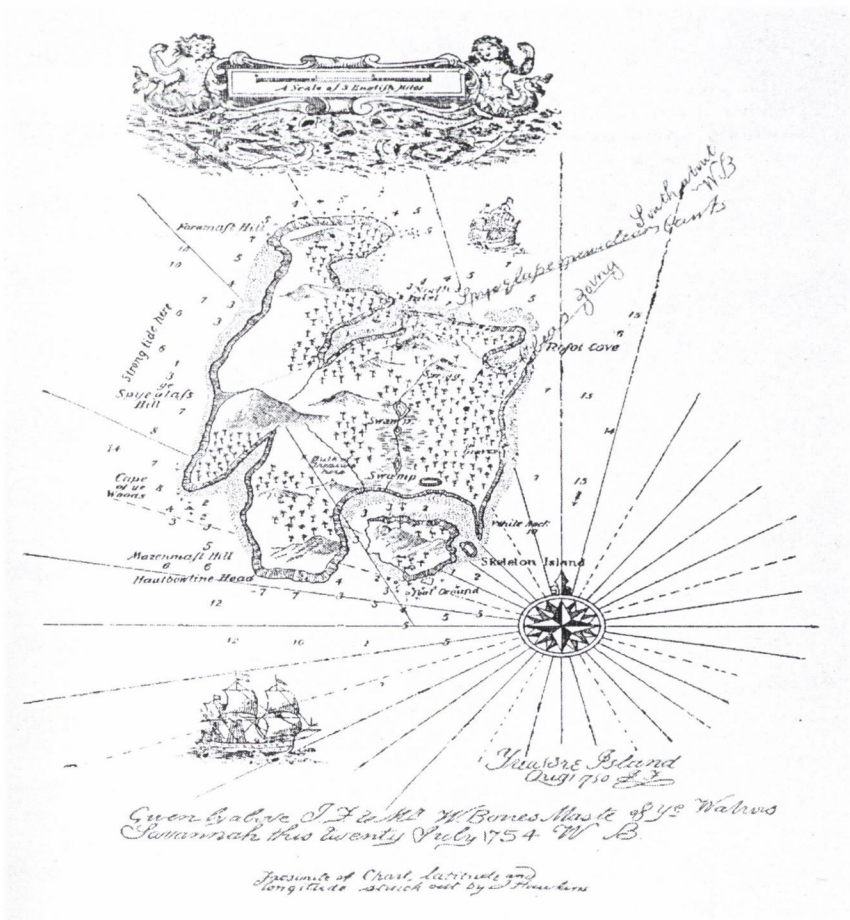


Figure 17. Map included with 'Treasure Island', 1883 (Stevenson 2011, 8).

The historical circumstances of publication thus preclude the predication of causality to either the map or the narrative. Stevenson drew a map of an imaginary landscape. From this map, he extrapolated his narrative. On the loss of the map en route to the publishers, Stevenson was forced to reconstruct his map according to the shape of the narrative. Thus, the narrative returns to reorganise and reimagine the map from which it emerged. In other words, the narrative returned to reshape and reconstruct its own ground. As such, in this case, the uncomplicated causal relationship between map and narrative that Jacob posits is simply untenable. Causer and caused, map and narrative trade places. Further, as the narrative returned to reshape and reimagine the map, it took control of its own condition of possibility. That is, appropriating and restructuring the map that formed its point of origin, the narrative appears self-generative or self-causing. The narrative, in reforming the map according to its own logic, determined and delimited the matrix from which it emerged in the first place.

Although somewhat fortuitous, the logic of vision and revision that resulted in the final version of Stevenson's map is replicated by later literary cartographers. As documented above, Le Guin's map also resulted from a dialogue between image and text, cartography and narrative. In tracing the genesis of both maps, I have sought to demonstrate that an obfuscation of points of origin is endemic to the act of literary cartography.

I have attempted to demonstrate how maps in children's literature are inflected by a cartographic tradition that obfuscates sites of authorship and origin. The wind-heads of Le Guin's maps were taken as a symbol of a reduced or mystified author function in Le Guin's maps. Further, a dialogue was established between the publication history of the first Earthsea map and that included with Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. Both maps, it was argued were subject to the metalepsis identified by

Miller as characteristic of literary maps. The result of this metalepsis was, it was suggested, a mystification of the relationship of causer and caused. Thus, authorial agency, as an agent of causation, was further complicated by the publication history of *Treasure Island* and *A Wizard of Earthsea*. In articulating how maps actively obfuscate their authorship, I have demonstrated that they participate in the Aeolian rhetoric of ecomimesis.

Morton argues that the Aeolian is a rhetorical formula fundamentally invested in issues or origin or provenance. In what remains of this chapter, I will articulate the close relationship that obtains between cartography in children's literature and the rhetorical devices of *anaphora* and *analepsis*. Harley states, somewhat dogmatically, that '*all* maps are rhetorical' as 'rhetoric permeates all layers of the map' (Harley 2001, 37; emphasis in the original). Anaphora and analepsis both involve rhetorical gestures backwards in time. Both tropes, it will be demonstrated, characterise the cartographic space, and linguistic representations of map making. Further, it will be argued that anaphora engages in the mystification of points of origin suggested thus far.

Anaphora and Analepsis

On Robert Louis Stevenson's map, included with *Treasure Island*, iconographic depictions of ships frame the island at its northern and southern points. Likewise, the maps included with Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* depict ships just the shores of the various geographies Gulliver encounters (Swift 2008, 206). Raymond Lister notes that 'it was a long time before cartographers ceased to illustrate ships...on the high seas' and 'they occur on maps right up to the beginning of the nineteenth century' (Lister 1965, 64-65). Maps included with children's literature, however, have

prolonged the tradition, particularly in the genres of fantasy and historical fiction. Le Guin's map for *The Farthest Shore* depicts *Lookfar*, crewed by Ged and Arren, and a flotilla representing the 'Children of the Open Sea' that the pair encounter in the narrative.

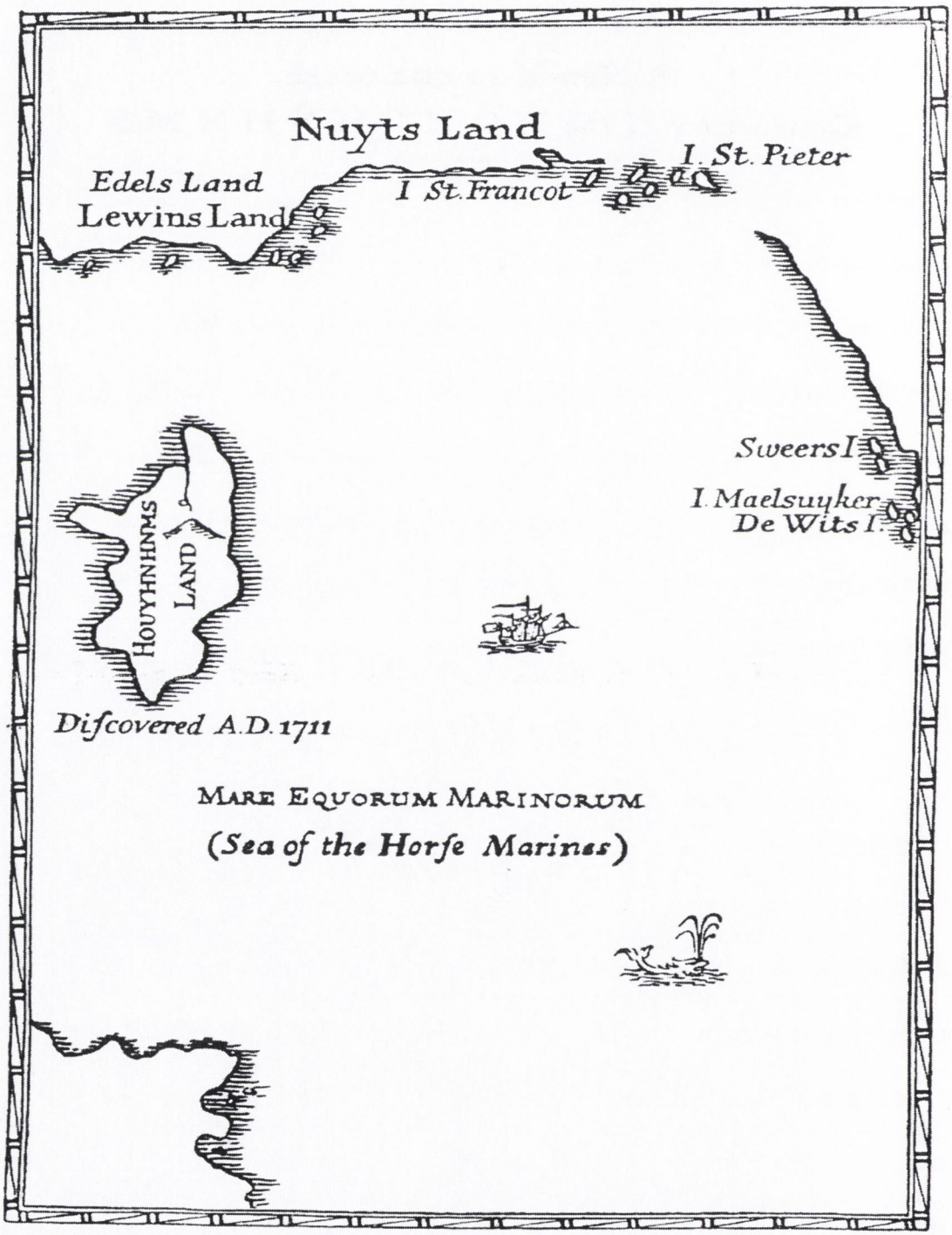


Figure 18: Map included with *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift (Swift 2008, 206).

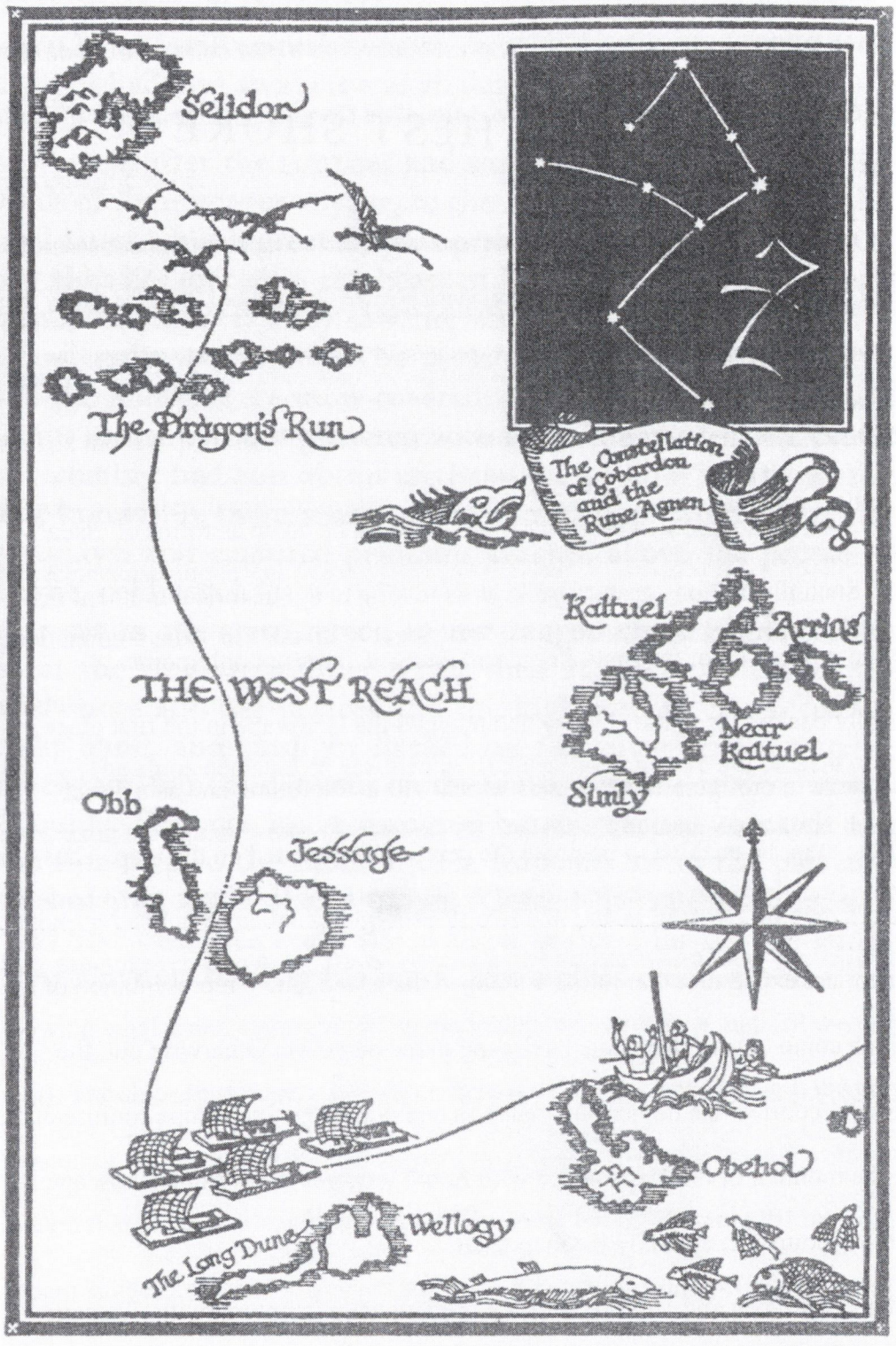


Figure 19: 'The West Reach.' Included with *The Farthest Shore*, first published 1972. (Le Guin 1973, 7).

The persistence of the representation of ships on cartography up to the nineteenth century, and children's literature up to the present day, has a particular bearing on the argument concerning origins I defend here. Michel de Certeau points out that

> far from being "illustrations," iconic glosses on the text, these figurations, like fragments of stories, mark on the map the historical operations from which it resulted. Thus the sailing ship painted on the sea indicates the maritime expedition that made it possible to represent the coastlines (de Certeau 1984, 121).

As such, cartographic depictions of ships might be taken as forms of visual analepsis. Such illustrations gesture backwards in time to the historical moment that enabled the production of the map. Representations of ships not only point analeptically backwards to the ships which mapped the landscape in the first place, they also serve to prefigure those vessels which will in the future, and as a direct result of the map, be enabled to navigate the geography depicted on the map. Thus, on Stevenson's map of Treasure Island, the two ships might be taken as both a reminder of the historical expedition that initially mapped the island, and a representation of the ships which come to visit that same landscape in the narrative. Otherwise put, the ships visually conflate the devices of analepsis and prolepsis. Such ships confuse and conflate the moment of the maps origin with future voyages to the same landscape, which are, of course, enabled by the map itself.

This confusion and conflation of the original act of mapping with subsequent voyages to the landscape represented on the map has a peculiar effect. The representations of ships on maps gesture backwards to the moment of the map's original production. However, they also anticipate future voyages to the same landscape, which are enabled by the very production of the map by those initial

voyages. As a result, such future voyages are conflated, on the cartographic space, with their own conditions of possibility. This conflation is representative of that alogic that Miller identifies as a metalepsis between causer and caused. Initial cartographic expeditions are confused with the future voyages they enable. First and second, enabler and enabled, are thus conflated on the cartographic plane.

The ships on Stevenson's and Le Guin's maps thus invoke the imaginary cause of the maps, the imagined cartographic expeditions to map the landscape, as well as those expeditions which the same maps enable in the narrative. Conflating the devices of analepsis and prolepsis, the ships further obfuscate the relationship between cause and effect. Furthermore, in the case of Stevenson's map, the publication history of the map frames the ships as iconographic depictions of a lost origin.

The ships depicted on the map of Treasure Island were not present on Stevenson's original sketch (Stevenson 2011a, 190). They appear only in the second iteration of the map, after the loss of the original en route to the publishers. Indeed, they are not even drawn by Stevenson but by his father who added 'embellishments of blowing whales and sailing ships' to the second version of the map (Stevenson 2011a, 190). The ships thus mark a difference between the map included with the published version of the novel and the lost original map. This difference leads Stevenson to lament that the second map was 'never "Treasure Island" to me' (2011a, 190). Laura Eidam suggests that the map was integral to Stevenson's self-perception as an 'author of authentic fiction' (Eidam 2012, 53). With the intervention of his father on the cartographic space, Stevenson's autonomy over his work, and hence, his sense of authorial agency is irrevocably compromised. More importantly, the ships represent,

for Stevenson, a reminder of a lost and obscured origin that can never entirely be reclaimed.

Thus, in conflating the devices of analepsis and prolepsis, the representations of ships on Stevenson's map conflate causer and caused, first and second. In so compromising the normal operations of causality, the ships represent a complication of authorial agency. Further, the publication history of Stevenson's text contributes to this reading of the ships on the map. His father's additions represent a diminuition of the author's prerogative. These visual analogues of anaphora and analepsis thereby obfuscate authorial agency. Insofar as Aeolian rhetoric turns on an etiolated or obscured sense of authorship, these ships contribute to the Aeolian rhetoric of the cartographic space. Further, this visual rhetoric of anaphora and analepsis is confirmed by descriptions of maps in books for children.

The map of Treasure Island is described in the narrative thus:

> The paper had been sealed in several places with a thimble by way of seal; the very thimble, there fell out the map of an island, with latitude and longitude, soundings, names of hills, and bays and inlets, and every particular that would be needed to bring a ship to safe anchorage upon its shores. *It* was about nine miles long and five across, shaped, you might say, like a fat dragon standing up (Stevenson 2011, 38; emphasis mine).

The 'it' which I have emphasised conflates the map with the landscape it represents in a rhetorical slight of hand. Before the clarification of the sentence that it initiates, the relative pronoun 'it' could refer equally either to the map or the territory. 'It' anaphorically conflates cartographic representation with geographical reality. This is an exemplary Aeolian manouevre. As argued in chapter one, the Aeolian names a rhapsodic form of representation in which the poet or author is not a creator, but merely a mediator of aesthetic energies. Ecomimesis frames art as that which emerges

directly from the environment or earth itself, passing through the artist as if through a conduit. Morton takes Wordsworth's project as paradigmatic of this form of ecorhapsody, noting that 'Wordsworth placed lines of poetry on or in the earth, trying to turn them into found objects. Just as individualism and private space were opening up, so collectivity and nonpersonal, or transpersonal, environmental space became artistically exciting' (2009, 56). Conflating the map with the territory, the anaphoric 'it' in the description of the map of 'Treasure Island' suggests a natural correspondence between reality and representation. This elision leaves little to no room in which something like an author might operate. Otherwise put, anaphora collapses the distance between representation and reality. In doing so, the cartographer is figured not as an agent who selects elements of reality and subjects them to his aesthetic or scientific agenda. Rather, the cartographer emerges as merely a conduit or channel through which the landscape expresses itself. Indeed, Jacob, in his discussion of imaginary maps, draws on the same vocabulary of rhapsody as Morton does in his discussion of ecomimesis. Jacob writes that the writing of a narrative preceded by a map is

> rhapsodic, in the etymological sense, since the gaze ties together and draws out an itinerary and establishes continuity by moving along the path on a journey and by 'sewing' together disjointed places, just as the singers (*rhapsodes*) of archaic Greece used to 'sew' (*rhaptein*) together fragments of the Homeric epic (Jacob 2006, 94).

As reconstructed by Jacob then, the author of a narrative included in a book with a prefatory map is one framed as a rhapsode and, as such, is implicated in an ecomimetic aesthetic.

Despite Le Guin's claim in the interview quoted above about the importance of map-making to her creative process, only one description of a map is offered in the

six books of the *Earthsea* cycle. In *The Farthest Shore*, Ged and Arren arrive on the island of Selidor and the latter recalls the location of the far-flung island on maps in his childhood home:

> In the Hall in Berila were old maps that had been made in the days of the Kings, when traders and explorers had sailed from the Inner Lands and the Reaches had been better known. A great map of the North and West was laid in mosaic on two walls of the Prince's throne-room, with the isle of Enlad in gold and grey above the throne; and Arren saw it in his mind's eye as he had seen it a thousand times in boyhood. North of Enlad was Osskil, and west of *it* Ebosskil, and south of *that* Semel and Paln; and there the Inner Lands ended, set here and there with a tiny dolphin or a whale. Then, at last, after the corner where the north wall met the west wall, there was Narveduen, and beyond *it* three lesser islands (Le Guin 1973, 166; emphasis mine).

The description of the map is saturated with confusing anaphoric elegant variations, emphasised above. Islands and landscapes are introduced in quick succession and immediately subjected to anaphora. The result is that the semantic ground keeps shifting beneath the reader's feet as he or she is forced to juggle the proper nouns to which the relative pronouns refer in her memory. In their accumulation, the pronouns thus strain against the relationship with the proper nouns to which they refer. By the end of the paragraph, the profusion of anaphoric pronouns is such that they threaten to become completely uncoupled from the nouns and landscapes to which they refer. So unmoored, the anaphoric 'its' and 'thats' emphasised above float free of the cartographic elements which are their nominal objects. These anaphoric pronouns are, then, Aeolian in the sense that, as a result of their confusing accumulation, they appear to have no unambiguous source or point of reference. Indeed, the creation of the maps is couched in the passive construction, 'in the Hall in Berila were old maps

that had been made in the days of the Kings'. This passive construction contributes to the sense of mystified cartographic agency. Further, this description of the mosaic map in the Hall of Berila is given analeptically as flashback to a time anterior to the events of the narrative. The original act of mapping as such never appears to take place in 'Earthsea'. Characters encounter a landscape that appears to always already have been mapped.

Maps in children's literature, are, then, saturated with visual analogues of analepsis and anaphora. This visual grammar is one that configures the cartographic space as one realised by an obcure and ever-absent author. It is a grammar matched by prose renderings of maps and acts of mapping in the narratives themselves. Like the maps that preface the narrative, maps *in* the narrative are structured by anaphora and analepsis. Thus, the cartographic space of maps included with children's literature troubles our ability to point to anything as unitary and uncomplicated as an author. Maps in children's books frame the cartographer as a conduit through which reality is channeled into representation. This is analogous to the way parataxis was shown to work in the first chapter. In so mystifying points of origin, maps in children's literature appear as works with an ambiguous origin in nature. Less the act of an artist subjecting landscapes to his whim, maps in children's books offer themselves as somehow indigenous to and emerging from geography itself.

Conclusion

Denis Cosgrove argues that

> as a graphic register of correspondence between two spaces, whose explicit outcome is a space of representation, mapping is a deceptively simple activity. To map is in one way or another to take the measure of a world, and more than merely take it, to figure the measures so

> taken in such a way that it may be communicated between people, places and or times. The measure of mapping is not restricted to the mathematical; it may equally be spiritual, political or moral. By the same token, the mapping's record is not confined to the archival; it includes the remembered, the imagined, the contemplated (Cosgrove 1999, 1-2).

This chapter has attempted to problematise the deceptively simple activity of prefacing fiction for children with a map. It has argued for the communicative and rhetorical nature of these maps and has suggested that literary cartographies in general, and Le Guin's in particular are invested in strategies of ecomimesis. As Cosgrove points out, maps refer not only to the contours of landforms or political boundaries, but to the acts of imagination that inhabit those places. In the above, I have attempted to document how maps in children's literature produce the fiction of 'nature' and imagine the embeddedness of the map reader in that same nature. Kimberley Reynolds argues that 'children's texts operate two semiotic systems simultaneously: the visual and the textual, and the entire domain is bound up in interactions between formats and media' (Reynolds 2007, 16). Building on Reynolds's suggestion, this chapter has demonstrated that Le Guin's maps both anticipate and share in the ecomimetic rhetoric of her prose. The two semiotic systems of map and narrative conspire to produce a sense of nature or environment.

Chapter three will persevere in the same spirit of critical suspicion. If Le Guin's cartographic and narrative descriptions of landscape result in reified images of 'nature', 'place' and 'environment', her renderings of nonhuman animals likewise produce the reification, 'life'. Chapters One and Two have turned on a mode of reading which assumes the philosophical redundancy of 'nature' as a term in environmental rhetoric. Chapter three will attempt a similar manoeuvre; it will argue for a vision of 'ecology without life'.

Life, Animality and Posthumanism

Chapters one and two argued that even as Le Guin's aesthetic appeared to reconcile the distinction between subject and object, her writing ended up reaffirming this distinction. This chapter will trace a similar tension in Le Guin's representation of animals. It will argue that Le Guin's critical and fictional writing appears to collapse the distinction between human and nonhuman life. However, as will be demonstrated, Le Guin's work also evidences a more conservative tendency to reaffirm the difference between human and animal. In articulating the tensions in Le Guin's representation of life, this chapter intervenes in debates pertaining to 'posthumanism' in children's literature.

As Cary Wolfe argues, the term 'posthumanism' in its current use has 'different and sometimes competing meanings' (Wolfe 2010, xii). Indeed, Wolfe's own use of the term co-opts an idiom more often associated with the interface between human and machine. This species of posthumanism considers the alternately utopian and dystopian promises of technologies which have the potential to effect a radical shift in what is understood by the term 'human.' In the context of children's literature, it is N. Katherine Hayles's articulation of the posthuman condition that has proved central to discussions of posthumanism.[1] Hayles argues that 'information has lost its body' and that information theory, which emphasises substrate neutrality, threatens to rehearse a Cartesian separation of mind and body (Hayles 1999, 2). Her list of the attributes of the posthuman subject follows from this neoCartesianism, suggesting that the posthuman 'privileges informational pattern over material instantiation', 'considers consciousness... as an epiphenomenon of evolution', 'thinks

[1] Richard Gooding, in his discussion of posthumanism in Philip Pullman's *Clockwork*, draws on Hayles's work (Gooding 2011, 310). Bradford et al., in their chapter entitled 'The Struggle to be Human in a Posthuman World' likewise draw extensively on Hayles's critique (Bradford et al. 2008, 78). Elaine Ostry's analysis of the figure of the posthuman in young adult science fiction also draws on Hayles's work (Ostry 2004, 224).

of its body as the original prosthesis' and 'configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines'(1999, 2-3). Hayles's monograph hesitates between a dystopian Cartesian nightmare where subjects consider their bodies as mere 'fashion accessories' and a utopian imaginary which promises to finally decentre the subject of liberal humanism (1999, 5).

For the most part, criticism of the posthuman condition in children's literature has found that fiction for children which focuses on the human/technology interface shares Hayles's ambivalence. Richard Gooding, for instance, suggests that in his fairy tale, *Clockwork*, Philip Pullman hesitates between a radical posthuman materialism, and a reactionary liberal humanism. Gooding suggests that *Clockwork* evidences a 'radically materialist position' and a 'moral resistance to some implications of that position' (Gooding 2011, 309). Likewise, Clare Bradford et al. in their readings of children's texts that represent characters mediated by information and bio/medical technology, argue that 'the idea of a posthuman future has utopian and dystopian possibilities' (2008, 155). However, on aggregate, their readings suggest that the texts they analyse retreat from the ambivalent promise of the posthuman condition and resort to the consolations of the humanist subject (2008, 165). Victoria Flanagan argues that 'agency is typically conceptualised in liberal humanist terms in fictions produced for children and adolescents as the capacity to act autonomously and independently' (Flanagan 2011, 41).

Children's literature criticism has thus detected an ambivalence about our new posthuman condition in its object of study. However, as signalled above, critical reflections on the posthuman subject have moved away from an exclusive focus on the technology/human interface. Wolfe's appropriation of the term, and, to a lesser extent, Rosi Braidotti's, have been particularly influential. It is Wolfe's and

Braidotti's inflection of posthumanism which frame the discussion that follows. Wolfe shares with earlier variants of posthumanism a suspicion of the liberal humanist subject (Wolfe 2010, xv). However, where Hayles drew on a fund of concepts supplied by cybernetics to trouble the distinction between man and machine, Wolfe's posthuman critique uses related concepts to problematise the distinction between human and animal. As such, Wolfe's definition of posthumanism is more appropriate to an analysis of Le Guin's work than Hayles's.

In an effort to palliate the sundering of consciousness from the body that houses it, Wolfe defines the posthuman in terms of its 'embodiment and embeddedness' in the world (2010, xv). His definition of posthumanism is directly opposed to 'Hayles's use of the term [which] tends to oppose embodiment' (2000, xv). Wolfe's expropriation of the term 'posthumanism' is inflected largely by his expertise in critical animal studies. His emphasis on embodiment is motivated by a desire to check the humanist impulse to equate humanity with mind, and animality with body. He writes,

> I emphasize two crucial points regarding my sense of posthumanism... The first has to do with perhaps *the* fundamental anthropological dogma associated with humanism... namely that 'the human' is achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature, the biological, and the evolutionary, but more generally by transcending the basis of materiality and embodiment altogether. (Wolfe 2010, xiv-xv; emphasis in original)

Wolfe checks the exceptionalism of the humanist subject by dissolving agency into the body, a body that is implicated in a network of other embodied interests. Appealing to various inflections of 'autopoiesis', Wolfe seeks to counter any vestigial dualisms, and, in so doing, counter the exceptionalist impulses of humanism (2010,

xxv). The posthumanism that Wolfe champions thus intensifies the embodiment which Hayles's posthuman subject seemed to abandon. Wolfe's version of posthumanism has, he argues, the potential to force us to 're-think our taken-for-granted modes of human experience' by 'recontextualizing them in terms of the entire sensorium of living beings and their own autopoietic ways of "bringing forth a world"'(2010, xxv). To paraphrase considerably, posthumanism becomes in Wolfe's hands a species of deconstruction. It names a form of critique that troubles the human/animal distinction which, as is evident from the quotation given above, underwrites humanism in Wolfe's understanding of the term.

This chapter builds on the work of Flanagan, Bradford and Gooding. Like these critics, I detect in the writing of Ursula Le Guin a residual humanism. My definition of humanism takes a slightly different inflection than that offered by Flanagan, Bradford and Gooding. Evidently, humanism is a term with a complex history that cannot adequately be reduced to any one dogma.[2] However, in the theories of Braidotti and Wolfe, humanism is made synonymous with those discourses that maintain a separation between human and nonhuman forms of life. Braidotti thus draws on the resources of posthumanism to argue the following:

> Environmental theory stresses the link between the humanistic emphasis on Man as the measure of all things and the domination and exploitation of nature and condemns the abuses of science and technology. Both of them involve epistemic and physical violence over the

[2] As Chris Baldick notes, 'humanism' emerged in the nineteenth century as a term 'for the values and ideals of the European Renaissance, which placed a new emphasis on the expansion of human capacities' (2001, 117). Baldick goes on to observe that in the twentieth century, influenced by the thought of Matthew Arnold, Anglo-American literary culture espoused liberal humanism, 'which centres its view of world upon the notion of the freely self-determining individual' (2001, 118). Further, 'in modern literary theory, liberal humanism (and sometimes all humanism) has come under challenge from post-structuralism, which replaces the unitary concept of 'Man' with that of subject which is gendered, 'de-centred' and no longer self determining (2001, 118).

> structural 'others' and are related to the European Enlightenment ideal of 'reason' (Braidotti 2013, 48)

For Braidotti, the humanistic ideal of reason was achieved at the expense of a violent process of othering. The rational human was defined against certain rational groups considered to be less than rational, such as women and animals. In other words, humanism, in Braidotti's terms, is predicated on the assumption of a fundamental distinction between human and nonhuman life. The second chapter of her monograph, 'Post-Anthropocentrism: Life beyond the Species', is devoted to documenting the epistemic and physical violence which results from this assumption (2013, 55-105).

Thus, where Flanagan, Bradford and Gooding articulate the humanisms of children's literature as a response to the posthuman challenge of technology, this chapter will document how Le Guin's writing responds to the challenge of the animal. Both technology and animality have become the focus of posthuman critique because they offer a challenge to the self-sufficiency and distinctiveness of the human. Flanagan, Bradford and Gooding suggest that children's literature reacts by re-affirming the humanist vision when faced with the encroachment of technology. Likewise, I will argue that Le Guin's text works to police the boundary between human and nonhuman life, thereby shoring up a distinction seen as fundamental to humanist discourse.

As demonstrated in earlier chapters, environmental writing attempts to mitigate the distinction between subject and object, or human and world. However, as argued earlier, such attempts at reconciliation end up reaffirming the distinctions they seek to deconstruct. Wolfe's version of posthumanism, which argues for the 'embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world', might then be read as another permutation of ecomimesis

(Wolfe 2010, xv). That is to say, much as nature writers, at least as caricatured by Morton, attempt to dissolve the subject into the world, Wolfe's posthumanism militates for collapsing the distinction between the human and a broader context of 'life'. The readings that follow thus serve a dual purpose. They suggest that Le Guin's fiction hesitates between affirming a utopian posthuman kinship with nonhuman life, and the announcement of human uniqueness. However, what follows will also serve to demonstrate the limits of Wolfe's inflection of posthumanism. It will be argued that Le Guin's fiction appears exemplary of Wolfe's vision of human embeddedness in a milieu of life. However, in demonstrating the residual humanism that inheres in Le Guin's writing, the difficulty of sustaining Wolfe's vision is thereby suggested.

This chapter might thus be juxtaposed with critical treatments of Le Guin's writing that celebrate her representation of nonhuman life, and, indeed, Le Guin's own critical reflections on the problem of the animal. Tonia L. Payne, for instance, argues that Le Guin's animal stories enjoin the reader to question 'categorical distinctions' between human and nonhuman life (Payne 2007, 170). Le Guin herself offers a meditation on the representation of animals in children's fiction in her critical work, *Cheek by Jowl* (2009). That work hesitates between affirming a continuity between human and nonhuman animal and offering a more conservative defence of the distinction between these two orders of life. Thus, Le Guin arranges an eclectic range of material drawn from classical philosophy and native American oral folklore to suggest a kinship between human and nonhuman animals. She writes,

> in his great poem *On the Nature of Things*, Lucretius saw no barrier between man and the rest of creation; he saw the non-human world as the matrix in which mankind is formed and nourished, to which we belong as the garnet belongs to the rock in which it crystallized, and to which we will return as the sunlit wave returns into the sea (Le Guin 2009, 46).

However, Le Guin qualifies such claims for continuity between human and non-human to such an extent that the author appears ultimately unwilling to finally collapse this fundamental distinction. Elsewhere in *Cheek by Jowl* she writes,

> no other creature talks the way we do. Some birds can imitate our speech; carefully trained apes can signify wants or interests by signing words in ASL; but evidently no animal except homo sap. has the capacity, activated in infancy, that allows us to learn the full range of human language (2009, 53).

Cheek by Jowl thus evidences a tension between a more or less Romantic desire to assert continuity between human and nonhuman life, and an instinct to preserve the distinction between human and animal intact. This tension is analogous to that documented in chapters One and Two, which described the ambiguous desire to collapse the subject/environment distinction by way of ecomimesis. Much as ecomimesis ends up reaffirming the distinction it otherwise appears to collapse, Le Guin's reflections in *Cheek by Jowl* conclude by reinstalling the distinction between human and nonhuman life. Akira Mizuta Lippit argues that this distinction was what allowed the invention of 'the human' in the first place:

> It is interesting to note that the invention of the idea of humanity, its appearance in the human sciences, was accompanied by an intensive investigation of the animal in those very sciences. At precisely the moment when the bond between humanity and animal came to be seen as broken, humanity became a subject and the animal its reflection (Lippit 2000, 19).

Le Guin's critical writing, in obliquely distinguishing man from animal, thus rehearses the basic operation that made intelligible the concept of the human. This distinction is one which, it will be argued, remains operative in her fiction.

To demonstrate this, Chapter Three proceeds with a close reading of an episode in *A Wizard of Earthsea*. In this reading, both Ged and Le Guin's prose are shown to police a human/animal distinction that the dragons threaten to collapse. Proceeding sections explicate the philosophical and scientific contexts which inform Le Guin's humanism. Eugene Thacker argues that 'the question of "life" is the question that has come to define our contemporary era' (Thacker 2010, xiii). For Thacker, the philosophy of modernity is inescapably biophilosophy and 'life' is the question to which modernity must continue to address itself. I thus situate Le Guin's depictions of animality in the broader context of twentieth-century discourses about life. Erwin Schrödinger's 1944 text *What is Life?* is posited as an important intertext which informs Le Guin's writing. As the importance of Schrödinger's text has not yet been appreciated by Le Guin scholars, a considerable portion of this chapter is spent in an exegesis of his thought and in documenting how the physicist's ideas are ramified by Le Guin's aesthetic.

Drawing on the resources of speculative realism, I argue that Schrödinger's theories lend themselves to contradictory discourses. On the one hand, Schrödinger's thought appears to efface the distinction between human and nonhuman life. On the other hand, however, his thinking also provides resources for affirming this same distinction. This chapter explores the working out of this tension in Le Guin's aesthetic.

The Problem of the Animal

In *Cheek by Jowl*, Le Guin writes 'animals were once more to us than meat, pests, or pets: they were fellow-creatures, colleagues, dangerous equals. We might eat them; but then, they might eat us. That is at least part of the truth of my dragons. They remind us that the human is not the universal' (2009, 38). Although Le Guin's dragons have an ambiguous provenance in myth, the author's comments suggest that the symbolic work performed by dragons in her writing is not exhausted by that mythical genealogy. Rather, dragons, for Le Guin, are an objective correlative for the relationship between human and nonhuman animals. Further, the dragon stands in a part/whole relationship to the entire kingdom of nonhuman animals. The dragon, as Le Guin's comment suggests, figures as a part that stands in for the full plenum of nonhuman animals.

Dragons are, thus, a part of that whole species named 'animal'. Otherwise put, 'animal' is, on the evidence of the above quotation, a homogenous and undifferentiated category. It is precisely this elision of distinction between different kinds of nonhuman animals, and their reduction to a status of a kind of ontological foil against which the human can define itself that Derrida objects to. In *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, Derrida, meditating on his relationship with a cat, writes,

> if I say 'it is a real cat' that sees me naked, this is in order to mark its unsubstitutable singularity. When it responds to its name... it doesn't do so as the exemplar of a species called 'cat,' even less so of an 'animal' genus or kingdom. It is true that I identify it as *this* irreplaceable living being that one day enters my space, into this place where it can encounter me, see me, even see me naked. Nothing can ever rob me of the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized (Derrida 2008, 9; emphasis in original).

Derrida's refusal to generalise his reflections on a particular cat to a genus of 'the animal' stands in contrast with Le Guin's thinking. Derrida's essay is a critique of the techniques by which the humanist subject fashions itself. In particular, Derrida is critical of symbolic economies that elide differences between individual animals to create the spurious category of 'the animal'. It is against this category that the individualised subject of humanism defines himself. Le Guin's dragons, as the objective correlative of the relationship between human and nonhuman animals, in fact produce 'animality' as category. By framing her thinking about nonhuman life in terms of wholes and parts, Le Guin's writing is invested in the production of a spurious category of 'the animal', and by extension, the equally spurious category 'human'. Below I articulate the maintenance of this human/animal distinction in the Yevaud episode of *A Wizard of Earthsea*.

Ged's encounter with the dragon Yevaud in *Wizard* establishes the motif that dominates encounters with dragons for the rest of the cycle:

> No creature moved nor voice spoke for a long while on the island, but only the waves beat loudly on the shore. Then Ged was aware that the highest tower slowly changed its shape, bulging out on one side as if it grew an arm. He feared dragon-magic, for old dragons are very powerful and guileful in a sorcery like and unlike the sorcery of men: but a moment more and he saw this was not trick of the dragon but of his own eyes. What he had taken for a part of the tower was the shoulder of the Dragon of Pendor as he uncurled his bulk and lifted himself slowly up (Le Guin 1994, 113).

Each encounter between human and dragon in the *Earthsea* cycle is couched in terms of an initial misrecognition. Each misrecognition takes the form of a taxonomic failure. In particular, the dragons are frequently mistaken for birds. In *The Farthest Shore*, while they are convalescing with the 'raft-people', Arren mistakes the dragon

Orm Embar for 'a great bird' (1973, 138). Later, while negotiating 'The Dragons' Run', Arren sees dragons as gulls (1973, 155). In the climactic scene of *Tehanu*, the wizard Aspen mistakes the dragon Kalessin for an albatross (1992, 200). Le Guin's readers have recapitulated the taxonomic troubles that attend the dragons in her texts. Millicent Lenz advises readers of the dangers of misrecognising her creations: 'Le Guin's dragons are not to be confused with the dragons of the Christian tradition' (Lenz and Hunt 2003, 52). In this section, I introduce the trope of recognition in Le Guin's writing. I argue that recognition acts to consolidate a humanist subject, defined as a subject distinct from the animal.

If misrecognition is the characteristic trope by which the dragons are identified, this is, I suggest, symptomatic of their ambivalent relationship to the human. As Le Guin puts it in the quotation above, dragons are 'like and unlike' men. Thus, the dragons occupy an ambivalent position with respect to humanity. Standing in proximity to and distance from the human, the dragon complicates the species boundary. In this, the dragons share an ontological space with the concepts of animality that populate the discourses of posthumanism. Wolfe, for instance, argues that 'the animal poses grave definitional threats to the discourse of humanism' (Wolfe 2010, 100). Akira Mizuta Lippit makes a similar argument:

> Despite the distance of animal being from the human world, the uncanny proximity of animals to human beings necessarily involves them in any attempt to define a human essence. The effort to define the human being has usually required a preliminary gesture of exclusion: a rhetorical animal sacrifice. The presence of the animal must first be extinguished for the human being to appear (Lippit 2000, 8).

The repeated misrecognition of the dragons is, I suggest, symptomatic of their uncanny proximity to human beings. Like and unlike men, they trouble taxonomic economies. Further, as Wolfe's and Lippit's comments makes clear, the ability to order animals according to a taxonomic schema raises issues of definition for the subject of humanist discourse. Specifying the animal as 'not-human' facilitates, as Lippit argues, the definition of the human as human. In other words, at issue in the recognition of the animal is the recognition of the human. Le Guin's dragons, then, are threatening insofar as they trouble those taxonomies that allow for the easy recognition of the animal, and by extension, the human.

The acts of misrecognition that introduce the dragons are followed by descriptive prose that places an emphasis on the dragons' ability to dissolve species identity. In the Yevaud episode, the descriptive language focuses excessively on the mouth of the dragons. Possessing the power to literally incorporate Ged into his frame through ingestion, the 'long, toothed jaws' of one of Yevaud's spawn threaten to physically engulf Ged, much as Yevaud's words threaten to figuratively engulf him (Le Guin 1994, 112).

Moreover, in each encounter with a dragon, Le Guin not only ensures that they are initially mistaken for something else, she also resorts to piling simile on top of simile in order to describe them. Thus, in the Yevaud episode in *Wizard*, the dragons are compared to a 'forty-oared ship' (1994, 111), 'a stone falling' (112), 'broken stone' (114), 'a hound' (114), 'a hill' (114). The proliferation of similes signals the taxonomic hesitancy that attends the representation of the dragons. If similes establish points of contiguity and distinction between two things, points of identity and difference, then the proliferation of similes used to describe the dragons can be read as an anxious response to the fact that dragons are ambivalently 'like and unlike' men.

Further, the fact that the dragons are represented by simile, and not by metaphor, establishes a discursive precedent for Ged's triumph over the dragons. Sallie McFague suggests that simile is essentially an impoverished form of metaphor: 'One difficulty with simile in contrast to metaphor is that simile softens the shock of the linkage through its "like" reducing an awareness of dissimilarity' (McFague 1982, 38). Simile, in other words, privileges identity at the expense of difference. Unlike metaphor, which maintains a 'shocking' 'is and is not' relationship between tenor and vehicle, simile is, on McFague's reading, a form of comparison which introduces similarity and difference in a contained form which has less power to shock (McFague 1982, 38). If metaphor maintains the tension between 'is and is not', simile introduces this tension in an already contained and domesticated form. In introducing them through simile, then, Le Guin not only signals the dragons' worrying proximity to the human, she also already begins to contain this proximity.

Dragons, which complicate the species boundary, are thus met in the text with tropes that attempt to specify and fix their identity. The motifs of misrecognition and the multiplicity of similes thus both register the same problem. Because the dragons trouble the human/nonhuman species line, that is, because they are 'like and unlike men', they represent a challenge to taxonomic thinking. In other words, both motifs signal the difficulty of recognising what a dragon is 'like', that is, to specify its identity. Appropriately, then, Ged triumphs over Yevaud with an act of recognition:

> A grating sound came from the dragon's throat like the noise of an avalanche far off, stones falling among mountains. Fire danced along his three-forked tongue. He raised himself up higher, looming over the ruins. "You offer me safety! You threaten me! With what?"
>
> "With your name, Yevaud."

> Ged's voice shook as he spoke the name, yet he spoke it clear and loud. At the sound of it, the old dragon held still, utterly still. A minute went by, and another; and then Ged, standing there in his rocking chip of a boat, smiled. He had staked this venture and his life on a guess drawn from the histories of dragon-lore learned on Roke, a guess that this Dragon of Pendor was the same that had spoiled the west of Osskil in the days of Elfarran and Morred, and had been driven from Osskil by a wizard, Elt, wise in names. The guess had held (Le Guin 1994, 116-117).

Above I argued that the dragon, as a creature both 'like and unlike' men, posed a challenge to thinking that proceeds in terms of identity. Ged's triumph over Yevaud is, appropriately, an act of recognition that redeems his initial taxonomic failure. He specifies Yevaud's identity, asserting and naming the dragon's identity with that of 'histories of dragon-lore learned on Roke'.

Further, Yevaud's attempt to bargain with Ged announces the wizard's complete triumph over his animal adversary. The dragon, vanquished, offers Ged 'nine stones from [his] hoard' (Le Guin 1994, 117). The iconic logic of Yevaud's proposal stands in contrast with the dragon's earlier propensity for dissimulation. Where before Yevaud spoke with a lying, triple tongue, thereby threatening the identity of language and reality, the dragon is now reduced to a symbolic economy predicated on an exchange of like for like. Yevaud offers Ged nine stones in exchange for the nine dragons over which the wizard has triumphed. The iconic logic of this proposal, that is, the substitution of like for like, reveals the dragon's subordination to a logic of identity.

As noted above, Lippit and Wolfe share a suspicion that the subject as it is conceived in humanism depends on the erasure of the animal. The animal is a foil against which man defines himself. However, the animal always threatens the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the human in its capacity to exhibit similarities with

man. In the words of Le Guin in *A Wizard of Earthsea*, the animal is both 'like and unlike' man. This ambivalent proximity-in-distance requires constant and vigilant policing, and I have read the Yevaud episode in Le Guin's first *Earthsea* book as exemplary of humanistic taxonomic vigilance. Furthermore, as Lippit points out, a 'rhetorical animal sacrifice' is necessary to the definition of the human such that the 'presence of the animal must first be extinguished for the human being to appear' (Lippit 2000, 8). Le Guin's comments in *Cheek by Jowl* perform precisely this gesture of exclusion. In assimilating all nonhumans animals to the spurious category, 'the animal', against which Le Guin defines the human, the individual animal as such is prevented from appearing. The singular animal appears only tropologically and rhetorically as synecdoche for the category 'animal'.

The argument presented here thus problematises the conclusions of Payne, who argues that Le Guin's writings offer a vision of human 'kinship' with nonhuman animals (Payne 2007, 172). In fact, Le Guin's representation of nonhuman animals is mediated by the recalcitrant humanism of children's fiction that Flanagan and Bradford et al. have documented. The next section furnishes a philosophical and scientific context for Le Guin's humanism. It situates Le Guin's writing in the context of mid-twentieth century definitions of life. These vital discourses circumscribe Le Guin's thinking about the nonhuman. In drawing on and transforming the vocabularies of mid-century vitalisms, Le Guin's writing is informed by the tensions which frame these discourse.

Le Guin and the problem of 'life' in the twentieth century

'It was a dark and stormy night', first published in 1971, is the first half of a diptych of critical essays by Le Guin which considers narrative as a function of biology (Le

Guin 1989h, 21-31). The essay quotes extensively from Terrence Des Pres's 1976 work, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*. Des Pres's book, which emerges from a collection of interviews with survivors of Soviet and Nazi death camps, is, in part a meditation on the nature of life. The text is informed by the understanding of life as an association of functions in the organism that resist dissolution into the surrounding environment. Des Pres quotes Spinoza, who claims in the *Ethics* that '*Each thing... insofar as it is in itself, endeavors to persevere in its being*' (Des Pres 1976, 5). This definition of life is operative throughout Des Pres's text, and the author draws on the language of thermodynamics and systems theory to support this understanding of life. He writes, 'order emerges. That, as biologists like to observe, is the first and most striking fact about life, since entropy or the tendency to dissolution characterizes all inorganic kinds of organization' (Des Pres 1976, 144). Le Guin, in her own essay, seizes on this thermodynamic and systems theoretical understanding of life. She considers narrative as a biological imperative, that is, as a function of life's essential resistance to entropy. 'Why are we huddling around the campfire? Why do we tell tales...Is it because we are so organized as to take actions that prevent our dissolution into the surroundings?' (Le Guin 1989h, 28).

This definition of life as a constellation of functions that resist entropy had, I will demonstrate, a particular purchase in scientific and philosophical definitions of life in the mid- to late twentieth century. In this section, I want to articulate what couching life in the language of thermodynamics entails for how the twentieth century in general, and Le Guin in particular, thought and wrote about life. After introducing Erwin Schrödinger's definition of life in terms of entropy, I briefly trace the genesis of his formulation. I proceed to document the emphasis on relationism in Schrödinger's thought, and signal an affinity between Schrödinger's essay and

contemporary developments in the philosophies of Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze. Finally, I conclude this section by arguing that Le Guin's own thinking about life is broadly consonant with the scientific and philosophical currents which crystallise in Schrödinger's essay, *What is Life?*.

Schrödinger and Le Guin on Relations

Theoretical physicist Erwin Schrödinger gave a series of lectures at Trinity College, Dublin in 1943, later published in the volume *What is Life?* in 1944. Schrödinger gave a systematic definition of life according to the principle of entropy which remained reasonably definitive into the late twentieth century.[3] In *What is Life?*, Schrödinger argues that it is possible to predicate 'life' of a phenomenon when it is observed to continue '"doing something", moving, exchanging material with its environment, and so forth, and that for a much longer period than we would expect an inanimate piece of matter to "keep going" under similar circumstances' (Schrödinger 1967, 74). To avoid thermodynamic equilibrium, the organism must metabolise. Schrödinger considers metabolism as the negentropic faculty of the organism which allows it to keep on living. He writes, 'what an organism feeds upon is negative entropy. Or, to put it less paradoxically, the essential thing in metabolism is that the organism succeeds in freeing itself from all the entropy it cannot help producing while alive' (Schrödinger 1967, 76). Daniel C. Dennett summarises Schrödinger's position

[3] Schrödinger explains the concept of 'entropy' as follows: 'When a system that is not alive is isolated or placed in a uniform environment, all motion usually comes to a standstill very soon as a result of various kinds of friction; differences of electric or chemical potential are equalised, substances which tend to form a chemical compound do so, temperature becomes uniform by heat conduction. After that the whole system fades away into a dead, inert lump of matter. A permanent state is reached, in which no observable events occur. The physicist calls this the state of thermodynamical equilibrium, or of "maximum entropy"' (1967, 74). Daniel C. Dennett, in his discussion of Schrödinger's thermodynamic rendering of life, explains entropy thus: 'In physics, order or organization can be measured in terms of *heat differences* between regions of space time; *entropy* is simply disorder, the opposite of order, and according to the Second Law [of Thermodynamics], the entropy of any isolated system increases with time. In other words, things run down, eventually' (Dennett 1995, 68; emphasis in the original).

thus: 'What, then, are living things? They are things that defy this crumbling into dust, at least for a while, by not being isolated — by taking in from their environment the wherewithal to keep life and limb together' (Dennett 1995, 69).

This systems theoretical definition of life has a complex history predating Schrödinger, however. In 'On the Definitions of Life' Coleridge refers to Bichat's definition of life as the 'sum of all functions by which death is resisted' (Coleridge 1885, 367). Bergson's understanding of creative evolution was informed by the nineteenth-century codification of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson wrote that 'everything happens as if [life] were doing its utmost to set itself free from these laws. It has not the power to reverse the direction of physical changes...It does, however, behave absolutely as a force would behave which, left to itself would work in the inverse direction' (Bergson 2007, 158). Schrödinger's 1944 exposition of 'life' in terms of entropy thus codified in scientific vocabulary what had been intuited and expressed by philosophical writing since at least the eighteenth century.

What I want to call attention to in Schrödinger's definition of life is the degree to which *relation* is privileged. That is, for Schrödinger, what defines 'life' is neither a property of the organism nor a property of an environment. Rather, life is the *relationship* between the organism and an environment. This relationship is sustained by metabolism.

For Schrödinger, life *is* the relation between subject and object. The living organism can only be adequately thought insofar as it has a relationship to an environment. Conversely, an environment has no autonomous existence. Rather, an environment is always an environment for an organism. Colebrook offers a useful summary of the ontology of life that informs Schrödinger's essay:

> The bounded organism, the embodied mind...do not exist in order to relate to the world, for the organism *is its ongoing relations*. There are not living beings who relate, nor beings that are blessed with life, nor even a matter that is somehow at a certain point of evolution blessed with a principle of life. Rather, in the beginning is a dynamism and plasticity, a potentiality for entering into relation *from which* something like a living being is generated (Colebrook 2010, 29 emphasis in the original).

To put this another way, on the definition of life suggested by Schrödinger, what we are dealing with is not an organism which then sets about establishing and maintaining a relationship to its environment. Rather, the organism simply *is* the ebb and flow of its relations with its environment.

As the quotation from Colebrook above might suggest, Schrödinger's essay might be read as a crystallisation of a broader tendency in twentieth-century thought to privilege relations in conceptualisations of life. As Thacker points out, 'philosophies inspired by Deleuze and Bergson have pointed to a concept of life defined by its immanently dynamic, self-organizing, and germinal qualities' (2010, xiii). In the Deleuzian reinterpretation, life is 'neither a quality that a body has, nor a vital force separate from a thing that is vitalized, but the priority of immanence in itself, a continuum or network of affects in which individuated subjects are more effects than causes' (Thacker 2010, xiii). Despite their incompatibility, the Deleuzian rejection of being and transcendence in favour of becoming and immanence is shared with philosophies of life informed by phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty, for instance, in the posthumously published *Nature* course notes, defines life as the 'power to invent the visible' (Merleau-Ponty 2003, 190). Bryan Bannon notes that Merleau-Ponty defines 'life as a fold', that is, an 'exchange between body and world' (Bannon 2009,

33). Like Schrödinger's, Merleau-Ponty's understanding of life is implicitly framed by relationism. Thus, Bannon concludes that, in Merleau-Ponty's later work, life 'expresses a given relation to the visible, natural world in every action' and 'in life, one actively articulates the surrounding world according to...affective dimensions' (Bannon 2009, 33, 34). In such readings, 'life' inheres in neither an organism nor in the milieu, but in the relation between these two terms.

Although I can find no documentary evidence to suggest that Le Guin read Schrödinger's essay, it is possible that she was familiar with the work. In 1982, Le Guin published the short story, 'Schrödinger's Cat' (Le Guin 1984, 49-61). The title refers to Schrödinger's famous thought experiment. Even if Le Guin did not read Schrödinger's *What is Life?* in the original, she may well have had second-hand knowledge of the physicist's definition of life. Certainly, her 1980 essay, 'Some Thoughts on Narrative', understands life in terms remarkably similar to the thermodynamic model described by Schrödinger. There she writes,

> living creatures go to considerable pains to escape equality, to evade entropy, chaos and old night. They arrange things. They make sense, literally. Molecule by molecule. In the cell. The cells arrange themselves. The body is an arrangement in spacetime, a patterning, a process; the mind is a process of the body, an organ, doing what organs do: organize. Order, pattern, connect' (1989, 42).

In *What is Life?*, Schrödinger suggests the following:

> The awkward expression 'negative entropy' can be replaced by a better one: entropy, taken with the negative sign, is itself a measure of order. Thus the device by which an organism maintains itself stationary at a fairly high level of orderliness (= fairly low level of entropy)

> really consists in continually sucking orderliness from its environment (Schrodinger 1967, 79).

'Some Thoughts on Narrative', which is consonant with Schrödinger's definition of life, considers narrative as a biological imperative which conspires with metabolism to maintain homeostasis. Thus, Le Guin writes, 'do we have any better way to organize...wildly disparate experiences...than the narrative? – an immensely flexible technology, or life strategy, which...presents each of us with that most fascinating of all serials, The Story of My Life' (Le Guin 1989, 42).

What I want to suggest here then is that Le Guin's understanding of life, as expressed in these two essays, is broadly consonant with the relational definition articulated by Schrödinger. Following the line of thought in the two essays from Le Guin we are considering, we can abstract the following theses:

1. Narrative is a pattern. 'According to Aristotle, narrative connects events' (1989, 38);
2. Life can be defined as those phenomena that resist entropy and disorder. Life is thus the maintenance of order. 'Living creatures go to considerable pain to...evade entropy' (1989, 42);
3. Narrative contributes to the organism's resistance to disorder. It does this by producing order and pattern. 'Do we have any better way to organize...than the narrative?' (1989, 42);
4. Life is a pattern. 'The body is an arrangement in spacetime, a patterning, a process' (1989, 42).

The significant tension lies between (3) and (4). In (3), Le Guin presupposes an entity that then proceeds to organise things through narrative. She asks, 'do we have any better way to organize...than the narrative?'. The third person singular appears to presume an entity which *uses* narrative, amongst its other faculties, to stave off disorder and entropy. By number (4) however, Le Guin has dropped her presupposition of an entity existing prior to its use of narrative. Now, the entity is *nothing but* the narrative it creates.

Above I characterised Schrödinger's definition of life as a 'relationist' one. I argued that on Schrödinger's definition, there is not a living organism that exists prior to the network of relations it effects with its milieu. Rather, the organism simply is the aggregate of these relations. What is important about Schrödinger's definition of life is that it prevents us from thinking the organism in isolation from it environment, or the environment without an organism. Rather, in this construal of life, we are constrained to thinking the relation between a living organism and its world. In the transition from (3) to (4) above, Le Guin's thinking follows a similar logic. Narrative, as the capacity to order and arrange its milieu, is fundamentally a form of relation between an organism and its environment. In the transition from (3) to (4), Le Guin affirms the primacy of the relation between the organism and its environment. As was the case with metabolism, what we have to do with here is not an independently existing organism that then sets about establishing a relationship with its environment through narrative. Rather, the organism simply *is* the maintenance of a relationship with its milieu and this relationship is effected by narrative.

This emphasis on relations is amenable to appropriation by a posthuman discourse. Wolfe characterises posthumanism as a 'historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatic, and

economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore' (Wolfe 2010, xv). To this catalogue of networks Wolfe adds the vital matrix of nonhuman forms of life in which he imbricates man. As noted above, Wolfe suggests that we 'recontextualise' the human 'in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings and their own autopoietic ways of "bringing forth a world"' (2010, xxv).

Schrödinger's account of life lends itself to a reading that would decentre the human, in a manner consonant with that suggested by Wolfe because it suggests that the organism has no essence. The organism, including man, has no being apart from the network of relations it establishes. If man is an effect of the relations he enjoys with his milieu, then this stands in radical contrast to a humanism that would assume an autonomous human essence. Schrödinger's thought thus offers itself to the kind of posthuman thinking which would emphasise the human's constitution by various non-humans objects and forces.

However, as will be argued below, Schrödinger's reflections on life also lend themselves to an affirmation of human distinctiveness from the broader matrix of life. I have introduced the thesis that Le Guin's own critical writing about life is, at the very least, consonant with, if not directly influenced by Schrödinger's essay. I will argue that Le Guin shares with Schrödinger a relationist understanding of life. However, it will be demonstrated that Le Guin's appropriation of Schrödinger's thought is not unproblematic. Rather, it will be argued that the emphasis that Schrödinger places on relations is qualified in Le Guin's aesthetic by her humanist sensibilities.

Dialogism

I have suggested that, in the definition of life offered by Schrödinger and Le Guin, 'life' is the network of relations an organism has with its environment. That is, for Le Guin, an organic life-form simply *is* the aggregate of its relations with an environment. In this section, I demonstrate that this relational definition of life finds expression in the narrative structure of *Gifts*. To do so, I draw on Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and apposite theories of the novel.

In the years intervening between the publication of *Wizard* in 1968 and *Gifts* in 2004, Le Guin's science fiction for adults experimented with narrative voice. Her 1985 work, *Always Coming Home*, is the most pronounced form of this experimentation with narrative voice. The text is an amalgam of poetry, stories, myths, illustrations, maps and audio recordings describing the life of the 'Kesh' community in the fictional Na Valley. Although there is a central focalising narrative presence, the woman Stone Telling, the text is intended as an anthropological survey incorporating the competing voices of the Kesh community. Indeed, the polyphony of narrative voices which structure the text lead one reviewer to comment that 'the considerable pleasures of this book are not the pleasures of the novel (Dooley 1985, 93). However, for that tradition of criticism indebted to Mikhail Bakhtin, the assembly of this polyphony of discourses in one text represents the defining quality of the novel. As Michael Holquist explains, in the Bakhtinian tradition,

> the kind of text we have come to call 'the novel' has been at most pains to establish its generic identity not only relative to other literary genres, but as it relates to the norms of everyday speech, which are the bases of genre formation itself. And it does this by flaunting or displaying the variety of discourses, knowledge of which other genres seek to suppress. What marks the novel off as distinctive within the range of all possible genres... is the novel's

> peculiar ability to open a window in discourse from which the extraordinary variety of social languages can be perceived (Holquist 2005, 69-70).

As Holquist describes it then, *Always Coming Home* would in fact, *pace* Dooley, constitute an epitome of 'novelness' (Holquist 2005, 70). 'Novelness', which is not restricted to the genre we call 'the novel', is characteristic of those discourses which evidence 'constant reminders of otherness in speech' (Holquist 2005, 73). Or, as Bakhtin himself puts it, any utterance,

> is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents. The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group (Bakhtin 1981, 276).

Subsequent to the publication of *Always Coming Home*, Le Guin's *Earthsea* novels underwent a transformation. This is immediately apparent in the 1990 publication *Tehanu*, the mixed reception of which focused so much on that text's apparent utter departure from the preceding three books in the series. As Donna R. White observes, 'many people had requested another book about *Earthsea*, but *Tehanu* wasn't quite what they expected' (White 1999, 107). *Tehanu* eschews epic themes in favour of local, domestic and private concerns, a fact which Le Guin frames as a feminist re-interpretation of the heroic tale. In *Earthsea Revisioned*, Le Guin writes that

> [Tenar's] definition of action, decision, and power is not heroic in the masculine sense. Her acts and choice do not involve ascendance, domination, power over others, and seem not to involve great consequences. They are 'private' acts and choices, made in terms of immediate,

> actual relationship. To those who still believe that the public and the private can be separated, that there is a great world of men and war and politics and business and a little world of women and children and personal relations, and that these are truly worlds apart, one important, the other not — to such readers, Tenar's choice will appear foolish, and her story sadly unheroic (1992a, 13).

In contrast to *A Wizard of Earthsea* and *The Farthest Shore*, with their extensive geographical range, *Tehanu* is focused on the island of Gont. Warren G. Rochelle suggests that

> the fourth book, *Tehanu*, provides the needed balance and mediation between the needs of the community and those of the individual. His magic spent, Ged returns to his home island, where after years of public deeds and adventures, he, with Tenar, attends to his private and personal life... The knowledge — his magic — which Ged used on a national scale, is gone. Now what he needs to know and what he learns are local, private and familiar — and both are valid in Ged's life for making meaning (2001, 151).

In turning away from epic subject matter, Le Guin began developing a narrative voice that could accommodate this new sensibility. Although *Tehanu* clearly does not share the experimental spirit that animated *Always Coming Home*, it nevertheless shares with the latter an emphasis on polyphony. That is, *Tehanu*, although it retains the omniscient narrative voice of the preceding three novels, places an increasing emphasis on dialogue. In this work, the narrative unfolds through the dialogue of the various characters. The final novel of the *Earthsea* cycle, *The Other Wind*, marks a fuller realisation of Le Guin's dialogic imagination. Where the diegetic voice of *Wizard* proceeded with little interruption, *The Other Wind* unfolds its plot in the guarded exchange of speech acts between characters.

For Bakhtin, the novel's 'characteristic subject' is the fact that the 'self' is constituted and complicated by the 'other' (Holquist 2005, 73). Thus Bakhtin writes in 'Discourse in the Novel',

> the way in which the word conceptualizes its object is a complex act — all objects, open to dispute and overlain as they are with qualifications, are from one side highlighted while from the other side dimmed by heteroglot social opinion, by an alien word about them. And into this complex play of light and shadow the word enters — it becomes saturated with this play, and must determine within it the boundaries of its own semantic and stylistic contours (Bakhtin 1981, 277).

For Bakhtin, then, novelistic utterances are polyphonic and they betray the voices of other speakers. Or, each word in the novel is not only itself but also 'the dialogic play of verbal intentions that meet and are interwoven in it' such that the novelistic utterance does 'not stifle these forces, but on the contrary may activate and organize them' (Bakhtin 1981, 277). The thesis defended here then is that Bakhtin's dialogic model of the novel, to which Le Guin's fiction increasingly corresponds, and the 'relationist' account of life I have introduced are analogous. That is, if the novel is, for Bakthin, the aggregate of competing voices, this is analogous to that understanding of life that posits the organism as the aggregate of its relations.

To support this claim, I want to turn to Le Guin's 2004 text *Gifts*. *Gifts*, which initiates Le Guin's second major fantasy cycle for young adults, marks a departure from the book that began the *Earthsea* cycle. *Wizard* is written in the voice of an epic omniscient third-person narrator. The epic voice is informed by the temporal detachment from those events it relates which is one of the defining characteristics of that register;

> The island of Gont... is a land famous for wizards. From the towns in its high valley and the ports on its dark narrow bays many a Gontishman has gone forth to serve the Lords of the Archipelago in their cities as wizard or mage, or, looking for adventure, to wander working magic from isle to isle of all Earthsea.
>
> Of these some say the greatest, and surely the greatest voyager, was the man called Sparrowhawk, who in his day became both dragonlord and Archmage. His life is told of in the *Deed of Ged* and in many songs, but this is a tale of the time before his fame, before the songs were made (Le Guin 1994, 1-2).

Gifts, by contrast, is written in the first person from the perspective of the protagonist Orrec. However, Orrec's persepective is not the only one presented by the text. In a series of embedded narratives, Orrec's father, his friend Gry and his mother also tell their own stories. *Gifts* then is dialogic in Bakhtin's sense. Bakhtin offers a contrast between the individuals of epic and the characters of the novel. Epic's individuals are characteristically 'finished and completed being[s]', 'hopelessly ready-made' creations which 'coincide' with themselves' (Bakhtin 1981, 34). By contrast, novelistic heroes enjoy a 'noncoincidence with themselves' (1981, 36). Holquist summarises the thrust of Bakhtin's thought thus: 'in dialogism, the very capacity to have consciousness is based on otherness... [consciousness] is the differential relation between a center and all that is not center' (2005, 17). In other words, in the dialogic model articulated by Bakhtin, '"self" is dialogic, a relation' (Holquist 2005, 18). The text of *Gifts* then, represents a dialogue between, amongst others, the alternately complementary and competing voices of Orrec, Emmon, the Brantor, Gry and Orrec's mother. This polyphony of voices suggests that Orrec, the focalising 'I' of the narrative, is an aggregate of these relations and narratives. Although it is filtered

through Orrec's voice, the overt dialogism of the text suggests that the 'I' with which he speaks intersects with other voices. Orrec's voice is, then, a dialogic one; it is constituted and contested by those other voices with which he enters into relation. What I want to suggest, then, is that the dialogism of *Gifts* is expressive of that relationist understanding of life I attributed to Le Guin in the introduction to this chapter. If, in *Gifts*, the narrating 'I' is fundamentally a dialogic 'I', a perspective constituted by the sum of its relations with other perspectives, then this accords with the idea that an organism *is* the aggregate of its relations.

Thacker argues that the critique of the concept of life is one practised in order to expose the implicitly human frame of reference that constrains thinking about living things. He writes, 'more often than not, life is understood to be something that, though it is not *lived* exclusively by human beings, is, however, *thought* exclusively by human beings' (2010, ix; emphasis in the original). Thinking and writing about a reified something called 'life', then, is a specifically and uniquely human project. In the conclusion of this section, I will argue that the formal structure of *Gifts* betrays the humanism detected by Thacker. Despite offering an apparently 'flat' model of subjectivity, the text nonetheless relies on a transcendent, grounding principle to animate its narrative and lend it meaning and coherence. It thereby qualifies the non-hierachical, 'flat' dialogism of the text with a narrative hierarchy.

In chapters One and Two I suggested that Le Guin's prose was structured by a tension between a desire to immerse the subject in the environment, thereby collapsing the distinction between these two terms, and a more conservative re-affirmation of the distance between subject and world. I want to suggest that the formal structure of *Gifts* is mediated by a similar tension. On the one hand, the dialogic form of the narrative suggests a vision of selfhood defined in terms of

relations. This dialogic self is ungrounded; there is not a self who then enters into relationships with other voices. Rather, it is just the case that the narrative voice and the self it speaks *is* the network of its dialogue with other voices. However, this dialogic model of self is complicated by an absent and transcendent narrative principle. To clarify this claim, I want to consider the character of Emmon, and his role in mediating the unfolding of the narrative.

In *A Wizard of Earthsea*, the respective chronologies of *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, that is 'story' and 'plot' respectively, are in near complete agreement.[4] After the epic introduction to the narrative quoted above, the authorial voice retreats and the *fabula* and *sjuzhet* proceed in tandem until the end of the novel, when the epic narrator returns to close the text (Le Guin 1994, 233) By contrast, the plot of *Gifts* begins with most of the action of the story nearly complete. Emmon arrives to discover an already blindfolded Orrec, and the plot unfolds as a series of flashbacks detailing how and why Orrec came to relinquish his vision. If the text of *Wizard* represents the relative agreement of *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, the flashbacks, embedded narratives and competing voices of *Gifts* give us a text that produces a tension between story and plot. It is Emmon's request to know how Orrec came to be blindfolded, that installs this tension. (Le Guin 2004c, 14). In responding to this question, Orrec indulges in flashbacks and allows his voice to be interrupted by embedded narratives, thus producing the tension between story and plot.

I want to make one further observation regarding the narrative function of Emmon that will prove crucial to the elaboration of the argument of this chapter. As

[4] Peter Brooks defines these terms thus: '*Fabula* is defined as the order of events referred to by the narrative, whereas *sjuzhet* is the order of events presented in the narrative discourse' (Brooks 1984, 12).

above, Emmon's arrival is the 'macguffin' which sets the narrative in motion.[5] However, the opening lines of the text situate the narrative voice in a time subsequent to Emmon's departure from Orrec's household:

> He was lost when he came to us, and I fear the silver spoons he stole from us didn't save him when he ran away and went up into the high domains. Yet in the end the lost man, the runaway man, was our guide (Le Guin 2004c, 1).

From the perspective of the narrative voice, Emmon has already left before the text begins. Thus, if Emmon is that which initiates the narrative, he is also a conspicuous absence in that narrative. Departing before the narrative begins, Emmon is a lack or absence that nonetheless animates the plot. Further, after Emmon's departure is narrated towards the end of *Gifts*, story and plot are reconciled. The narrative voice is no longer troubled by competing voices and the text proceeds swiftly and without further interruption to closure. Thus, only after Emmon's departure is subjected to narrative can the text resolve itself satisfactorily. If Emmon is an animating principle for Le Guin's writing, if he is that which gives the narrative life, he is also an absence that frustrates and troubles that narrative.

What I want to suggest is that Emmon functions as the absent ground that enables the production of the dialogic voice of Orrec. On the one hand, *Gifts* offers a vision of subjectivity in which the self is an ungrounded process. Orrec's voice appears as simply the effect of his dialogue with other characters. Selfhood is an effect that appears as an epiphenomenon of more primordial process of relationality. On the other hand, however, this dialogic model of selfhood is enabled by an absent transcendent principle. Absent from the narrative at its onset, Emmon stands immune

[5] The online edition of the Oxford English Dictionary defines a macguffin as 'an object or device in a film or book which serves merely as a trigger for the plot'.

from the dialogism of the narrative. He represents a grounding principle in a text which otherwise emphasises the ungrounded dialogue of voices.

In the introduction to this chapter I called attention to the consensus that children's literature, despite flirtations with posthumanist visions of decentred subjectivities, ultimately retreats to a more familiar humanist paradigm. *Gifts* is exemplary of this ambivalence. In its dialogic structure, *Gifts* appears to model subjectivity as the result of complex processes of interaction. This model is broadly consonant with the various decentrings of subjectivity celebrated in posthumanist discourse. Rosi Braidotti, for instance, argues for a posthumanism which 'is associated to and supported by a monistic philosophy, which rejects dualism, especially the opposition nature-culture and stresses instead the self-organizing... force of living matter' (Braidotti 2013, 3). Much as the human emerges in Braidotti's discourse as an emergent process of material relations, Orrec's voice appears as an emergent phenomenon of dialogue. However, as demonstrated above, the narrative structure of *Gifts* qualifies this apparently posthuman, relational and de-centred inflection of subjectivity. Emmon is a transcendent principle. As the ground of a world from which he stands immune, his function is more or less analogous to that of the humanist subject. Indeed, an analogy might be drawn between Emmon and the Cartesian subject that is the target of so much ecocritical and posthumanist ire. Like the Cartesian subject, Emmon is a transcendent principle of meaning for a world to which he is exterior.

Le Guin's appropriation of Schrödinger is, then, a complicated process of translation. Clearly attracted to the understanding of life and self she finds in Des Pres and Schrödinger, Le Guin's fictional writing is nonetheless ambivalent in its sympathies for the relational model offered in these intertexts. This ambivalence is

sponsored by Le Guin's hesitant commitment to humanism. As documented in the discussion of *Cheek by Jowl* above, Le Guin, struggles to reconcile her sense that the human exists in terms of its relations with other animals, and a very humanist sympathy for the apparent distinction of the human from the order of life. The next section will continue to interrogate Le Guin's transformation of Schrödinger. In casting life as an aesthetic phenomenon, *Gifts*, it will be argued, acts to constrain and contain its appearance to suit a human frame of reference.

Life and the Aesthetic

Millicent Lenz suggests that what distinguishes the original *Earthsea* trilogy 'from most writers in this secular age' is Le Guin's 'direct approach to the topic of personal death and what lies beyond it' (Lenz and Hunt 2003, 42). For Lenz, *A Wizard of Earthsea, The Tombs of Atuan* and *The Farthest Shore* share a broadly existentialist vision in that they deal with 'the mystery of death and the puzzle of immortality as components of a personal vision of life' (2003, 42). Peter Hollindale suggests that *Tehanu* and *The Other Wind* mark a thematic departure: 'Both show the progressive decline of wizardry in favour of secular power (Lebannen) and domestic power (Tenar)' (Hollindale 2003, 186). However, if *Tehanu* and *The Other Wind* represent a complication of the power of wizardry and words enunciated in the earlier books, they nonetheless evidence a thematic continuity. Thus, Hollindale suggests that *Tehanu* and *The Other Wind*, although couching their exploration in secular and domestic terms, nonetheless retain the *Earthsea* cycle's singular preoccupation with the problem of death.

Le Guin's *Annals of the Western Shore* trilogy, published between 2004 and 2007, is her second major fantasy cycle for a young audience. In these texts, and in

particular in the first novel of the trilogy, *Gifts,* I argue that Le Guin effects a transition from *Earthsea*'s engagement with the problem of death to the problem of life. However, if *The Annals* represent a reorientation of Le Guin's artistic emphasis, they share with the *Earthsea* books, in particular *A Wizard of Earthsea,* a celebration of the aesthetic impulse. Lenz suggests that *A Wizard of Earthsea* is 'on one level an "artist" novel' and Le Guin, writing after the publication of *The Farthest Shore*, suggests that the first three books of the sequence are 'about art, the creative experience, the creative process (Lenz and Hunt 2003, 47; Le Guin 1989, 43). If, as Hollindale suggests, *Tehanu* and *The Other Wind* are less concerned with great acts of magic and word craft, then the books of *The Annals of the Western Shore* might be construed as a return to the 'artist novel' mode of *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Lenz describes this book as the narrative of 'an alienated outsider [who] undergoes an inner struggle to achieve the self-discipline he needs to control his "magic" powers. This process, a kind of *Bildungsroman* in a fantasy setting, can be seen as the organizing thread of the narrative' (2003, 47). Lenz could equally have been describing *Gifts* with this summary; this text likewise charts the struggles of Orrec Caspro to master the hereditary gift of 'unmaking' which threatens to consume him. Orrec's gift, the power to 'unmake', is almost a mirror image of the magic power of making with which Ged contends in *Wizard*.

In one respect then, *The Annals of the Western Shore* marks a departure from Le Guin's earlier fantasy cycle. If, as Hollindale and Lenz suggest, the poetry of *Earthsea* is mobilised in response to the problem of death, Le Guin's later fantasy is, I argue, an aesthetic confrontation with the problem of life. However, *The Annals* also signal a return on Le Guin's part to the 'artist novel' mode which framed *A Wizard of Earthsea*. It is the task of this chapter to articulate the intersection of these two

themes. That is, in my discussion of *Gifts*, I document the formulation of 'life' as an aesthetic problem in and by the narrative. Specifically, I argue that the recognition of life is an aesthetic act that serves to consolidate a humanist subject.

Orrec's father's 'unmaking' of a rat trapped in a barrel of water is the first such act described in the text, and it establishes the pattern which subsequent acts of 'unmaking' follow:

> It was in the winter. In the courtyard. A trapped rat. A young rat. It had got into a rain barrel and been unable to clamber out. Darre the sweeper saw it first. My father said, 'Come here, Orrec,' and I came, and he said, 'Be still and see this,' and I stood still and watched. I craned my neck so that I could see the rat swimming in the water that half-filled the barrel. My father stood above the barrel, gazing down steadily into it. He moved his hand, his left hand, and said something or breathed sharply out. The rat squirmed once, shuddered, and floated on the water. My father reached his right hand in and brought it out. It lay utterly limp in his hand, shapeless, like a wet rag, not like a rat. But I saw the tail and toes with their tiny claws. 'Touch it, Orrec,' he said. I touched it. It was soft, without bones, like a little half-filled sack of meal inside its thin wet skin. 'It is unmade', my father said, his eyes on mine, and I was afraid of his eyes then (Le Guin 2004c, 19-20).

This scene of unmaking is prototypical of other acts of unmaking in the text. In each scene of unmaking, living organisms are evacuated of an interiority and are reduced entirely to their surface appearance. When Orrec's father unmakes the rat, the animal becomes sickeningly 'soft, without bones, like a little half-filled sack of meal inside its thin wet skin' (2004c, 19). What I want to suggest is that these scenes install a distinction between human and nonhuman life. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault describes a transformation effected by George Cuvier in the representation of living

things. Cuvier, Foucault suggests, consolidated an understanding of the organism according to which,

> the organs are arranged in the body, and the further they are from the centre, the more they gain in flexibility in possibilities of variation, and in distinctive characters. Animal species differ at the peripheries, and resemble each other at their centres; they are connected by the inaccessible, and separated by the apparent. Their generality lies in that which is essential to their life; their singularity in that which is most accessory to it. The more extensive the groups one wishes to find, the deeper one must penetrate into the organism's inner darkness, towards the less and less visible, into that dimension that eludes perception; the more one wishes to isolate the individuality of the organism, the further one must go towards its surface, and allow the perceptible forms to shine in all their multiplicity (Foucault 2005, 291).

In Foucault's argument, as points of identity between organisms retreat into an invisible interior, difference wells up to occupy the surface. Reducing nonhuman forms of life to regions of pure surface, the acts of unmaking thus evacuate any points of contiguity between human and nonhuman forms of life. Orrec and his father empty nonhuman animals of that interior space where, Foucault argues, furtive arrangements of similarity with human life might announce themselves. Above I quoted Le Guin's claim that what organs do is 'order, pattern, connect' (1989, 42). In voiding the rat and the dog of organs, Orrec deprives the animals of any ability to forge unsettling points of connection between human and nonhuman.

If the scenes of unmaking produce a distinction between human and non-human life, they also serve to contain and domesticate life *as such*. This domestication is effected by the construction of life as an aesthetic phenomenon by the text. The acts of 'unmaking' in the text are predominantly visited against forms of life; Orrec 'unmakes' a snake, his dog Hamneda and decimates the life on a hillside.

(2004c, 74-76; 116; 121-22).[6] Orrec's father 'unmakes' enemies in battle (2004c, 39). In each example of the 'unmaking' of an animate entity, what is evacuated from that entity is ultimately an animating principle of 'life' which lends the animal form, structure and order. Thus, after being 'unmade' both the rat and the dog 'Hamneda' are described as 'shapeless' (2004c, 19; 116). Likewise, the 'unmade' snake is 'misshapen' (2004c, 75).

In using the vocabulary 'shape' and 'form' to characterise the life principle in *Gifts*, Le Guin establishes a rhetorical association between life and the aesthetic which, I suggest, is fundamental to her conceptualisation of life. This association is one reinforced in each scene of 'unmaking' in the text. In the final example of 'unmaking', Orrec reflects on the devastation he has wrought upon a hillside:

> I raised my head and looked at the hillside in front of me, a broad swathe of dead grass and withered shrubs, dust and shattered stones, a formless ruin. Any living thing that had been there was dead. All the delicate, coherent, complex shapes of the things that had been there were destroyed. The ash tree was a hideous, branchless stump (Le Guin 2004c, 123-124).

The vocabulary of 'shapeless' and 'formless' figures life as an aesthetic phenomenon. Above I noted that Le Guin appropriates from Des Pres and Schrödinger an understanding of life as the maintenance of order in the face of universal entropy. Further, as suggested above, Le Guin figures narrative as an adaptation which preserves order. That Le Guin recasts Schrödinger's thermodynamic expression of life in aesthetic terms, that is, in the language of 'narrative', will be important to the development of what follows.

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[6] Exceptions in which inanimate objects are unmade include the Brantor's 'unmaking' of a knot and a market stall and some houses in a raid on a neighbouring village (Le Guin 2004c, 21; 38).

In Le Guin's writing, order is translated from a synonym for the empirical measure, entropy, to a hazy aesthetic category. 'Order', for Le Guin, is associated less with entropy and more with aesthetic categories of harmony and complexity. This process of translation means that 'order', for Le Guin, becomes 'order for a subject'. In other words, 'order' loses the status of an absolute it had in Schrödinger's essay and becomes, in Le Guin's writing, a relative term. It is at this juncture that the insights of speculative realism prove most useful. Meillassoux's neologism 'correlationism' is the philosophical antagonist which figures in all the arguments of the various branches of speculative realism, and, as such, his definition of the term warrants re-iteration here:

> The central notion of modern philosophy since Kant seems to be that of correlation. By 'correlation' we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other. We will henceforth call correlationism any current of thought which maintains the unsurpassable character of the correlation so defined (Meillassoux 2009, 5).

Correlationism, which Meillassoux and fellow speculative realists take as the paradigm under which the dominant forms of post-Kantian philosophy operate, is a form of antirealism. It prescribes certain limits to what can be said and thought, and rules metaphysics, that is, the determination of what being is as such, out of bounds. This is a fundamentally Kantian dictum. As Levi Bryant observes, 'Kant...held that in addition to phenomena (beings for-us) things-in-themselves exist. The correlationist merely argues that we have no access to these beings that are apart from thought and can therefore only speak of being as it is for-us' (Bryant 2011, 37). In other words, correlationism limits philosophy to reflecting on the nature of our access to being.

This can take the form of Merleau-Pontyian phenomenology, which builds a taxonomy of the perceptual habits which structure our access to phenomena, or some flavours of deconstruction, which exposes the tropological nature of human relations to being. Fundamentally, correlationism is a question of scale. Under correlationism, all things are translated into a human scale in that they are discussed only in the nature of our access to them. Being is shown to pivot around thought, and humans form the implicit frame of reference for all that is.

Under the paradigm of correlationism, a consideration of being as it would appear independent of thought is proscribed. Most importantly for our purposes, correlationism is an act of philosophical domestication. That is, correlationism domesticates or reduces the appearance of being *as such* to the appearance of being *for us*. As Bryant puts it,

> for the anti-realist or corrrelationist, claims about beings are never claims about beings-in-themselves or beings apart from us, but are always and only claims about beings as they manifest themselves to *us*. For the realist, by contrast, claims about objects *really are* claims about *objects* and not objects as they are *for-us* or only in relation to us (2011, 38; emphasis in the original).

Correlationism thus names a thoroughly anthropocentric episteme. In reducing things to their appearance *for-us*, that is, to their phenomenal appearance, correlationism reduces the entirety of being into a human environment. I use environment here in the sense of 'background' or milieu, against which humans form the foreground. Being, therefore, is translated into something thinkable only in relation to the human. Thacker's project in *After Life* is, in one sense, the exposure of the implicit correlationism which has informed thinking about 'life'. Thacker writes:

> It is often noted that it is only human beings that worry about the definition of life — the rest of the world simply lives it. This is undoubtedly related to the long-standing tradition in Western thought to regard life specifically as the life *for us* as human beings. Life is, at least from Aristotle onwards, a concept that is highly stratified, the view down from on top of a pyramid of increasing complexity. But if the existence of disasters, pandemics, and nonhuman networks tells us anything, it is that there is another world in addition to the world that is there 'for us'... This is not simply a world in itself, and neither it is a world that is destined for us — rather, it is a world that presents us with the very limits of our ability to comprehend it in terms that are neither simply that of the 'in itself' or the 'for us'. It is a world 'without us' (the life *sans soi*). It is the challenge of thinking a concept of life that is foundationally, and not incidentally, a nonhuman or unhuman concept of life (Thacker 2010, xv; emphasis in the original).

Attempts to define life are, then, implicated in a broader project of reducing being to its being for-humans. Living things, co-opted for this attempt at definition, are reduced to their phenomenal appearance and thereby domesticated. To return to the discussion of *Gifts*, in constructing life as an aesthetic phenomenon, the text domesticates life. Thacker claims that 'there have only ever been three approaches to thinking about life: SOUL, MEAT and PATTERN' and, further, 'it would seem that the emphasis on pattern is a distinctly postmodern phenomenon, the terrain of cybernetics, information theory, self-organization' (Thacker 2005, first paragraph).[7] In contrast to the 'soul' and 'meat' paradigms that, Thacker argues, were emphasised in biological thinking in the past, the 'pattern' conceit implicitly suggests a parallel between the structure of life and the structure of language. That is to say, understood

[7] As Thacker observes, however, the 'soul,' 'meat' and 'pattern' paradigms also form a 'triptych' in that each the paradigms do not succeed one another, displacing previous metaphors. Rather, different historical periods emphasise particular paradigms, while the other two linger in the background (Thacker 2005, second paragraph).

as a pattern, life seems to share the properties of self-reflexivity and self-organisation with language. Thus, in construing life as a pattern, contemporary biological thinking sustains an idea of life that emphasises the extent to which life is always already represented. The pattern paradigm thus differs from the 'soul' and 'meat' paradigms in its privilege of representation. Where 'soul' and 'meat' simply named the significant force or matter of animate entities, 'pattern' names the way life represents itself as life to a subject.

In constructing life as a pattern and aesthetic phenomenon, the scenes of unmaking in *Gifts* thus reduce life to its appearance for-us. As Paul Ennis writes, 'the act of representing the properties of an 'in-itself' is also the act of making it 'for-us' (Ennis 2011, 6). In *Gifts*, the scenes of unmaking frame life as *nothing but* and/or *always already* a representation. The possibility of a life that is not relative to us is thereby proscribed. Life, as a pattern, is translated into a phenomenon unintelligible without reference to aesthetic perception. Further, aesthetic perception is, in Le Guin's writing, the specific prerogative of the human. In her essay, 'Collectors, Rhymesters and Drummers' Le Guin writes,

> gorillas build a nest every night. Zoo orangs drape themselves charmingly with favorite bits of cloth or sacking. If we shared any collecting tastes with our closest relatives, it might indicate a 'deep grammar' of beauty — a 'deep aesthetic'? — in all us primates, or at least in the fancy big ones.
>
> But alas I know no evidence of wild apes collecting or prizing objects because they seem to find them pretty. They examine objects of interest with interest, but that's not quite the same as stealing something because it's small and shiny and hiding it away as a treasure. Intelligence and the sense of beauty may overlap, but they aren't the same thing (2004d, 173).

The aesthetic, in Le Guin's reading, is a means of establishing a distinction between human and nonhuman animals. Specifically, the capacity to recognise something as beautiful marks one out as a subject capable of aesthetic appreciation. Insofar as only humans have the capacity to recognise beauty, aesthetic experience is integral to the establishment and maintenance of the human/nonhuman distinction. Le Guin thus appropriates the aesthetic for an ultimately humanist project. In this she is anticipated by Edmund Burke. In 'A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of our Ideas of The Sublime and the Beautiful' [1757], Burke wrote that

> the only distinction [animals] observe with regard to their mates, is that of sex. It is true that they stick severally to their own species in preference to all others. But this preference, I imagine, does not arise from any sense of beauty which they find in their species, as Mr. Addison supposes, but from a law of some other kind, to which they are subject (Burke 1998, 39).

As Peter Heymans writes, 'one of the defining differences between human and non-human animals, according to Burke, is the former's aesthetic sensibility. In the *Enquiry*, he... argued that the intuitive recognition and appreciation of beauty is an exclusively human capacity' (Heymans 2012, 105). The salient word in this quotation is 'defining'. The aesthetic, for Le Guin as for Burke, is instrumental in establishing a defining line between the human and nonhuman.

Thus, *Gifts* frames life as something with meaning only in relation to the human. Indeed, as Colebrook observes, in the implicit Kantianism that prevails in twentieth- and twenty-first-century thought, the aesthetic is fundamentally this act of domestication:

> The notion of the 'aesthetic' has its origins in perception... and also... the subject. For Kant, the work of art is to be judged only in its capacity to enliven the subject's capacity to give order and synthesis to the world; beauty is the experience of material as perfectly harmonious with the subject's conceptualising powers, while the sublime refers to an experience that allows the subject to feel its own striving for form and order. The work of art returns us to the constituting power from which the lived world unfolds. This emphasis on art as disclosing the active power that originally forms the world as this meaningful world for 'us' is maintained in all forms of post-Kantian aesthetics that take us back to the structure, language or matrix that gives us 'our' world (2009, 77).

The aesthetic so formulated is an act of reduction whereby being becomes an environment or background for human activity. This act of reducing being to its phenomenal appearance to humans is precisely the same that *Gifts* performs in framing life as an aesthetic phenomenon.

What I have termed the domestication of life in Le Guin's text is prefigured by the implicit correlationism of Schrödinger's reflections on the nature of life. Schrödinger's essay is actually an exercise in delimiting the conditions which life must satisfy in order to be recognised as life. He thus poses the question, 'when is a piece of matter said to be alive?' (1967, 74). We must thus make a subtle, but nonetheless important distinction, in our reading of Schrödinger's essay. That is, Schrödinger does not seek to specify what life is. Rather, he limits himself to providing criteria by which we might identify life. In other words, Schrödinger does not offer what would be tantamount to an ontology of life, that is, defining what life is. Rather, he offers an epistemology of life according to which pieces of matter are recognised as alive if they satisfy his criteria. 'Life', for Schrödinger, is thus an epistemological and not an ontological category.

As quoted above, Thacker argues that 'more often than not, life is understood to be something though it is not *lived* exclusively by human beings, is, however *thought* exclusively by human beings' (2010, ix; emphasis in the original). In a similar vein, Evelyn Fox Keller argues for an understanding of life that privileges its constructedness. Keller suggests that the 'category of life is a human rather than a natural kind' and that the question '"what is life?"...is a historical question, answerable only in terms of the categories by which we as human actors choose to abide' (Keller 2010, 292). Further, although Carol Cleland and Christopher Chyba assume, in contrast to Keller, that life is a natural kind, they agree with Keller in their argument that furnishing definitions of life entails a paralysing correlation between life and thought. As Bedau and Cleland explain, the 'central difficulty with the definitional approach to life' is that it tends to explicate the '*nature* of life in terms of our current *concept* of life' (Bedau and Cleland 2010, 297; emphasis in the original). Ultimately, the problem with the definitional approach to life is, according to Cleland and Chyba, one of recognition; 'they believe that definitions of life are likely to mislead scientists about the essential properties of life, and run the risk of blinding them to truly "weird" forms of life' (Bedau and Cleland 2010, 296). At issue, then, in furnishing definitions of life, is the problem of recognising life. Unlike the other 'hard' sciences, biology is fundamentally constrained by the comparatively small sample size with which it has to work. Whereas physics in particular can observe phenomena at interstellar distances, biology is confined to the study of life on earth, which, despite its morphological diversity, is remarkably isomorphic.

At any rate, left unthought and unrecognised in Schrödinger's essay is what, if anything, 'life' would be without reference to thought. In giving us the conditions of thought which a phenomenon must satisfy in order to qualify as 'being alive',

Schrödinger fundamentally confines the purview of his investigation. Thus, Schrödinger's essay does not speculate as to what might constitute life 'in-itself', that is, what 'life' independent of thought would be. Instead, Schrödinger restricts himself to setting out the conditions under which a 'piece of matter' can be said to be alive, that is to say, when we can recognise life (Schrödinger 1967, 74). Further, Meillassoux distinguishes between two scientific paradigms, that of 'adequation' and 'intersubjectivity':

> In the Kantian framework, a statement's conformity to the object can no longer be defined in terms of a representation's 'adequation' or 'resemblance' to an object supposedly subsisting 'in itself', since this 'in itself' is inaccessible...From [the philosophy of Kant] on, *intersubjectivity*, the consensus of a community, supplants the *adequation* between the representations of a solitary subject and the thing itself as the veritable criterion of objectivity' (2009, 4; emphasis in the original)

My argument has consisted in the claim that Schrödinger does not specify what life is in his essay. Rather, he specifies those conditions under which the characteristic, 'life', might be predicated of an entity. Thus, Schrödinger's thought is framed by the paradigm of *intersubjectivity* identified by Meillassoux as the preeminent assumption of the scientific method post-Kant. Instead of seeking to represent life as it is independent of human access to it, Schrödinger sets out those criteria which would permit the consensus that some thing manifests the phenomenon of life. In both Schrödinger and Le Guin, 'life' is, then, a phenomenon in the strict sense of an appearance for perception. That is to say, it is an order of being intelligible only by reference to the human. Le Guin's text refracts Schrödinger's correlationist definition of life as an aesthetic principle. In doing so, she further confirms the implicit

anthropocentrism and humanism of the project of defining 'life' because the aesthetic is, in Le Guin's thought, an explicitly and uniquely human attribute.

The representation of life and subjectivity in *Gifts*, I have demonstrated, can be read according to the critical narrative described by Flanagan and Bradford. As documented above, Flanagan, Bradford and Gooding emphasise the inherent humanism of children's literature. This emphasis obtains despite flirtations in that literature with posthuman technological subjects. The scenes of unmaking in *Gifts* locate Le Guin's writing in a similar tradition. Despite flirting with a dialogic, relational and apparently decentred model of subjectivity, the formal structure of *Gifts* ends up reaffirming a transcendent principle of meaning. Further, in the scenes of unmaking, *Gifts* frames life as an aesthetic phenomenon. In doing so, life is made intelligible only in its relation to aesthetic perception, that is, human access. Again, this is a profoundly Protagorean gesture on the part of an author who stresses in her critical writing that 'I don't think that Man is the measure of all things, or even of very many things. I don't think Man is the end or culmination of anything, and certainly not the center of anything' (Le Guin 1989e, 99-100). Ultimately, Le Guin's construction of life is traversed by a contradiction analogous to that which structures her representation of nature. Ray Brassier offers the following exegesis of correlationist thought:

> If the idea of a world-in-itself, of a realm of phenomena subsisting independently of our relation to it, is intelligible at all, it can only be intelligible as something in-itself or independent 'for-us'. This is the reigning *doxa* of post-metaphysical philosophy: what is fundamental is neither hypostasized substance nor the reified subject, but rather the relation between un-objectifiable thinking and un-representable being, the primordial reciprocity or

> 'co-propriation' of *logos* and *physis* which at once unites and distinguishes the terms it relates (Brassier 2007, 50).

Correlationism, in other words, appears to announce the fundamental connectedness of subject and world. This connectedness is achieved, in different schools, by way of the medium of intentionality, language or embodiment. However, as Brassier argues, in announcing the implication of the subject in the world, correlationism also ends up reaffirming the distinction between these two terms. The distinction is reaffirmed, as I have demonstrated above, by privileging the human as the site of meaning for being. Le Guin's representation of life thus shares with her representation of nature a tension between an apparent desire to dissolve the distinction between human and world, and a more reactionary instinct to preserve this distinction.

Conclusion

In *The Open*, Giorgio Agamben observes that,

> the division of life into vegetal and relational, organic and animal, animal and human... passes first of all as a mobile border within living man, and without this intimate caesurae the very decision of what is human and what is not would probably not be possible. It is possible to oppose man to other living things, and at the same time to organize the complex — and not always edifying — economy of relations between men and animals, only because something like an animal life has been separated within man, only because his distance and proximity to the animal have been measured and recognized first of all in the closest and most intimate place (2004, 15).

For Agamben as for Wolfe, the human sustains itself by way of a disavowal. What is disavowed by the human are points of similarity or spaces of contiguity with the

animal. As we have seen in the case of Le Guin, this disavowal is accomplished, if only ambiguously, by rhetorical tropes which mediate likeness and difference. Le Guin's writing, it has been demonstrated, reinscribes a humanist distinction between human and nonhuman animal. This chapter thus concludes by revising the assumptions of previous scholars of Le Guin's representation of nonhuman life. *Pace* Payne's contention that Le Guin's animal stories reimagine our relationship to animals as one of kinship, this chapter has suggested that Le Guin's fiction for children reinstalls a distinction between man and animal. Le Guin's writing might thus be read according to the narrative described by Flanagan and Bradford et al., whereby children's literature is seen to retreat to comfortably humanist discourses. This is despite the apparent and increasing redundancy of these narratives in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries.

Further, as has been suggested, Le Guin's appropriation of the language of 'life' from Erwin Schrödinger, and her translation of Schrödinger's reflections into a vitalist aesthetic principle results in an affirmation of the uniqueness of the human. By framing life as an aesthetic principle, Le Guin's writing orients the universe of living things according to a human frame of reference. As Thacker intuits, 'subtracting the human from the philosophical problem of life is tantamount to foreclosing the possibility of thinking life at all' because 'the human seems to be the ground of the intelligibility of life, insofar as life presupposes a temporal, formal and spiritual dimension' (2010, 242). The concept of 'life' itself is, in Thacker's reading, irredeemably anthropocentric and correlationist. In documenting the aesthetic inflection given to the concept of life by Le Guin, this chapter has argued for precisely this privileging of the human that Thacker detects. Thacker asks provocatively, 'without a subject to think the concept of life, can life be said to exist

at all?' (2010, 242). Life, in Le Guin's writing, is an aesthetic distinction which it is the prerogative of the human to inscribe. As such, 'life', in Le Guin's writing, becomes unequivocally humanist insofar as it is intelligible only by reference to human, aesthetic perception. The aesthetic recognition of life appears as an act that serves to define human life as such, and to announce its distinctiveness from life in general.

Reading Le Guin in the Anthropocene

Writing in the January 2002 edition of *Nature*, Nobel prize-winning chemist Paul Crutzen postulated that the planet had entered a new geological era, the Anthropocene:

> For the past three centuries, the effects of humans on the global environment have escalated. Because of these anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide, global climate may depart significantly from natural behaviour for many millennia to come. It seems appropriate to assign the term 'Anthropocene' to the present, in many ways human-dominated, geological epoch, supplementing the Holocene — the warm period of the past 10-12 millennia. The Anthropocene could be said to have started in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when analyses of air trapped in the polar ice showed the beginning of global concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane. This date also happens to coincide with James Watt's design of the steam engine in 1784 (Crutzen 2002, 23).

The concept of the Anthropocene has proven provocative in the environmental humanities, as the following discussion will illustrate. In particular, it has occasioned an interrogation of who exactly this 'anthropos' is that has brought about the Anthropocene. Dipesh Chakrabarty has argued that the concept of the Anthropocene requires us to reconfigure the scope of human agency. He suggests that invoking an Anthropocene implies considering human beings as 'geological agents' which, in turn requires that we 'scale up our imagination of the human' (Chakrabarty 2009, 206). Moreover, the Anthropocene apparently conflates two narratives that history had previously kept separate. Chakrabarty suggests that 'philosophers and students of history have often displayed a conscious tendency to separate human history... from natural history, sometimes proceeding to deny that nature could ever have history in quite the same way that humans have it' (2009, 201). However, climate change, the

most visible anthropogenic alteration to the earth's ecosystems, suggests the untenability of this separation in the twenty-first century. As Chakrabarty puts it,

> in unwittingly destroying the artificial but time-honored distinction between natural and human histories, climate scientists posit that the human being has become something much larger than the simple biological agent that he or she has always been. Humans now wield a geological force (Chakrabarty 2009, 201-206).

In other words, we now possess the capacity to alter the life, geology and climate of the planet in ways previously reserved for major, nonanthropogenic entities such as volcanoes and asteroid strikes. The anthropos that prefixes the Anthropocene is, then, a profound metamorphosis of what constitutes the human. If, as the posthumanisms of Cary Wolfe and Rosi Braidotti insist, the subject of liberal humanism was fashioned in terms of its distinction from the nonhuman, then the Anthropocene apparently signifies the redundancy of humanism once and for all. In other words, the human of the Anthropocene can no longer entertain a distinction between human and non-human narratives.

For the most part, the concept of the Anthropocene has been taken as confirmation of a long sensed continuity of the human and nonhuman.[1] Bruno Latour for instance, writes that, 'the first advantage of living in the time of the Anthropocene is that it directs our attention toward much more than a "reconciliation" of nature and society as one larger system that would be unified in terms of either one or the other' (2013, 78). Latour anticipates this thesis in his earlier work, *We Have Never Been Modern*, in which he argues that industrial society proliferates 'hybrids'. Latour's exemplary hybrid in *We Have Never Been Modern* is the hole in the ozone layer

[1] A continuity of human and nonhuman, or nature and culture is the fundamental premise of Romantic humanism, as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation.

(Latour 1993, 1). Reflecting on a report in his daily newspaper on the status of ozone in the atmosphere, Latour notes the curious mixture of political, economic and scientific data that is used to account for the phenomenon. As Latour puts it, 'the same article mixes together chemical reactions and political reactions. A single thread links the most esoteric sciences and the most sordid politics' (1993, 1). For Latour, the hole in the ozone layer cannot be understood either as a purely natural or purely cultural phenomenon, but must instead be thought of as a hybrid or quasi-object. As Harman argues, 'these hybrids are a nightmare for any attempt to slice the world cleanly into two purified districts' (Harman 2009, 62). The Anthropocene could simply be taken as one of a chorus of late twentieth and early twenty-first-century responses to the environmental crisis. Such responses point to a sense of human alienation from nature as generative of our current environmental predicament. To mitigate this crisis, what is needed, on this reading, is a recognition of our inherence in nature. However, interpreting the concept of the Anthropocene thus is to flatten the range of readings it may invite. If the readings of Latour and others have interpreted the Anthropocene as a confluence of the human and the nonhuman, there has been another strain of criticism that has emphasised that the Anthropocene in fact points to the liminal or exorbitant position of the human. Colebrook exemplifies this position. Introduced earlier, Colebrook's understanding of the Anthropocene warrants reiteration as it will be central to the argument of this chapter. She writes,

> the Anthropocene is a threshold at which all 'our' concepts of horizon, milieu, ethos and polity are voided: our dwelling is no longer inhabitation, nor do we partake in an organic interdependence or ecology. Rather the human is not so much an event within life as a rupturing in the very figure of life: not one being among others so much as a violent symbiosis (2012, 188).

For Colebrook, the Anthropocene precludes any seamless integration of the human back into the nonhuman. In the Anthropocene, the human possesses a hyperbolic agency that cannot simply be willed away by asserting a contiguity between human and nonhuman. As noted in the discussion of ecofeminism and embodiment in the introduction to this dissertation, such thinking counts as wishful and reactionary in Colebrook's argument (2012, 194). For Colebrook, the anthropos of the Anthropocene constitutes a trauma for being. That is to say, the human cannot be reconciled with being in the manner suggested by posthumanism. Any attempt to dissolve anthropic agency in the universal acid of vitalism or embodiment is an act of repression. Ecocriticism in general and critical animal studies in particular have tended to take the position that the human/nonhuman animal distinction is a fraudulent one that is ripe for deconstruction, as Chapter Three demonstrated. However, on Colebrook's reading, the Anthropocene suggests the need to proliferate, rather than attenuate, distinctions. Humans now enjoy an exaggerated agency that is orders of magnitude more influential than that possessed by any other form of life. The scale of this agency is such that it installs a difference between the human and nonhuman. Conceptualising the Anthropocene might be characterised by an articulation of this distinction.

The Anthropocene is thus amenable to two readings that are arguably mutually exclusive. On the one hand, theorists such as Chakrabarty and Latour understand the Anthropocene as the arrival of a posthuman subject. That is to say, they read the Anthropocene as a moment in which the imbrication or embedding of human and nonhuman history is finally realised. However, the Anthropocene also lends itself to a contradictory reading, one which would emphasise man's distinctiveness from other forms of life. As Colebrook makes clear, the Anthropocene can be read as

announcing, once and for all, man's utter difference from all other forms of life. In this reading, the Anthropocene does not signal the confluence of human and non-human histories. Rather, the Anthropocene configures man as a violent breach in the order of life. Put otherwise, the anthropos of the Anthropocene is an entity with global, geological agency unprecendented in the history of life. The contradictions which animate the Anthropocene are captured succinctly by Bronislaw Szerszynski: 'The very notion of the Anthropocene contains an element of indecision: is this the epoch of the apotheosis, or of the erasure, of the human as the master and end of nature?' (Szerszynski 2010, 16). When we invoke 'the human' in the Anthropocene, then, we invoke a newly obscure and equivocal figure. This chapter will argue that Le Guin's writing is fiction of the Anthropocene. It will trace the working out of this tension — between Anthropocene humanity as embedded in nature and humanity as rupture — in her *Earthsea* novels and short stories.

The chapter begins by situating Le Guin's writing in the context of 'The Great Acceleration' in industry and anthropogenic ecosystem alteration in the second half of the twentieth century. It then proceeds to articulate a tension between narrative and metamorphosis in Le Guin's fiction. Metamorphosis, it will be demonstrated, appears to elide the human into the nonhuman. This elision appears consonant with Latour's and Chakrabarty's understanding of the Anthropocene. However, narrative and plot act to preserve the human/nonhuman distinction. I argue that the tension between metamorphosis and narrative in Le Guin's fiction expresses the tension between the Latourian Anthropocene, and Colebrook's understanding of this new geological epoch.

Le Guin and The Great Acceleration

Crutzen's neologism, 'Anthropocene', captures and codifies a sense of humanity's geological agency. However, this awareness was prefigured by transformations in the way the planet was imagined following World War II. As Steffen et al. observe, the second half of the twentieth century witnessed a profound growth in human industry that far outstripped any historical precedent:

> The human enterprise switched gears after World War II. Although the imprint of human activity on the global environment was, by the mid-twentieth century, clearly discernible beyond the pattern of Holocene variability in several important ways, the rate at which that imprint was growing increased sharply at mid-century. The change was so dramatic that the 1945 to 2000+ period has been called the Great Acceleration (Steffen et al. 2011, 849).

The Great Acceleration refers to an explosion in human population, economic production and consumption. An inevitable consequence of this explosion was the increasing visibility of anthropogenic environmental transformation.[2] Concomitant with this accelerated transformation of ecological systems was a transformation in the way humanity imagined its relationship to the globe. Thomas M. Lekan thus suggests that 'at the dawn of the Great Acceleration, aerial photographs and documentary films... began to reveal the full extent of anthropogenic shaping of a terrestrial environment' (Lekan 2014, 184). Among the most potent of these were NASA's 1968 'Earthrise' and 1972 'Blue Marble' photographs, both of which, as Lekan observes,

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[2] Steffen et al. observe that 'the Earth system has clearly moved outside the envelope of Holocene variability. The rise in atmospheric greenhouse gases is well documented, but there are many more equally significant changes to the global environment. Conversion of natural ecosystems to human-dominated landscapes has been pervasive around the world; the increase in reactive nitrogen in the environment, arising from human fixation of atmospheric nitrogen for fertilizer, has been dramatic; and the world is likely entering its sixth great extinction event and the first caused by a biological species' (Steffen et al. 2011, 850).

were later appropriated by the environmental movement in the United States (2014, 180). Thus, the fact that humanity was experiencing transformations in the way it inhabited and imagined the earth became perceptible at least fifty years before Crutzen gave these transformations a name. In the natural sciences, the increasing sense of humanity's geological agency prompted a conference in 1955 at Princeton University. Entitled 'Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth', Lekan identifies this conference as a 'watershed in human perception of the Anthropocene' which 'pondered for the first time the significance of humans as "the ecological dominant on the planet"' (2014, 186; 185).

Le Guin's first two *Earthsea* texts, 'The Word of Unbinding' and 'The Rule of Names' were thus written at a time when the postwar acceleration was gathering pace, and a sense of humanity's ecological hegemony was crystallising. Both stories were published in *Fantastic* in 1964. *A Wizard of Earthsea* was published in 1968, the same year that NASA's *Earthrise* photograph was released, and *The Farthest Shore* in 1972, the same year as 'Blue Marble'. In what follows, I propose to treat Le Guin's work as fiction of the Anthropocene. Like Blue Marble and Earthrise, I suggest that the *Earthsea* books engage with a transformation of the image of man and his relationship to the planet that became perceptible in the Great Acceleration.

Plot and Symbol in the Anthropocene

As suggested above, the Anthropocene lends itself to two contradictory readings. On the one hand, the Anthropocene appears to signal the confusion of human and non-human agency. On the other, the Anthropocene affirms human distinctiveness. In articulating the tension between these two readings of the Anthropocene, this chapter will focus on matters of plot. James J. Pullizzi observes that

> narratives have evolved to organize the past; they're quite poor at predicting the future. Our (meaning humanist scholars') attempts to flesh out the Anthropocene with narratives and logical arguments are crude ways of simulating the climate for the reader, to make it explicable in terms that seem meaningful to our everyday experience and actionable for social justice aims (Pullizzi 2014, 83).

Plot and narrative are, as Pullizzi points out, particularly vulnerable to the transformation of received distinctions in the Anthropocene. A reading of plot and narrative can bring focus to the fundamental tension that animates the Anthropocene. Chapter three argued that Le Guin understood the capacity for story and narrative as an indicator of human species distinctiveness. For Le Guin, a talent for plot establishes a distinction between human life and life in general. This identification of plot as a distinguishing feature of human life is echoed by narratological theory. In a monograph which otherwise entertains postmodern decenterings of the subject, Mark Currie sounds a remarkably humanist note when he writes that, 'it does not seem at all exaggerated to view humans as narrative animals, as *homo fabulans* — the tellers and interpreters of narrative' (2011, 6). Story-telling is, here, appropriated to a humanist narrative that would install a distinction between human and nonhuman. The human capacity for story is yet another mark of our distinction from the non-human. Currie's appeal to plot as a distinguishing feature of the human is remarkable in that it is uttered in a critical space that otherwise carefully traces the mediation of the human by competing ideologies and interests. This capacity of narrative to describe distinctions is, as Peter Brooks argues, latent in the lexical associations of the word 'plot'. Brooks writes, 'common to the original sense of the word [plot] is the idea of boundedness, demarcation, the drawing of lines to mark off and order' (1984, 12).

Plot and narrative, it will be argued, preserve the distinction between human and nonhuman in Le Guin's writing. Against the work of boundary-marking performed by plot, Le Guin's fictions posit the motif of metamorphosis. Metamorphosis has been read in terms of its potential to efface the human/nonhuman distinction. Readings of metamorphoses in the Western literary tradition suggest that fantastic transformations transcend historical specificity in a universal and generic concern with what constitutes the human. Jude Allen, for instance, argues that 'metamorphosis destabilizes and makes porous the fixity of the imagined line between human and animal, and thus threatens the distinction between human and animal' (Allen 2013, 19). Similarly, Bruce Clarke suggests that 'stories of metamorphosis depict in various figures the restless transformation of the human (Clarke 2002, 170). Insofar as it gestures towards the failure of this distinction, metamorphosis appears consonant with the embedding of the human in the nonhuman that Latour and Chakrabarty read in the Anthropocene.

This chapter thus traces a tension between narrative and metamorphosis in Le Guin's fiction, a tension it posits as analogous to that between Colebrook's and Latour's versions of the Anthropocene respectively. That is to say, metamorphosis works to undermine the distinction between human and nonhuman and is, in this respect, consonant with Latour's reading of the Anthropocene. Narrative, it will be argued, contains the disruptive potential of metamorphosis. Narrative and plot thus maintain the distinction between human and nonhuman, a distinction that Colebrook sees affirmed by the Anthropocene.

Metamorphosis: Narrative and Symbol

In an interview with Susan Bernardo, Le Guin refers to the translation work that has punctuated her development as a writer (Bernardo and Murphy 2006, 6). Le Guin's version of the Tao Te Ching was the first of her translations to be published, but she lists Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as one of many unpublished translations. As this chapter will show, the metamorphoses represented in Le Guin's *Earthsea* books are most likely shaped by her intimacy with Ovid's work. Wendy Olmsted argues that the '*Metamorphoses*... explores the limits of the human by examining violations of the boundaries between the godlike, the human and the natural' (Olmsted 1996, 167). The transformations experienced by human characters in Le Guin's texts will, it will be shown, serve to interrogate what is meant by the term 'human'.

As Bruce Clarke observes, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 'the trope of metamorphosis marks important moments of cultural origin. The tales mark natural objects... with the names and traces of human identities and desires' (Clarke 1995, 31). K. Sara Myers situates Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in a tradition of aetiological and cosmogonic poetry which stretches back at least to Hesiod's eighth-century BCE *Theogony*, and argues that the myths narrated in the *Metamorphoses* have an 'aetiological focus... which explain the origins of numerous natural and cultural phenomena' (Myers 1994, 6). Clearly, not all of the transformations from human to nonhuman form in the *Earthsea* texts can be similarly characterised as aetiological. However, the narrative of the Woman of Kemay is demonstrably aetiological. The myth of the woman who is both human and dragon is central to both *Tehanu* and *The Other Wind*.[3] *Tehanu* offers the fullest account of the tale (1992, 17-21). Tenar relates the story to Therru early on in the text as the pair is passing through a forest on their

[3] The tale of *The Woman of Kemay* is repeated in *The Other Wind*, pages 101 and 125 (2003a).

way to Ogion's hut. As Clarke observes, metamorphosis possesses an etymological connection with wandering. Teasing out the implications of this connection, Clarke suggests that

> the thematic fields of metamorphic allegory are united in the figure of the metamorphic mis-wanderer as dis-possessed agent. Cast out from its proper body, the metamorph can personify the wandering of signifiers, the change of meanings under metaphoric processes, the wanderings of the components of drives under repression, the metempsychosis of the departed soul, the circulation of commodities, and the literal exile of materially displaced persons (1995, 57).

It is entirely appropriate then, that Tenar tells her story of metamorphosis in a forest, which, as Robert Pogue Harrison observes, is associated in the literary and philosophical tradition with dislocation and confusion.[4] However, the story of metamorphosis told by Tenar is not, in fact, her story at all as the text is stratified into a number of embedded narratives. Tenar is the first frame narrator, who introduces the myth of the Woman of Kemay to Tehanu by recounting another story of metamorphosis, that of Bordger of Way (1992, 17). Tenar then proceeds to tell a story which Ogion had originally recounted to her while she was Ogion's ward and apprentice (1992, 17-21). Ogion's story constitutes the second narrative level. In it, Ogion meets the Woman of Kemay who herself takes on the role of narrator (1992, 19-20). The Woman of Kemay tells the story of the original sundering of humanity from the dragons in a primordial act of metamorphosis. This story constitutes the third, final and most 'deeply' embedded narrative.

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[4] Harrison writes 'as an obstacle to visibility,' forests constitute 'an obstacle to human knowledge and science' (Harrison 1992, 10).

The fact that the text takes on a stratified structure at this juncture indicates its literary heritage in aetiological narrative. As Myers observes, Ovid's reliance on embedded narrative and framing narrators in the *Metamorphoses* should be interpreted as a structure generic to aetiological narrative (Myers 1994, 68). In particular, Myers points to the influence of the Alexandrian poet Callimachus's *Aetia*, composed in the third century BC (1994, 67). Myers argues that, by the time Ovid came to compose the *Metamorphoses*, 'it seems that the use of internal narrators for aetiological disquisitions might have become associated with Callimachus's aetiological poetry' (1994, 68). She points to Vergil's use of an internal narrator, Evander, in Book 8 of the *Aeneid* as he 'leads Aeneas over the site of ancient Rome and explains to him the origins of well-known landmarks' (Myers 1994, 68; 71). An embedded narrative structure was, then, generic to aetiological narrative in Augustan literary culture. The fact that Le Guin adopts an embedded and stratified narrative for her own tale of metamorphosis suggests a relationship with this aetiological tradition. This suggestion is borne out by the content of the Woman of Kemay's song.

The woman of Kemay's narrative begins in a fashion that registers its aetiological motive:

> 'When Segoy raised the islands of the world from the sea in the beginning of time, the dragons were the first born of the land and the wind blowing over the land. So the Song of Creation tells. But her song told also that then, in the beginning, dragon and human were all one. They were all one people, one race, winged, and speaking the True Language' (Le Guin 1992, 19).

The story continues to tell of a gradual sundering and eventual bifurcation of this one primal race into two distinct species: 'So those who had been both dragon and human

changed, becoming two peoples' (1992, 20). What I want to suggest is that this bifurcation constitutes an original metamorphosis that accounts for the split between nature and culture. As Clarke observes of Ovid's aetiological myths of metamorphosis, 'all cultural origins are catastrophic, that is to say, non-original, since they are already a turning away from something prior... a disruption of natural structures' (1995, 31). The Woman of Kemay's myth gives an account of the original catastrophe. It furnishes a mythic explanation for the existence of not any one particular cultural phenomenon, artifact or institution, but for the existence of culture and history as such. This is because the metamorphic separation of human and dragon is also the separation of culture and history from nature. In the Woman of Kemay's telling, humans 'gathered up wealth, treasure, things made, things learned [and] built houses, strongholds, to keep their treasures in, so they could pass all they gained to their children' (1992, 19-20). The dragons have no such interest in the transmission of wealth and knowledge through generations and time. The dragons 'became more and more in love with flight and wildness, and would have less and less to do with the works of making or with study and learning, or with houses and cities' (1992, 19). History and culture are apportioned to the human. The dragons, virtually ageless in the *Earthsea* texts, participate in the ahistorical and eternal temporality of nature and the nonhuman. As Chakrabarty argues, the practice of denying history to nature has 'a long and rich past' (2009, 201). Chakrabarty argues for the prevalence of 'an assumption common to historians of the mid-twentieth century: man's environment did change but so slowly as to make the history of man's relation to his environment almost timeless and thus not a subject of historiography at all' (2009, 204). The long, protracted and only faintly perceptible timelines on which nature operated made it appear immune to representation in history. History, so formulated, is the account of

human institutions and practices, which change at rates quick enough to be perceptible to human observers.

As the beginning of this chapter argued, Latour and Chakrabarty understand the Anthropocene as the collapse of the nature/culture distinction. The Woman of Kemay's aetiological narrative of metamorphosis recapitulates Chakrabarty's contention that the human is distinguished from the nonhuman by its possession of a history. The Woman of Kemay is a hybrid, metamorphic creature who, in retaining the form of both dragon and human, refuses to entertain the distinction between the historical and the natural described in her song. In this, she is a metamorphic creature of the Anthropocene as it is theorised by Latour and Chakrabarty. Thomas H. Ford summarises this view as follows: 'The Anthropocene deconstructs traditional divisions between timescales (geological and existential), between temporal frames (the deep past and the living present), between objects of knowledge (natural and cultural)' (Ford 2013, 65).

Both human and dragon, the Woman of Kemay marks a point of intersection between the geological deep time inhabited by the dragons, and the historical time of the human. In this, she is a creature who appears intelligible according to Latour and Chakrabarty's sense of the Anthropocene. However, as indicated above, the Anthropocene is an equivocal figure that lends itself to contradictory readings. If the Woman of Kemay appears to signal the failure of the human/nonhuman distinction, Le Guin's text also permits a reading that preserves and reinstalls this distinction. This is a reading that turns on the symbolic work performed by the conceit of metamorphosis in the Western literary tradition and by the narrative economy of Le Guin's text. In the above discussion, I suggested that the figure of the Woman of Kemay is amenable to an interpretation that would stress the collapse of the

human/nonhuman distinction. However, the text also solicits a symbolic reading that tends to preserve or reinstate this same distinction.

Jude Allen suggests that metamorphosis tends to be read in allegorical terms by the Western critical tradition, that is, as 'a metaphor or allegory either for some kind of passion, sexual desire or other emotionally transgressive state which is deemed to be animalistic or "beastly"' (Allen 2013, 24). Allen's thesis is that such readings tend to co-opt and contain the subversive potential of metamorphosis:

> Although it may be argued that the very idea of human-animal metamorphosis only makes sense in terms of difference, metamorphosis also suggests a continuum or meeting between human and other beings and must therefore be resisted. By resisting any notion of continuum through the means of an allegorical reading, we are protected from the idea itself. As long as the metamorphosis is contained within — so to speak, neutralised by — an allegorical reading, we are denied the possibility of thinking about the continuum as a literal one (2013, 24).

In other words, then, reading metamorphosis symbolically affirms a human/non-human distinction, whereas a more literal interpretation of the conceit appears to collapse this distinction.[5] The literal interpretation of metamorphosis that Allen suggests, an interpretation that stresses human/animal continuity, is predicated on the same assumption that sponsors Latour's and Chakrabarty's theories of the Anthropocene. For Latour and Chakrabarty, the human/nonhuman distinction is a historical error that can now be rectified by way of proper interpretation. In Allen's criticism, this interpretation is prosecuted by way of a literalism. However, it is my

[5] 'Symbol' is arguably a more accurate term for the process here described by Allen as 'allegory' and I will use 'symbol' in this chapter.

contention that the symbolic work performed by the conceit of metamorphosis cannot simply be ignored, as Allen seems to suggest. Chris Baldick defines a symbol as,

> in the simplest sense, anything that stands for or represents something else beyond it — usually an idea conventionally associated with it... In literary usage, however, a symbol is a specially evocative kind of image... that is, a word or phrase referring to a concrete object, scene, or action which also has some further significance associated with it (Baldick 2001, 251).

If the literal reading of metamorphosis proposed by Allen suggests the collapse of the human/nonhuman distinction, a symbolic reading of the conceit would preserve this distinction. Further, if Colebrook's rendering of the Anthropocene is accepted, a symbolic reading is required by the Anthropocene. As the quotation above makes clear, a symbol mediates between the reader and the object, scene or action that is symbolised. As such, symbols install a distance between the reader and symbolic reality. The reader only has an indirect, oblique access to the world mediated by the symbol. This distance between the reader and the symbolised world recapitulates that between man and world in Colebrook's version of the Anthropocene. That is, much as the reader who encounters a symbol has access to the symbolised world only by way of a certain necessary distance, the anthropos of the Anthropocene is removed from the world in which he intervenes. Reading metamorphosis symbolically is, then, an act that affirms a distinction between human and nonhuman. In the readings that follow, I will suggest that the various metamorphoses represented in Le Guin's fiction invite and demand a symbolic reading.

In *Tehanu* each of the narrators, Tenar, Ogion and the Woman of Kemay, tells a borrowed tale. That is, none of the narrators is a story-maker, but, rather, each is

story-teller or story-mediator. If, as Clarke suggests, metamorphosis possesses an etymological connection with wandering, then this is evident in the way stories themselves appear to wander from their points of origin here. Ogion, 'wandering... along the coast' of Gont hears a fisherwoman singing a song:

> It was the tune and the words both that Ogion heard, and he had never heard them before, so he asked where the song came from. And from one answer to another, he went along to where somebody said, 'Oh, that's one of the songs of the Woman of Kemay.' So he went along to Kemay, the little fishing port where the woman lived, and he found her house down by the door (Le Guin 1992, 17-18).

If Ogion wanders aimlessly, so too does the song of the Woman of Kemay. Detached from its point of origin, the song, which alludes to metamorphosis, circulates among various singers and speakers. Encountering this wandering song in his own wandering, Ogion's travels are henceforth directed by its movement. However, in seeking to find the song's point of genesis, Ogion is ultimately frustrated. The Woman of Kemay claims no ownership of the story, but instead sings him a song that has the impersonal quality of myth. She prefaces her story with the line 'I'll sing you a story I know' (1992, 19). The text obscures the origin or author of the story and, in doing so, invites an interpretation familiar from Ovid scholarship, that is, an interpretation in terms of intertextuality.

If all the narrators of the Woman of Kemay episode are mediators, and not makers, of stories, then an eminently plausible reading would point to Le Guin's intimacy with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in particular, and Augustan literary culture in general. Indeed, Kai Mikkonen argues for precisely such an intertextual interpretation of metamorphosis and suggests that metamorphosis is 'a trope for intertextuality', that

is, 'a trope for the comparison and combination of texts within a text' (Mikkonen 1996, 327). The fact that each of the narrators relates borrowed stories could, then, be read as a symbol of Le Guin's own authorial position as a relator and sometime translator of Ovid's literary myths. Such a reading is further authorised by a critical tradition that emphasises the self-reflexive interrogation of the role of the author in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. As Myers points out, 'the use of frame narratives has itself been shown to be... a powerful device for poetic self-reference. Internal narrators bring to the fore the issue of the reliability of the narrator' (Myers 1994, 70). Le Guin's metamorphoses can then be read as symbols of her transformation of Ovid, much as Ovid's metamorphoses have been read as transformations of myth. Clarke offers such a reading. He suggests that 'metamorphosis in literature may be read as an allegory of writing and its effects — reading (mis)interpretation, figuration, intertextual transmission, and so forth. The metamorphic changes represented within texts are allegories of the metamorphosis *of* texts (1995, 2; emphasis in the original). Similarly, Gildenhard and Zissos interpret metamorphosis in Ovid as figures of intertextuality, suggesting that 'Ovid extends the remit of the term [metamorphosis] to the realm of poetics'. They propose that the transformations figured in *Metamorphoses* can be read as symbols of 'Ovid's handling of his predecessors in acts of intertextual transformation' (Gildenhard and Zissos 2013, 5).

This episode then, invites a symbolic reading, one which interprets stories of metamorphosis as figures of intertextuality. As Allen observes, 'human/animal metamorphosis in literature has historically been presented and understood allegorically' a fact which she suggests 'restricts any possibility of ontological likeness... between human beings and other beings (2013, 23). Allen views the symbolic frame of metamorphosis in the literary tradition with suspicion. She fears

that stories of metamorphosis, insofar as they have been 'written and read as allegories... have thus contributed to the maintenance of a relationship in which humans are seen as categorically separate from and superior to other animals' (2013, 23). However, the maintenance of the human/animal distinction performed by the symbolic work of metamorphosis can be read in terms of the fundamental ambivalence of the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene, as has been argued throughout, is amenable both to interpretations which stress humanity's continuity with life, and to readings that stress humanity's total distinction from all other organisms. Thus, the Woman of Kemay episode draws on the power of metamorphosis to suggest the failure of the human/nonhuman distinction. However, the text also invites a symbolic reading of metamorphosis in terms of intertextuality and thereby works to affirm the human/non-human distinction. This distinction is further shored up by the narrative structure of the Woman of Kemay episode.

The myth of the separation of human from dragon related by the Woman of Kemay occurs at the most embedded or deepest level of narration. Her song is framed by two other narrators, Ogion and Tenar. As indicated above, this narrative embedding is a feature generic to classical aetiological poetry and literary metamorphosis. However, the Woman of Kemay's song is doubly framed by human narrators. The text is stratified so as to position her story at the 'lowest' level of a narrative hierarchy headed by Tenar, who alone of the three narrators possesses no metamorphic ability at all. As such, the worrying dissolution of the boundary between the human and nonhuman posed by the Woman of Kemay is neutralised by the narrative structure. This narrative structure apportions the greatest authority to Tenar who, in contrast to both Ogion and the Woman of Kemay, does not change form at will. Put otherwise, the Woman of Kemay's voice is relegated to the least privileged

point in a narrative hierarchy. The song she sings, a song that tells of continuity between human and nonhuman, and the voice that embodies this continuity, are mediated and thereby contained by two human voices.

Allen, noting the peripheral or geographically marginal locations in which metamorphosis typically occurs, reads such a situation as a strategy of containment. Spatially isolated, metamorphosis, Allen suggests, is safely relegated to spaces with little or no connection to 'the civilised world' (Allen 2013, 20). If literature contains metamorphosis in acts of geographical isolation, I want to suggest that something similar is happening in narrative terms in *Tehanu*. That is to say, in so 'deeply' embedding the Woman of Kemay's voice, she is isolated from the main flow of the plot. Much as metamorphosis in Greek myth tended to occur on far-flung islands, remote from the main centres of civilisation and history, the Woman of Kemay's narrative appears remote from the narrative proper. If, as argued above, the Woman confuses the historical human and the ahistorical natural, then the narrative structure contains this threat. It does so by locating her voice outside of the main flow of narrative, in a space that does not occupy the time of the main plot. Thus isolated, the Woman of Kemay is relegated safely to a space outside the historical time of the narrative proper. The text frames her voice as peripheral, marginal and alienated from history. It thereby reclaims the prerogative over history for the entirely human, embodied by Tenar, a prerogative that the Woman of Kemay had called into question.

I have read this episode in *Tehanu* as symbolic of the tension that mediates the Anthropocene. On the one hand, the Woman of Kemay is a metamorphic figure that appears to collapse the human/nonhuman distinction. In this, she can be read in terms of the Anthropocene as configured by Latour and Chakrabarty. However, I have suggested that there is another reading available in this episode, one that works to

affirm the distinction between human and nonhuman. This reading is one enabled by the narrative economy and symbolic potential of the episode. Narrative structure and the symbolic reading suggested by the Woman of Kemay episode work to maintain the distinction between human and nonhuman life that the conceit of metamorphosis would otherwise efface.

In the following sections, I document the expression of this tension in Le Guin's short fiction set in the *Earthsea* universe. I consider the short fiction collected in *Tales from Earthsea*, as well as 'The Word of Unbinding' and 'The Rule of Names'. In her foreword to the collection of her short stories, *The Wind's Twelve Quarters*, Le Guin calls 'The Word of Unbinding' and 'The Rule of Names' 'germinal' fictions which would eventually, after a period of gestation, result in the *Earthsea* novels (Le Guin 2000b, xiv). Both stories were originally published in *Fantastic* in 1964. These two germinal stories, largely neglected by scholars of the *Earthsea* books, centre on tales of metamorphosis. Further, a discussion of these two stories is apposite to the argument being developed in this chapter because of the historical emphasis in discussions of short story on matters of plot. As will be demonstrated in what follows, the texts also solicit a symbolic reading of metamorphosis.

The Short Story in the Age of the Anthropocene

An emphasis on plot in discussions of the short story has been widely influenced by John Gerlach's contention that short fiction distinguishes itself from the novel by the greater accent it places on points of ending or closure. Gerlach supports his thesis by drawing on the authority of Poe:

> Reading short stories in the light of Poe's injunctions I began to see how anticipation of the ending was used to structure the whole, even when stories did not aim for Poe's singleness. I could see a new sense in Poe's familiar critical dicta, and I could see their wide application. Stories began to fall into patterns based on how they were structured in relation to the ending, and it was clear that endings were linked to historical changes in the genre (Gerlach 1985, 3).

According to Gerlach's argument, one of the chief means by which short fiction achieves Poe's celebrated 'unity of impression' is the satisfaction derived from its conclusion (Poe 2006, 545). By virtue of the short story's brevity, the ending of the short narrative is proportionally more significant than it is in the novel. Gerlach suggests that, given its length, it is possible for the reader of the novel to 'lose sight of the possibility of ending at all' (1985, 7). In contrast, with the 'short story, as Poe argued, the writer can at least keep the reader in anticipation of the ending' (1985, 7). Gerlach's suggestion that short fiction is generically teleological in a way the novel is not has been rehearsed by critics of the form in the years since. Michael Trussler, for instance, argues that the short story is 'opposed to the novel's circuitous deferrals' insofar as it 'manifests a form of textual desire that contains a relentless drive toward its own endings' (Trussler 1996, 567).

As this section will demonstrate, the endings of both 'The Rule of Names' and 'The Word of Binding' possess a narrative force consonant with the theories of Gerlach and Trussler. Le Guin's short stories, it will be argued, are mediated by narrative structures intrinsic to the American short story, a form that lends itself to expressing the ambivalence of the Anthropocene.

Latour speaks of a 'reversal' of 'Western philosophy's most cherished trope' such that 'human societies have resigned themselves to playing the role of dumb object, while nature has unexpectedly taken on the role of active subject' (Latour 2014, 11). The vocabulary of reversal deployed by Latour invokes an Aristotelian poetics. Specifically, it trades on the Aristotelian concepts of *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*, defined in the *Poetics*. *Peripeteia*, translated as 'reversal' by Anthony Kenny, is defined by Aristotle as 'a change in direction in the course of events... taking place, as we insist in accord with probability or necessity (Aristotle 2013, 30). *Anagnorisis*, translated as 'discovery' refers to 'a change from ignorance to knowledge, and thus either to love or hate, on the part of those destined for good or bad fortune' (2013, 30). For Latour, Crutzen's proposal requires us to recognise the anthropos that we have become. This recognition or *anagnorisis* is attended, as in those plots which Aristotle found exemplary, by a reversal of fortune.[6] Latour, elaborating this *peripeteia*, argues that 'through a surprising inversion of foreground and background, it is *human* history that has become frozen and *natural* history that has taken on a frenetic pace' in the Anthropocene (2014, 12; emphasis in the original).

This chapter has argued for the presence of a fundamental tension in theorisations of the Anthropocene. It has opposed Latour and Chakrabarty, who understand the Anthropocene as enfolding the human in the nonhuman, to Colebrook who suggests that the Anthropocene is symptom and reaffirmation of this human/non-human distinction. However, this tension is already pregnant in Latour's thinking. Harman, for instance, points to the fact that Latour's use of the word 'hybrid' 'misleads us with its false overtones of a mixture of two pristine ingredients' (2009,

[6] 'Discovery [*anagnorisis*] takes its finest form when it coincides with reversal, as in the *Oedipus*' (2013, 30).

63). In other words, by naming phenomena such as the ozone layer, 'hybrids', Latour preserves the distinction between nature and culture even as he gestures towards the collapse of this difference. What I want to emphasise here, however, is the way Latour's narrative rendering of the Anthropocene neutralises or contains the capacity of that epoch to trouble received distinctions. If Latour's version of the Anthropocene turns on the failure of received demarcations, the Aristotelian structure with which he frames the epoch tends to neutralise the anxiety of this failure. Although the Anthropocene signals, for Latour, a collapse of the distinction between human and nonhuman histories, its general shape can be accommodated to an archetypal plot. The Aristotelian shape that Latour lends the Anthropocene allows the dizzying reversals it entails to be domesticated and made meaningful in human terms. Plot and narrative intervene, in Latour's account, as in Le Guin's representation of metamorphosis, to contain threats to the sanctity of the human/nonhuman distinction. In this section, I argue that Le Guin deploys a similarly Aristotelian plot in her short story, 'The Rule of Names'. As in Latour's account of the Anthropocene, *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* work to contain the threat to the human/natural distinction that metamorphosis otherwise suggests.

Short fiction theory has tended to characterise the genre in Aristotelian terms. Thomas M. Leitch thus suggests that 'the anecdotal short story... presents an Aristotelian action with a beginning, middle and end' (Leitch 1989, 130). Leitch's article contends that American short fiction in particular is possessed of a 'debunking rhythm', which he defines as the movement from 'bewilderment to authoritative revelation, from ignorance to knowledge' coupled with an 'antithesis, the movement from one belief or situation to its opposite' (1989, 132). These two elements of the debunking rhythm of the American short story are the familiar Aristotelian plot

elements of *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* respectively. I will argue that *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* conspire to contain the ambiguity of the human/nonhuman metamorph by driving Le Guin's short fiction to closure.

'The Rule of Names' is exemplary of the debunking rhythm identified by Leitch as a hallmark of the American short story (Le Guin 2000, 80-93). The narrative focuses on Mr. Underhill, a wizard, who, true to his name, lives under a mound on an isolated island. Mr. Underhill is revealed at the end of the story to be the dragon Yevaud, who absconded with the treasure of Pendor and, taking human form, concealed himself on Sattins island. It is the arrival of a stranger, who eventually reveals himself as the Sealord of Pendor and rightful inheritor of Mr. Underhill's treasure, that eventuates the discovery of Yevaud. The latter's true nature is uncovered at the end of the story as he engages in a series of competitive metamorphoses with his antagonist.

Most pertinent to the argument of this chapter is the embedded narrative of the Sealord of Pendor. En route to confront Mr. Underhill, the Sealord encounters Birt and relates to him the history of the horde of Pendor. The Sealord opens his story thus: 'It's a story that started a hundred years ago, and isn't finished yet — though it soon will be, very soon'(Le Guin 2000, 86). The Sealord's history is initiated with an anticipation of its closure. In this, it reflects in microcosm the teleological drive of short fiction. However, the very closure anticipated at the end of the tale is actually deferred by the act of telling the tale. The tale told by the Sealord is totally superfluous to his own ends. With little to no preamble, the Sealord regales Birt with the story without any real motivation. In telling Birt this tale, he delays the resolution of the story which he anticipates in the very opening lines. However, the Sealord's

tale obviously functions as exposition for the reader and it is this expository function which supplies its motive.

In the battle between the Sealord and Mr. Underhill that closes the story, the two transform themselves variously into lions, tigers, groves, waterfalls, hills, and tongues of flame in an effort to triumph. The battle ends when Mr. Underhill transforms himself into a dragon and the Sealord, tiring of the dance, challenges Mr. Underhill to stand in his true form by calling him by his True Name:

> 'Take any shape you please, little Mr. Underhill!' he taunted. I can match you. But the game grows tiresome... Now, big dragon, little wizard, take your true shape. I command you by the power of your true name – Yevaud' (Le Guin 2000, 90).

When the dragon does not return to human form as expected, the Sealord wavers, and repeats his challenge. Mr. Underhill replies as follows:

> 'Yes,' said a great, husky, hissing voice. 'My true-name is Yevaud, and my true-shape is this shape.'
>
> 'But the dragon was killed — they found dragon bones on Udrath Island.'
>
> 'That was another dragon,' said the dragon, and then stooped like a hawk, talons out-stretched. And Birt shut his eyes (2000, 91).

The discovery of Mr. Underhill's true form is exemplary of the trick-ending of short fiction in general, and the debunking rhythm of American short fiction in particular. Further, as the Sealord is forced to realise his mistake, he is subjected to the familiar Aristotelian plot elements of *anagnorisis* attended by *peripeteia*. What I want to emphasise, however, is that it is the Sealord's superfluous narrative to Birt that allows the ending of the *The Rule of Names* to be read in terms of *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia*.

The Sealord of Pendor, having found dragon remains in his quest for the treasure, assumes that Yevaud had died and 'some unknown wizard from somewhere, must have met him single-handed and defeated him — and then made off with the treasure' (2000, 88). It is this assumption, narrated to Birt, which frames the closure of the story as a moment of *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia*.

If the Sealord's tale is superfluous to his own ends, it is integral to the mechanics of the plot. It furnishes the reader with a comfortably familiar narrative structure with which to approach the plot. This paradigm is familiar both as exemplary of Aristotelian plot dynamics and the sense of an ending that critics attribute to the short story. As Leitch writes, 'all short stories... proceed to a revelation that establishes a teleology, a retrospective sense of design, informing the whole story' (1989, 131). Thus, even if the Sealord does not triumph over Mr. Undehill/Yevaud, plot does triumph.

The metamorphic capacity of Mr. Underhill/Yevaud represents an obvious threat to the human/nonhuman distinction. The potential of metamorphosis to trouble the distinction between human and nonhuman is neutralised by the narrative told by the Sealord. The act of framing the final metamorphosis of Mr. Underhill into Yevaud as both *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* is a technique of containment. The Sealord's embedded narrative allows this transformation of human into nonhuman to be read not as a threat to the distinction between these two orders of being, but, rather, as elements of an eminently familiar Aristotelian plot structure. Mr. Underhill's metamorphosis implicates the totality of the story with that 'retrospective sense of design' which Leitch detects in the short story (1989, 131). In doing so, this metamorphosis reaffirms order, pattern and design even as it seems to trouble the orderly distinction of the human from the nonhuman.

Metamorphosis and Apostrophe

Margaret Ronda argues that the Anthropecene entails a 'startling awareness of an anthropogenic presence perceptible in the nonhuman surroundings and... an accompanying sense that this recognition reshapes ("morphs") the human perceiver in unforeseen ways' (Ronda 2014, 103). In the Anthropocene, there is no such thing as 'nature', or an immaculate outside to culture. Rather, in the Anthropocene, hybridisation prevails, and matter is permeated by cultural activities. If the anthropos now names an image of the human whose being is compromised by the nonhuman, then what we understand by matter is likewise newly qualified. In the Anthropocene, matter is seen to possess an agency previously the prerogative of subjectivity. Ronda argues that the figure of apostrophe might be mobilised as a way to theorise the newly perceptible agency of the nonhuman. She suggests the centrality of apostrophe to an ecopoetics that 'ascribes significance and relationality to the nonhuman world' (2014, 104). An apostrophic ecopoetics might, on Ronda's argument, ask 'how can a poem give matter and creaturely life a "voice," a "face"?' (2014, 105). In this section, I explore the possibility of using apostrophe to theorise a poetics of the Anthropocene in Le Guin's short fiction. I suggest that apostrophe lends matter something approaching subjectivity, thereby mitigating the distinction between human and non-human. However, it will be shown that Le Guin's fiction also acts to contain this metamorphosis, thereby preserving the difference between the cultural and the natural. This act of containment is again performed by plot.

The pronominal anaphora that opens 'The Word of Unbinding' has no referent. That is to say, there is no individual with whom the reader can associate the pronoun 'he' in the rhetorical question, 'Where was he?' (Le Guin 2000a, 71). Because of this, 'Where was he?' can be read as an apostrophe. Baldick defines apostrophe as a 'rhetorical figure in which the speaker addresses a dead or absent person, or an abstraction or inanimate object' (2001, 17). The pronominal anaphora 'he', is then, also an apostrophe in that it refers ultimately to an absence. This opening apostrophe anticipates the rhetorical gestures of Festin himself; '"Who?" he demanded of the walls, and slowly a name gathered on them and ran down to him like a thick black drop sweated out from pores of stone and spores of fungus: "Voll"'(2000a, 72) Addressing walls, trees, and, as in the quotation given above, his wizard's staff, the wizard's speech is characteristically apostrophic. The story describes Festin's attempt to escape his imprisonment by effecting a series of self-transformations, only the final of which, performed by the word of 'unbinding' is successful.

Apostrophe's original definition in classical rhetoric supplies a reading of the connection between the trope and metamorphosis. Quintilian, in the *Institutio de Oratario* suggested that apostrophe 'consists in the diversion of our address from the judge' (Quintilian 9.2.38).[7] Douglas Kneale stresses the fact that apostrophe, understood as a 'diversion of speech' frames 'nearly all definitions of apostrophe down to the nineteenth century' (Kneale 1999, 13). Apostrophe, from the Greek *apostrephein* meaning to 'turn away', thus contains an etymological sense of wandering speech. In its original rhetorical context, it signified the diversion and distraction of language from its proper course. As above, Clarke suggests that the

[7] References are to Harold Edgeworth Butler's 1966 translation of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratorio*.

'thematic fields of metamorphic allegory are united in the figure of the metamorphic mis-wanderer as dis-possessed agent' (1995, 57). Like the metamorph then, apostrophic speech is deviant. Apostrophe, like metamorphosis, signals a diversion from an origin. 'The Word of Unbinding' draws on and confirms this understanding of apostrophe as a deviation from a point of origin. Festin's first word in the story is addressed to an inanimate object. He cries, 'Staff!' (Le Guin 2000a, 72). When the staff fails to appear, the wizard summons a light by words alone:

> When his alderwood wizard's staff did not come to his hand, he knew that he was in peril. He sat up, and not having his staff with which to make a proper light, he struck a spark between finger and thumb, muttering a certain Word. A blue will o' the wisp sprang from the spark and rolled feebly through the air, sputtering. 'Up,' said Festin, and the fireball wobbled upward till it lit a vaulted trapdoor very high above, so high that Festin, projecting into the fireball momentarily saw his own face as a pale dot in the darkness (2000a, 72).

Festin's first word takes the form of a failed apostrophe. The will o' the wisp, serving the same function as the attempted apostrophe, also acts as substitute for apostrophe. This substitute takes the form of a deviation. That is, Festin's gaze wanders from its point of origin in the body. Festin's will o' the wisp, standing in for apostrophe, might, then be read as a literalisation of that trope. Like apostrophe, Festin's spell constitutes a wandering or diversion from a point of origin.

Moreover, as Jonathan Culler observes, apostrophe is also a form of poetic self-fashioning. He argues that 'the vocative of apostrophe is a device which the poetic voice uses to establish with an object a relationship which helps to constitute him' (Culler 1981, 142). Or, put otherwise, 'one who successfully invokes nature is one to whom nature might, in its turn, speak' (Culler 1981, 142). Apostrophe, then,

not only shares an etymological connection with metamorphosis but also involves metamorphosis as a fundamental process of its rhetorical machinery.

Before he realises that metamorphosis will offer him no escape from Voll's prison, Festin attempts one final desperate spell of self-transformation:

> The walls were gone. He was in the earth, rocks and veins of granite for bones, ground-water for blood, the roots of things for nerves. Like a blind worm he moved through the earth westward, slowly, darkness before and behind (2000a, 76).

This dissolution of the self into its surroundings confirms the connection between apostrophe and metamorphosis for which I have been arguing. Indeed, Festin's penultimate act of metamorphosis can be read as a literalisation of apostrophe. This is because, as Culler argues, apostrophe is a trope which 'can be read as an act of radical interiorization and solipsism. Either it parcels out the self to fill the world, peopling the universe with fragments of the self... or else it internalizes what might have been thought external' (1981, 146). Festin's spell, which dissolves the wizard into the world, is, then, a literalisation of apostrophic solipsism. It is an act of metamorphosis, which, like apostrophe, tinctures the inanimate with subjectivity. What I want to suggest, is that if 'The Word of Unbinding' is structured by a metamorphosis that literalises the trope of apostrophe, then so too is the concept of the Anthropocene.

Latour writes that, in the Anthropocene 'the traces of our action are visible everywhere', and, so,

> we encounter, just as in the old prescientific and nonmodern myths, an agent which gains its name of 'subject' because he or she might be *subjected* to the vagaries, bad humor, emotions, reactions, and even revenge of another agent, who also gains its quality of 'subject' because it also is *subjected* to his or her action. It is in this radical sense that humans are no longer

> submitted to the diktats of objective nature, since what comes to them is also an intensively subjective form of action. To be a subject is not to act autonomously in front of an objective background, but to *share agency with other subjects that have also lost their autonomy* (Latour 2014, 5; emphasis in the original).

The concept of the Anthropocene draws on a poetic tradition that imagines nature responding to man's address. Our activities have completely permeated nature thereby lending it subjectivity. Thus, the concept of the Anthropocene addresses nature by way of apostrophe. In doing so, it reconfigures and transforms the image of man. The voice of man in the Anthropocene is one to which nature, no longer natural, can and will respond. In fact, in a lecture given at the conference, 'Anthropocene – Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet', Le Guin couches her discussion in terms of apostrophe. She suggests that,

> one way to stop seeing trees or rivers or hills only as natural resources is to class them as fellow beings, kinfolk. I guess what I'm trying to do is subjectify the universe, because look where objectifying has got us. To subjectify is not to co-opt and colonise and exploit. Rather, if it's done honestly, it involves a great reach outward of the mind and the imagination (Le Guin 2014, transcription mine).

The rhetorical trope that underwrites this conceit is that of apostrophe. Le Guin creatively addresses trees, river and hills as subjects and imagines their various responses. Her claim that the Anthropocene involves 'a great reach outward of the mind' is, further, suggestive of Culler's characterisation of apostrophe as solipsism. Le Guin's Anthropocene universe is one in which the self, in Culler's words, has been parceled out to fill the world.

Festin's act of metamorphosis can, I suggest, be read as a literalisation of apostrophe. In this, it resonates with the metamorphosis of matter in the Anthropocene proposed by Latour. Apostrophe grants the inanimate world subjectivity and is, then, a trope, that mitigates the distinction between natural and cultural. However, Le Guin's story is expressive of the fundamental ambivalence of the Anthropocene suggested earlier. If apostrophe and metamorphosis in 'The Word of Unbinding' suggest the attribution of agency to the inanimate world, thereby qualifying the human/nonhuman distinction, the narrative structure of the story works to contain and neutralise this subversive potential.

Indeed, there is a tradition in literary criticism that takes the position that apostrophe and narrative are mutually exclusive. Trussler's distinction between the 'abrupt, sporadic' focus on the singular event of the short story, and the 'synthesising effect most novels provide' is roughly analogous to a distinction that predates the flowering of the short story proper at the end of the nineteenth century (1996, 559). This distinction is that between the lyric and the narrative poem. Culler thus writes that 'one can distinguish two forces in poetry, the narrative and the apostrophic. A poem can recount a series of events... alternatively a poem may invoke objects, people a detemporalized space with forms and forces' (Culler 1981, 149). Short stories share with lyric a tendency to react against the smooth flow of events knitted together by the novel. The rhetorical figure that characterises lyric is, as Culler suggests, apostrophe.

Culler's schema suggests that narrative waxes as apostrophe wanes. It is the argument of this chapter that Le Guin's short stories are framed by a related dialectic. Apostrophe, which signals a metamorphic dissolution of self into world, informs the rhetorical structure of 'The Word of Unbinding'. However, much as narrative acts to

exclude apostrophe in Culler's schema, Le Guin's stories represent the triumph of narrative over the radical metamorphoses effected by apostrophe. To demonstrate this, I want to consider the fate of the final apostrophe and metamorphosis in 'The Word of Unbinding.'

The most important act of metamorphosis, the act that in fact motivates the plot in 'The Word of Unbinding', is that effected by Voll. It is revealed at the end of the story that Voll had split himself, in an act of self-transformation, into spirit and substance. His spirit wanders the archipelago:

> [Festin] had heard first long ago of Voll the Fell, who was said to be more than wizard yet less than man; who passed from island to island of the Outer reach, undoing the works of the Ancients, enslaving men, cutting forests, and spoiling fields, and sealing in underground tombs any wizard or Mage who tried to combat him. Refugees from ruined islands told always the same tale, that he came at evening on a dark wind over the sea (2000a, 72-73).

Again, the connection between wandering and metamorphosis observed by Clarke is confirmed. Voll's name becomes a signifier which, divorced from any signified, wanders though the Archipelago. Not only does Voll sunder spirit from substance in an act of metamorphosis, he separates language from meaning and reference. Voll, of course, means 'full' or, more suggestively, 'whole' in German. Bifurcating himself into two incomplete objects, Voll's name is ironically misapplied. Festin, at the end of the story, forces Voll to reinhabit his body (Le Guin 2000a, 78). Festin thus actually acts to contain the disruptive potential of metamorphosis. Voll's metamorphic bifurcation sundered the word from the thing. Festin reasserts this connection. Significantly for our purposes, Festin achieves this by way of apostrophe:

> [Festin] called out his enemy's name: 'Voll!'
>
> Called, unable to withstand, Voll came towards him, a thick pale shape in the starlight. Festin approached, and the other cowered and screamed as if burned (2000a, 78).

Voll is totally aphasic and, thus, Festin once more addresses an inarticulate subject in apostrophe. In doing so, he forces Voll back into himself and repairs the split between spirit and substance. Further, Festin's act restores the connection between word, Voll, and thing. In fact, however, Festin's apostrophe should, I suggest, be read not as the reassertion of an original connection between word and thing. Rather it should be read as a speech act that frames words as natural signs. That is to say, it suggests that 'Voll' is a motivated name that possesses an iconic, rather than an arbitrary relationship, with what it names.

Finally, it is the characteristic narrative rhythm of the short story that allows Festin's apostrophe to be read thus. As indicated above, critics of the form have attributed a unique salience to endings in short fiction. Trussler puts the point thus: 'The reader of a short story is continually conscious that the meaning created by the short story's ending may sweep back through the story, altering any or all textual details' (1996, 572). In this case, the ending sweeps back through the story to suggest that Voll's name is ironically misapplied. That is to say, had Voll never split himself in two in an act of metamorphosis, he would never have been known as 'not-whole'. Thus, the ending of the story establishes a normative understanding of language as natural sign and frames departures from this norm as deviant.

'The Word of Unbinding' thus ends in a containment of language, one that the narrative figures as redemption. Having traced the deviance of language from its proper course by the trope of apostrophe, the close of the narrative reasserts the connection between word and thing. Paradoxically, then, Festin's final act of

apostrophe to Voll is at once the last apostrophe uttered in the story and a triumph over apostrophe itself. Speech, having wandered from its proper path to address inanimate objects, is now returned to its proper context. Ultimately, it is the teleological energy of short fiction that effects this containment. Washing back through the narrative, the ending of the 'The Word of Unbinding' works retroactively to posit apostrophe as deviance and distraction from the proper circuit of speech. Thus, apostrophe and the subjectivity with which it tinges the nonhuman, inarticulate world are contained by the power of plot.

Le Guin's short story thus embodies the ambivalence that characterises the Anthropocene. Framing metamorphosis as the literalisation of apostrophic speech, 'The Word of Unbinding' is structured by that rhetorical trope which grants subjectivity to the inanimate world. Thus, the subject/object distinction appears mitigated in a way consonant with Latour and Chakrabarty's reading of the Anthropocene. However, the failure of this distinction is only temporary and apparent; reading for the plot in 'The Word of Unbinding' suggests Le Guin's ultimate ambivalence about the contiguity of the human and nonhuman. Narrative and plot work to contain and neutralise the threat to the human/non-human distinction posed by Festin's apostrophic metamorphosis. In the following section, I consider the representation of metamorphosis in 'The Bones of the Earth'. Like Festin's, the metamorphosis represented in this story takes the form of a dissolution of self into surroundings. In 'The Word of Unbinding', the interaction of plot and metamorphosis was read as expressing as ambivalence of the Anthropocene. In 'The Bones of the Earth', the symbolic work performed by the conceit of metamorphosis complicates apostrophe's power to suggest a contiguity between human and nonhuman agency.

The Bones of the Earth

Dissolving himself into the world that surrounds him, Festin's is an act of metamorphosis that is metonymic of the transformation of the human in the age of the Anthropocene. Le Guin reserves this particular form of metamorphosis for her short fiction. In the *Earthsea* novels, characters typically transform themselves into nonhuman animals.[8] It is only in the two short stories, 'The Word of Unbinding' and 'The Bones of the Earth' that a metamorphic dissolution of the self into the world is represented. The collapse of boundaries between self and world effected by Festin is not only a literalisation of the trope of apostrophe, as I have been arguing. Overdetermined in the range of readings they invite, these acts of self-transformation solicit a Freudian interpretation. They are evocative of that phenomenon Freud named 'the oceanic' feeling (Freud 1975, 1). Briefly, this phenomenon names that sense of 'oneness' with the universe which, Freud suggests, is characteristic of religious feeling (1975, 1). The oceanic feeling is defined by the failure of that distinction between the ego and the world that the developmental process achieved. As Freud puts it, the sensation 'is a feeling of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole' (1975, 2). As such, the oceanic feeling is an anachronistic remnant of an earlier stage of maturation, one in which no fine line between the ego and what surrounds it existed. Although Freud does not say as much, this phenomenon is another form taken by the death drive. Insofar as it figures the dissolution of the self into the world, the oceanic feeling is at once an analeptic gesture to beginnings of the ego, and a proleptic imagining of its end. It is this end-oriented feature of the oceanic feeling that, I suggest, renders it particularly amenable

[8] Examples include Ged's transformation into a hawk in *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1994), page 155-156 and the story of 'a great wizard who liked to turn himself into a bear, and did it too often, and became a bear, and killed his own little son' recounted by Tenar in *Tehanu* (1992, 17).

to representation in short fiction. As documented above, numerous critics of the genre, including Poe and Gerlach, have detected in the short story an overwhelming bias towards the importance of endings.

This dissolution of the self into surroundings is repeated in Le Guin's later short story, 'The Bones of the Earth'. In that narrative, the wizard Heleth disintegrates the boundaries between self and world in order to prevent an earthquake on the island of Gont:

> 'What I have to do, you see,' the old wizard said, still talking to Silence because it was a comfort to talk to him even if he was no longer there, 'is get into the mountain, right inside. But not the way a sorcerer-prospector does, not just slipping about between things and looking and tasting. Deeper. All the way in. Not the veins, but the bones' (2003, 160).

Again, as was the case with Festin's, in this act of metamorphosis the human is dissolved into the world such that the inanimate is lent subjectivity. As I have been arguing, this is the characteristic solipsism of apostrophe that, in Culler's words, 'peoples the universe with fragments of the self' (1981, 146). Heleth's act of metamorphosis is then, a literalisation of the trope of apostrophe. This reading is confirmed when it is considered that the wizard prefaces his spell with an explicit act of apostrophe. Heleth addresses his absent apprentice Silence by way of apostrophe. Of course, the apprentice's very name, 'Silence', frames Heleth's speech as apostrophe. It was, further, Heleth who gave the young wizard this name in the first place, thus signaling his predilection for addressing inarticulate subjects in apostrophe. Heleth's metamorphosis is, then, like Festin's, a literalisation of that trope which structures his speech throughout the narrative. Moreover, as I have been

suggesting, the act of dissolving the self into the world is that act of metamorphosis that underwrites the concept of the Anthropocene.

Heleth's metamorphosis can be read, then, as a literalisation of apostrophe, a figure of speech that imaginatively attributes agency to the inanimate world. As such, metamorphosis again appears to mitigate the distinction between the human and the nonhuman, the cultural and the natural. However, as this chapter has argued throughout, the concept of the Anthropocene is animated by a tension. This tension lies between readings, like Latour's and Chakrabarty's, that see the Anthropocene as the reconciliation of nature and culture, and that of Colebrook, who understands the Anthropocene as symptomatic of man's total exteriority to being. 'The Bones of the Earth' embodies this tension — the same act of metamorphosis that troubles the distinction between human and nonhuman is couched in a language that reaffirms this very difference.

Heleth's spell is characterised as a 'slow enlargement' (2003, 161). One of his final thoughts is 'I am vastening' as he attains a hyperbolic scale. (Le Guin 2003, 161). It is precisely a question of scale that has motivated critical formulations of the Anthropocene. Thus, Chakrabarty argues that 'to call human beings geological agents is to scale up our imagination of the human' such that to the human is attributed 'a force on the same scale as that released at other times when there has been a mass extinction of species' (2009, 206, 207). Heleth, in stopping the earthquake, quite literally acts as a geological agent and thereby embodies the hyperbolic agency of the human in the Anthropocene. As Chakrabarty argues, human agency in the Anthropocene has ballooned to encompass all proportions. As a result, the anthropos does not simply claim prerogative over those scales previously reserved for geological

forces, but, rather, finds itself implicated in a total confusion of all scales, as Timothy Clark argues:

> One symptom of a now widespread crisis of scale is a derangement of linguistic and intellectual proportion in the way people often talk about the environment, a breakdown of 'decorum' in the strict sense. Thus a sentence about the possible collapse of civilization can end, no less solemnly, with the injunction never to fill the kettle more than necessary when making tea. A poster in many workplaces depicts the whole earth as giant thermostat dial, with the absurd but intelligible caption 'You control climate change.' A motorist buying a slightly less destructive make of car is now 'saving the planet' (Clark 2012, 151-152).

Clark calls this derangement a 'crisis of scale' (2012, 150). Le Guin's foreword to *Tales from Earthsea* compounds this sense of scalar confusion and dislocation. There, Le Guin writes that 'the five tales in this book explore or extend the world established by the first four Earthsea novels. Each is a story in its own right, but they will profit by being read after, not before, the novels' (Le Guin 2003, xii). In terms of the suggested order of reading, the stories in a very literal sense come 'after' the novels. The tales, even though they are nominally stories in their own right, would thus appear to be dependent on the novels for their intelligibility. However, as the foreword proceeds, the temporal relationship between the tales and the novels becomes more complex. Le Guin offers a detailed chronology of the events of the stories in relation to those represented in the novels;

> 'The Finder' takes place about three hundred years before the time of the novels, in a dark and troubled time; its story casts light on how some of the customs and institutions of the Archipelago came to be. 'The Bones of the Earth' is about the wizards who taught the wizard who first taught Ged, and shows that it takes more than one mage to stop an earthquake.

> 'Darkrose and Diamond' might take place at any time during the last couple of hundred years in Earthsea; after all, a love story can happen at any time, anywhere. 'On the High Marsh' is a story from the brief but eventful six years that Ged was Archmage of Earthsea. And the last story, 'Dragonfly,' which takes place a few years after the end of *Tehanu*, is the bridge between that book and the next one, *The Other Wind* (to be published soon) (Le Guin 2003, xiii).

Le Guin thus interleaves the tales among the events of the novels. Her short stories qualify and ramify those longer narratives, modulating their meaning retrospectively. With respect to the novels then, the short stories contained in *Tales from Earthsea* occupy a strange temporality. In one obvious sense, they come 'after' those novels. However, they are also intercalated between the events of the longer narratives. The short stories are both dependent on the novels for their intelligibility, but, in that the short stories 'cast light' on the institutions of the Archipelago, the novels are also dependent on the tales. Both frame and framed, the short stories throw causality into a state of disarray. Le Guin's foreword locates them simultaneously before, during and after the novels and thereby confuses any smooth temporal connection between events. As the short fictions come both before and after the novels, no one scale is allowed priority. This intersection between the two scales brings about a confusion of chronology and causality.

However, it is not just the case that scales are confused in the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene also describes the removal of humanity from any sense of scale at all. Or put otherwise, humanity operates on a scale entirely its own and is, once more, the measure of all things. Heleth recognises his enlargement with a nonce word, the deadjectival intransitive verb, 'vastening' (Le Guin 2003, 161). In deriving a verb from the adjective, 'vast', Heleth, metamorphoses scale from something that one

possesses in the manner of an attribute, to something that the anthropos performs in the manner of a verb. Scale is not now something the anthropos occupies as one member of a set of objects occupying a similar scale. Rather, man occupies a scale uniquely his own. There are no other members of the set, 'human scale'. Or, as Colebrook argues, 'the literal truth of the Anthropocene era is that man is not being within the world, but has existed as a geological force that has irrevocably altered a world that is no longer an earth' (Colebrook 2012, 198). The human scale is now supremely removed from all other scales on the earth. A nonce word is, then, the only word equipped to express an exclusively human sense of scale. In its complete singularity, 'vastening', is the only word suited to the inflated scale of the anthropos.

Finally, Heleth's 'vastening' conceals an act of violent expansion by way of its intransitivity. Heleth parcels his being out to occupy all of Gont island, radically scaling his agency up at the expense of the geological agency of the island. However, this is not presented as the transitive action of a subject on an object, that is, as the action of a human on a landscape. 'Vastening' is, thus, performative of the compromised geological agency of the island. Intransitive, it does not even register a sense of an object, with agencies and scales of its own, that is being acted upon. Intransitivity is, here, an act of mystification — it acts to conceal the contraction of geological agency that accompanies the expansion of human agency.

The dissolution of self into world effected by Heleth and Festin is, as I have argued, a literalisation of the trope of apostrophe. Parcelling out their selves to occupy the world, the spells of these two wizards lend the inanimate subjectivity. The metamorphoses of Heleth and Festin thus appear to accord with Latour and Chakrabarty's version of the Anthropocene. In their reading of the Anthropocene, the natural and the cultural no longer exist as distinct, oppositional terms. Rather, the

cultural is enfolded in the natural in much the same way that Heleth and Festin immerse themselves metamorphically into their surroundings. However, Heleth's 'I am vastening' suggests the complacency of this reading (Le Guin 2003, 161). As argued above, Heleth's 'vastening' can be read as an expression of man's ultimate exteriority and alienation from the world. That is, Heleth's 'vastening' reveals man as a rupture within being who cannot simply be assimilated back into the natural order.

Further, the opening sentences of Le Guin's *Earthsea* short stories compound this sense of man as a trauma for being. 'The Word of Unbinding' opens with an interruption (Le Guin 2000a, 71). With no preamble the wizard Festin awakens to find himself imprisoned in a stone cellar. No explanation of how he was captured is offered, and the reader must join Festin in seeking to account for this interruption to the normal course of his life. Trussler identifies a narrative situation generic to the short story. He writes,

> many short stories depict situations where characters are perplexed by a given set of circumstances, circumstances that seem to preclude a mode of interpretation that will allow a mediation back into what Bahktin calls the 'normal course of biographical time,' where events are understood through their being integrated into a series (Trussler 1996, 558)

Trussler's description renders Le Guin's *The Word of Unbinding* almost exactly. The story confirms Trussler's assertion that short fiction, in contrast to the novel, tends to 'accentuate a single event' while the novel prefers to 'knit numerous events together in a single fashion' (1996, 558). Beginning *in media res*, the narrative is framed as an event isolated from larger and holistic temporal structures that would explain it. It is less a sequence of events than an interruption to that sequence of events that constitutes the novel. Le Guin's *Earthsea* short fictions thus begin with a

sense of rupture. In opening her stories, Le Guin introduces characters that appear detached, isolated and alienated from historical frames. 'The Word of Unbinding' opens, curt and terse, *in media res*:

> Where was he? The floor was hard and slimy, the air black and stinking, and that was all there was. Except a headache. Lying flat on the clammy floor Festin moaned, and then said, 'Staff!' When his alderwood wizard's staff did not come to his hand, he knew he was in peril (Le Guin 2000a, 71).

The story begins with a pronominal anaphora. Obviously, the pronoun 'he' typically refers back to previously encountered persons. Here, however, because we begin *in media res*, 'he' has no referent. It is an empty signifier. There is no point of anteriority, no previously encountered individual with which the reader can associate 'he'. Clare Hanson writes that '"events" in a good many short stories are not primarily seen as the fruits of time or as the culmination of long processes' (Hanson 1989, 27). The opening of 'The Word of Unbinding' confirms Hanson's claim. In this case, it is a character, an anthropos, that is not seen as the fruit of time or culmination of long process. The anaphora that opens the story invokes an identity with a history even as it signals the absence of a history. 'Dragonfly', the final story in the collection *Tales from Earthsea*, is another narrative opened by a pronominal anaphora; 'Her father's ancestors had owned a wide, rich domain on the wide, rich island of Way' (Le Guin 2003, 197). 'The Bones of the Earth' beginning *in media res,* opens thus: 'It was raining again, and the wizard of Re Albi was sorely tempted to make a weather spell' (2003, 143). In this case, the definite article suggests familiarity with a character and knowledge of his history.

What I want to suggest then, is that the beginnings of Le Guin's short stories configure man as a rupture. They draw on the convention of short fiction to begin with an interruption to the normal course of biographical time, as Trussler puts it (1996, 558). Characters introduced by pronominal anaphora in the opening of Le Guin's short stories appear as empty signifiers. Entities without history, they appear dislocated and detached from the flow of time.

Conclusion

Mike Cadden, in his monograph on Le Guin's fiction for children and adults, suggests that there 'are many different unreconciled ideas in Le Guin's work' (Cadden 2005, 1). This dissertation has traced Le Guin's ambivalent attempts to reconcile the human with nature in her writing. Chapters One and Two, drawing on the concept of ecomimesis, called attention to the verbal and visual rhetorical strategies by which Le Guin maintains the fiction that something like 'nature' or 'the environment' existed. These first two chapters also suggested that even while apparently reconciling the human with 'nature', the rhetoric of Le Guin's texts acted to reinstall difference and distinction between these two terms. Similarly, Chapter Three argued that Le Guin's representation of animality and life hesitated between a more or less posthuman desire to collapse the human/animal distinction, and a more humanist emphasis on humanity's distinction from the rest of life. The final chapter of this dissertation has couched the tension discerned in Le Guin's writing in terms of the Anthropocene. If the first three chapters detected a tension in Le Guin's fiction between a desire to mitigate the human/nature distinction, and a reaffirmation of this distinction, Chapter Four has suggested that Le Guin's ambivalence can be read as symptomatic of the

new geological epoch we inhabit. The Anthropocene is open to mutually exclusive readings; it apparently signals the failure of the human/nonhuman distinction and, conversely, it marks the final triumph of human distinctiveness. Insofar as Le Guin's writing expresses a failure to reconcile these two positions, it can be read as fiction of the Anthropocene.

Conclusion

Lynn Overholt Wake suggests that in *Charlotte's Web* (1952), E.B. 'invites us to situate ourselves more attentively and harmoniously within both culture and nature, which together comprise the web of life' (Wake 2004, 102). Insofar as White achieves this vision of communion with nature, Wake takes *Charlotte's Web* as exemplary of 'nature writing', which she suggests is predicated on 'a blurring of the boundaries between self and world' and 'an intuitive determination that one's writing must not deny the interconnectedness of living things (Wake 2004, 104). Wake claims for White's text an ability to incite greater feelings of harmony and connectedness in the reader and thus, a more environmentally conscientious imagination. It is precisely against such Romantic ecocriticism of children's literature that this dissertation has defined its project. By deconstructing the rhetoric of connectedness, holism and harmony in Le Guin's texts, this dissertation has articulated the contradictions in which such rhetoric is mired. Wake's version of ecocriticism is one in which the human might be reincorporated into something called 'nature'. The task of the ecocritic becomes, in this formulation, one of producing readings which valorise an unalienated contact between human and nature, thereby palliating the Cartesianism which, it is supposed, is at the root of the environmental crisis. John Stephens's ecocriticism is conceived in similar terms. In his analysis of children's narrative, he defines 'eco-poeisis' as those 'rare moments' in which 'the text represents an interpenetration of subject (focaliser) and object (world), in which the focaliser becomes the locus for a perception of the hacceity ("thisness" or self-immanence) of the phenomenal world' (Stephens 2010, 210). Stephens' version of ecopoeisis shares

with the ecocritical practice of Wake a tendency to obviate distinction in favour of intergration and wholeness.

This dissertation has imagined the role of the ecocritic in somewhat different terms. Instead of producing readings that emphasise unmediated contact between human and nature, the work of this project has explored the impossibility of this fiction. Indeed, the readings produced in the preceding pages have attempted to negotiate and engage with the problem of mediation, instead of resorting to precritical celebrations of authentic experience. In other words, this dissertation has attempted a form of reading appropriate to the Anthropocene.

The Anthropocene, as numerous scholars have noted, is one which requires more nuanced theories of mediation and not, as Wake would have it, anti-Enlightenment suspicion of any abstraction that comes between human and nature. The mediated quality of the human, or, indeed, posthuman condition in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is a point of emphasis in humanistic theorisations of the Anthropocene. Tobias Boes and Kate Marshall, for instance, note that 'anthropogenic climate change on a truly global level... can never be experienced — only local changes in weather patterns can. Such climate change can instead only be explained (rather than known) through the statistical methods of the natural sciences' (Marshall and Boes 2014, 61). Further, it is not just the case that our modes of knowing can no longer be grounded in experience. The Anthropocene names an era in which, as numerous scholars have observed, human and nonhuman agencies intermediate. As Marhsall and Boes point out, 'the Anthropocene is a moment in which human agency finds itself in a condition of *acting upon* and *being acted upon* by the non-human' (2014, 61; emphasis in the original).

If, then, responding to the Anthropocene necessitates a closer engagement with the processes of mediation, Romantic ecocritical reading practices, of which Wake is an example, appear singularly unequipped for the task. Indeed, ecocritical approaches to children's literature might be charged with missing a critical opportunity. Children's literature criticism, since its institutionalisation in the late 1970s and early 1980s, has made a claim for the uniquely mediated nature of the genre. As has often been pointed out, it is adults who write books for children, adults who publish books as children's literature, and adults who ultimately buy books for children. Children's literature is, then, a space in which what can be thought and said emerges from a complex ecology of adult mediators. It is a species of literary production that is, more so than most, defined by its relationship to processes of mediation. Distancing themselves from the practices of Wake and Stephens, future ecocritical approaches to children's literature might capitalise on that genre's explicit relationship to mediation. They might, for instance, draw strength from an analogy between the mediated nature of our knowledge of climate change, derived from the methods and apparatuses of scientific authorities, and the transmission of culture through the various adult authorities which mediate children's literature.

Further, Wake practices a form of reading which emphasises the erasure of distinctions in an attempt to suture the rift between nature and culture. In this, she is joined by Holton and Rogers who decry the fact that 'embodied experiences of the world, born of active dialogue within it' are 'occluded' by *Owl* magazine in favour of 'studying the world from a distance' (2004, 162). However, the Anthropocene solicits a form of reading that would, in fact, proliferate distinctions. This form of reading is precisely that which Colebrook gestures towards in calling the human 'not so much an event within life as a rupturing in the very figure of life' (2012, 188). The human is to

be distinguished from all other living beings by the scale, both temporal and spatial, of its influence on life itself. This distinction between human and nonhuman life is further nuanced by the fact that the Anthropocene enjoins us to reconsider our conceptions of human agency. As Margaret Ronda argues, the Anthropocene signals 'a heretofore unknown degree of species wide-agency, capable of altering the Earth's systems of organization' (Ronda 2014, 103). However, this species wide-agency is unavailable experientially and, as Ronda observes, as a consequence, we 'participate in this geologic agency without identifying with it' (2014, 103). Thus, the Anthropocene couples together the phenomenological and the geological registers of human existence even as it affirms their incommensurability. As a result, the *anthropos* of the Anthropocene is one haunted by a sense of 'nonidentity', 'internal estrangement' and an 'estranged relation to self-identity' (Ronda 2014, 103). Not only, then, is the human a figure distinguished from life by its command over vast temporal and spatial scales, the human now names a form of existence which embraces a distinction between personal experience and species-wide agency.

Further, the Anthropocene also engenders and problematises distinctions at the level of the social. Ulrich Beck argues that 'climate change exacerbates existing inequalities between the poor and the rich, between the centre and the periphery — but simultaneously dissolves them. The greater the planetary threat, the less the possibility that even the wealthiest and most powerful will avoid it' (Beck 2010, 258). Humanity now finds its social existence to be one of pronounced discrepancy and distinction. However, as anthropogenic climate change provokes increasingly extreme 'natural' disasters, the rich will share with the poor in a new sense of passivity and vulnerability. As Beck puts it, 'climate change is both hierarchical and democratic. Climate change is pure ambivalence' (2010, 258). If the Anthropocene is, then, an

epoch that proliferates contrast and difference, it also signals the fragility of those received distinctions by which experience has historically been structured.

Critical practice in the Anthropocene thus requires a thought that would embrace the distinctions and incommensurable distances that now characterise human existence. Given this, it is hard to see how the existing ecocritical approaches to children's literature might be defended. Indeed, the place of children's literature in the academy is now one traversed by the broader transformations in the field of humanistic enquiry of which it is a subset. The Anthropocene in general and climate change in particular have been received by the academy as a challenge to invent new forms of thought. Matt Spencer suggests that 'it seems vital to seek new philosophical resources for responding to the sciences of the climate' (Spencer 2013, 163). Timothy Clark goes even further, suggesting that climate change forces a wholesale 'rethink of the terms of innumberable practices and thought' (Clark 2010, 132).

In the concluding pages of this dissertation, I will articulate how the academic study of children's literature might respond to this call to invent new ways of reading and thinking, and reflect upon how this dissertation has attempted to initiate this kind of criticism. The transformations in thought and experience wrought by the Anthropocene pose problems for the reading and writing of literature, which, while not unique to children's literature, are certainly pronounced in that genre.

Narrative in the Anthropocene

In his acceptance speech for the Carnegie Medal in 1996, Philip Pullman emphasised the importance of plot to the exclusion of all other considerations in children's fiction:

> What characterises the best of children's authors is that they're not embarrassed to tell stories. They know how important stories are, and they know, too, that if you start telling a story you've got to carry on till you get to the end. And you can't provide two ends, either, and invite the reader to choose between them. Or, as in a highly praised recent adult novel I'm about to stop reading, three different beginnings. In a book for children you can't put the plot on hold while you cut artistic capers for the amusement of your sophisticated readers, because, thank God, your readers are not sophisticated. They've got more important things in mind than your dazzling skill with wordplay. They want to know what happens next (Pullman 1996).

Very few, if any, scholars of children's literature would follow Pullman in suggesting that plot and formal sophistication are mutually exclusive elements in that genre. However, as observed in the introduction to this dissertation, criticism of children's literature has noted that the genre is one that is reluctant to abandon its roots in liberal humanism. Thus Robyn McCallum argues that 'the cultural construction of the child was coincident with and contingent upon the construction of the humanist self, and there has been a historical complicity between children's literature and liberal humanism' (McCallum 1999, 6). Children's literature, McCallum argues, as informed by the tradition of liberal humanism, 'typically assumes and valorizes humanistic concepts of individual agency' (1999, 6). This discourse of individual agency finds expression most frequently in the *bildungsroman* plot. Such coming of age narratives structure those novels whose subject matter would seem to offer the greatest challenge to the claim of these plots to mediate experience. Although he is careful to stress that 'linear sequential action' is not a defining characteristic of children's literature, Peter Hollindale nonetheless also detects a greater emphasis on the 'linear eventfulness which is truly part of life' in children's literature (Hollindale 1997, 38; 39). Hollindale suggests that 'many authors write for children because the world of

the adult novel is ideologically unreceptive to their narrative preferences' and 'many adults read children's books because there, and only there, they find a well-told tale' (Hollindale 1997, 39). Further, in her discussion of young adult fiction 'in the posthuman age', Elaine Ostry suggests that 'writers use the literary tropes of young adult literature (and adolescence itself) to show the complexities of the coming age' (Ostry 2004, 223). By using 'biotechnology as a metaphor for adolescence', science fiction for young adults rehearses the basic urplot of that genre, 'the search for identity and sense of self' (Ostry 2004, 223).

If Pullman detects a particular emphasis on plot in children's fiction, rather than, say, formal innovation or 'wordplay', this might in part be attributed to that genre's historical preoccupation with the *bildungsroman* conceived as the attainment of autonomy and agency. Pullman's contention that satisfying children's literature might be identified by the character of its plot is lent a degree of support by the phenomenal success of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books. John Pennington argues convincingly that the success of these books cannot be attributed to their aesthetic achievements. Pennington describes a 'disconnect between *what* the books attempt to say... and *how* Rowling says them, a disconnect between form and content' (Pennington 2002, 79; emphasis in the original). Indicting Rowling's work as a 'failed fantasy' on 'aesthetic grounds', Pennington explains the success of the Potter books as deriving from the 'archetypal' 'good versus evil' narrative archetype (2002, 79; 90). In other words, Rowling's success would appear to bear out Pullman's claim that good (or at least popular) children's fiction is characterised only by the strength of its plot.

In Pullman's words, then, children's literature satisfies the desires of its readers to 'know what happens next' (Pullman 1996). However, it is precisely this

appetite for clear causal connections that the Anthropocene frustrates. As a number of scholars in the environmental humanities have made clear, thinking the Anthropocene requires imagining new forms of temporality. The most powerful injunction to conceive of new senses of time comes from climate change. Karen Pinkus suggests that 'climate change has radically altered perceptions of time, and indeed, the flow of time itself' (Pinkus 2013, 195). The transformations wrought by climate change are attributable to the expansive geographical and temporal scales that characterise this phenomenon. It on these grounds that Morton calls global warming a 'hyperobject', which he defines as a 'massively distributed entity that can be thought and computed, but not directly touched or seen (Morton 2013c, 37). Because its effects are so widely dispersed across time and space, climate change fractures entrenched understandings of causality. This poses a particular problem for narrative arts. As Adam Trexler notes, 'imagining climate change is an enormously difficult task', in part, because 'anthropogenic global warming is expansive' and thereby refuses assimilation to the dialectic of 'cause and effect [which] make[s] a satisfying narrative' (Trexler 2014, 205). Indeed, as James J. Pulizzi argues, the challenges that climate change poses to narrative are such that any attempt to interpret global warming according to hermeneutic paradigms can be construed as an act of containment. Climate change is not, on Pulizzi's view, a phenomenon deduced from narrative and history. Rather, it is a product of computer simulations and calculation (2014, 83). Our knowledge of the Anthropocene is thus grounded in modes of representation profoundly inimical to representation in narrative. As Pulizzi puts it,

> the digital computer reduces everything it touches to counting or statistical analysis, including narrative itself... The counting that these technical apparatuses perform need not rely on narrative to find connections or relations between data points. They therefore need no

> teleology or meaning in the same way that narrative stories need beginnings, middles, and ends. The *anthropos* of the Anthropocene promises some meaning and purpose for this new geologic era, but there is none to understand, only to count statistically (Pulizzi 2014, 85).

Pullman suggests that children's literature has a particular investment in plot and narrative. His vision of children's literature is, therefore, particularly vulnerable to the changes in senses of time and causality wrought by the Anthropocene. Instead of reading for the plot in children's fiction, the Anthropocene in fact requires readings that emphasise the limited capacity of narrative to mediate between being and experience. The final chapter of this dissertation was written in precisely this spirit. In positing a tension between narrative and apostrophe, Chapter Four suggested the difficulty of reconciling plot with rhetorical forms which suggest nonhuman agency. Moreover, the Anthropocene resists being thought according to a narrative of crisis and resolution. These are precisely the terms in which Alice Curry couches her analysis. Curry argues as follows:

> In post-apocalyptic fiction, the ecocatastrophe of tomorrow is graphically invoked to reflect upon the worsening crisis of today. Climate change is envisaged not as a general process of environmental decay and social degeneration but as an immediate and devastating shattering of cultural norms. Such a dramatic erasure of previous knowledges serves to interrogate the current epistemological frameworks held responsible for crisis while laying the groundwork for new and different modes of human-earth interaction. The new world orders put forward in the old world's stead are predicated on a variety of ethical standpoints that are rendered, more or less, able to engender sustainable human relationships with the earth (2013, 18).

However, to name climate change a 'crisis' is already to anticipate the disarticulations of meaning that the Anthropocene might provoke. Put simply, identifying climate

change as a 'crisis' suggests an inevitable reversion to a norm, much as financial crises are produced by capital and then neutralised by the same market forces that engendered them. The Anthropocene, however, resists assimilation to this narrative because, as Martin McQuillan argues,

> the event and singularity of climate change is constituted in the concept that it is already irreversible. The singularity of climate change as a crisis might be that it is not subject to the temporality of the crisis and that it might be a crisis without resolution and so demonstrate itself not to be a crisis at all but a constant state. In this sense crisis becomes a permanent condition or at least the resolution of this crisis is the construction of a new idea of the normative (McQuillan 2012, 275).

There is no resolution to the environmental crisis, or, put otherwise, an indefinite state of crisis is the only imaginable resolution. Climate change also exposes the vacuity of 'sustainability' narratives, invoked by Curry as an antidote to historical environmental malfeasance. As Robert Markley points out, 'sustainability evokes a succession of individual lifetimes — an unbroken sequence of embodied experiences from the past and into the future that presupposes cultural evolution taking place against the backdrop of the timeless present of an abiding Nature' (Markley 2012, 45). The Anthropocene, however, marks an interruption to this order of succession as it introduces perturbations to our understandings of causality and temporality. Further, to our experience of ourselves as individualised, embodied and autonomous entities, the Anthropocene now adds an unexperienced and strictly imperceptible species level agency. Predicated as it is on the level of personal experience, the discourse of sustainability cannot account for species agency. Finally, on a more prosaic note, it might be asked what, exactly, the discourse of sustainability hopes to preserve. Many

in the developing world would have no interest in sustaining the status quo into the future. What is needed then is a radically new ecological imaginary, one prompted by the Anthropocene but whose contours are not sketched in advance.

The Anthropocene might be better approached as messianic in Derrida's sense. In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida writes of 'a certain emancipatory promise' which would take the form of a 'messianism without religion, even a messianic without messianism' (Derrida 1994, 59). This messianism without religion takes the form

> of democracy to come, its 'idea' as event of a pledged injunction that orders one to summon the very thing that will never present itself in the form of full presence, is the opening of this gap between an infinite promise (always untenable at least for the reason that it calls for the infinite respect of the singularity *and* infinite alterity of the other as much as for the respect of the countable, calculable, subjectal equality between anonymous singularities) and the determined, necessary, but also necessarily inadequate forms of what has to be measured against this promise (Derrida 1994, 65; emphasis in the original).

As Jack Reynolds explains, Derrida juxtaposes the messianic to the messianisms of monotheism. The 'Muslim, Judaic and Christian religions... proffer a Messiah of known characteristics' (Reynolds 2015, s.v. 'Wholly Other/Messianic'). Derrida's messianic narrative, by contrast, is a 'call to the wholly other,' which is 'not a call for a fixed or identifiable other of known characteristics' (Reynolds 2015, s.v. 'Wholly Other/Messianic'). Derrida thus suggests the possibility of an 'eschatological relation to the to-come of an event *and* of a singularity, of an alterity that cannot be anticipated' and an 'awaiting without horizon of the wait, awaiting what one does not expect yet or any longer' (Derrida 1994, 65; emphasis in the original). Messianic time is thus oriented to an event which is 'indeterminable' and which remains forever on

the horizon (Reynolds 2015, s.v. 'Wholly Other/Messianic'). Reading climate change in children's literature means reading for the singularity of the event of the Anthropocene. It means allowing the Anthropocene to escape and unsettle the hermeneutic structures by which criticism interprets, anticipates and delimits. Of these structures, archives and the practice of archiving are especially vulnerable to the fragility of memory in the Anthropocene.

The Archive

In her contribution to the volume, *Children's Literature Studies: A Research Handbook*, Alison Bailey itemises the potential attractions of archival research for apprentice children's literature scholars:

> Although modern editions or digital versions of [books for printed for children in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries] will be available, there are still many reasons to track down and consult the originals. You can, for example, get a greater sense of the intimate involvement of real children with their books when you hold a small, scuffed volume which someone owned, scribbled on or coloured in, loved or hated... as evidenced by marginalia or the way it has been cared for... In addition to final, published versions of texts, archives will often hold related ephemera and manuscript material. From drafts, initial designs, correspondence and doodles, you can discover much about an author's or illustrator's intentions and working processes and compare these with the published product (Bailey 2011, 45).

The proliferation of specialist archives of children's literature in the libraries of research institutions is evidence of the growing appeal of modes of reading grounded in archival practice in recent years. Such archives draw on a number of organisational principles in selecting materials for curation and preservation. National or regional

collections of children's literature are curated by such institutions as the Seven Stories Archive in Newcastle, the Northeast Children's Literature Collection at the University of Connecticut, the Betsy Beinecke Shirley Collection of American Children's Literature at Yale University and the Lu Rees Archive of Australian Children's Literature at the University of Canberra. Other archives, such as The Children's Literature Archive at Ryerson University, discriminate based on a given historical period, in this case between the late nineteenth century and mid-twentieth century. Similarly, national and regional archives might select material for assimilation to the collection based on historical period. Thus, the Seven Stories archive at Newcastle University holds material from the 1930s to the present. Other important archives of children's literature are dedicated to the curation of materials pertaining to the life and writing of particular authors. Examples include the Beatrix Potter Collections at the Victoria and Albert Museums, the Ursula Le Guin papers at the University of Oregon, and the Arthur Ransome Archive at Leeds University.

This list of children's literature archives and the principles that govern their organisation is hardly exhaustive. However, it is suggestive of common practices that underpin curatorial practice. These practices include the curation of material based on its contribution to a national or regional literature, a work's contribution to scholarly understandings of a historical period, or the preservation of a text based on its relation to a notable author of children's literature. National, historical and personal/authorial principles of organising knowledge are, I will argue, particularly vulnerable curatorial practices in the Anthropocene, as are the reading methods they engender. The Anthropocene presents a challenge to the assumptions that sponsor the memory apparatuses of the modern research archive and it does this by troubling the apparent neutrality or self-evidentiary qualities of the archive. As Miller puts it 'archiving in

any of its modes is assumed to be constative, not performative. It just neutrally gathers together such materials, saves them from harm, and lets researchers decide what use to make of them' (Cohen, Colebrook and Miller 2012, 56).

The Anthropocene throws into question both the principles which structure the archive, and the reading protocols brought to bear on the materials curated therein. As has been documented above, the Anthropocene entails a metamorphosis of temporality. Karen Pinkus thus observes that 'our collective ability to know what we mean by "the present" and "the future" has never been more vexed' (Pinkus 2013, 195). But this collective ability is precisely that which is enabling of and enabled by the archive. As Marlene Manoff writes, 'the archive affirms the past, present and future; it preserves the records of the past and it embodies the promise of the present to the future' (Manoff 2004, 11). In the context of what some theorists have called 'the disappearing future', it might be asked whom, exactly archiving in the twenty-first century is aimed at (Cohen, Colebrook, Miller 2012). Manoff calls attention to the fact that archives preserve materials in the faith that they will be of use to future readers. This future readership is an assumption rendered increasingly fragile by human vulnerability to the sixth mass extinction event which we have precipitated. Harriet Bradley writes that the archive is a

> repository of memories: individual and collective, official and unofficial, licit and illicit, legitimating and subversive. And on the basis of such memories we strive, however ineffectively and partially, to reconstruct, restore, recover the past, to present and re-present stories of the past within our narratives (Bradley 1999,109).

In other words, the temporality of the archive is one of messianism and apocalypticism. The archive anticipates and prefigures a future readership. It

establishes conditions of possibility for what can be said of the present by the future. The Anthropocene, by contrast, requires a form of thinking which is open to the singularity of the event.

Further, Bradley's observations are borne out by the tendency of children's literature archives to include (or fail to include) materials based on their provenance in a given historical period. In doing so, such archives allow us to reconstruct or re-present, in Bradley's words, the past for the present. In many ways, this is a procedure entirely apposite to the Anthropocene. Much as we are only now beginning to feel the effects of an Industrial Revolution begun nearly three centuries ago, archives incubate texts and allow them to produce effects by way of a similar 'delayed reaction.' However, the archive installs a distinction between past and present which the Anthropocene calls into question. The archive brings the past into the present in order to subject it to narrative, to order it according to an institutional logic of historical periods and thereby intimate a succession of time. The archive produces the present *as* the present by affirming its difference from the past that it has succeeded, and from a future which it anticipates. By contrast, the Anthropocene suggests that the past operates in the present, and troubles the surety with which the archive posits a community of future readers.

Further, archives such as those at Seven Stories in Newcastle obviously contribute to a nationalist narrative. That institution describes itself as 'the only collection in the world dedicated to telling the story of British children's literature from the 1930s to the present day' (Seven Stories 2015). The archive thus announces itself as a technology for imagining a community, for cultivating a shared history and managing a sense of British identity. However, the Anthropocene is an era that has been construed by scholars as a time of proliferating and dimly-sensed connections. In

particular, our experience of weather in the twenty-first century deterritorialises regional identifications. As noted in chapter one, Mike Hulme argues that that global climate and local weather have become imbricated, a fact which results in 'a meteorological entanglement which has significant consequences, for the re-making of identity and meaning; the work of geography' (Hulme 2010, 269). In the Anthropocene, the phenomenological experience of local weather is mediated by an awareness of global climate. The result, as Hulme puts it, is that 'our experience of weather and climate is increasingly cosmopolitan; it is losing its place-based character' (2010, 272). Regional and national narratives, such as those sustained by the archive, appear ill-equipped to account for the new cosmopolitanism of our daily meteorology. As local weather is understood increasingly in the context of global climate, the boundaries of the nation state and the climactic zones harboured therein lose their definition.

If the Anthropocene problematises the historico-nationalist principles that organise institutions such as the Betsy Beinecke Shirley Collection of American Children's Literature and the Lu Rees Archive of Australian Children's Literature, it also impinges on the assumptions that sponsor archives dedicated to particular authors. Archives such as the Beatrix Potter Collection are predicated on an understanding of authorship and practices of reading which appear as anachronisms in the Anthropocene. The archive in turn invites a certain form of scholarship and suggests a certain ideology of reading, which Miller describes thus:

> Researchers who use archives are obeying more or less unselfconsciously a set of widely established protocols: 1) Using archives shows you are a really serious scholar. 2) Such scholars have the vague assumption and hope that they will find something truly surprising and important in an archive, something that will transform the hitherto accepted understanding

> of the author in question. Some strap slip of paper will hold a vital revisionary key. 3) You will become famous as the scholar who found that stray slip of paper and understood its importance. 4) An under-theorized and unstated penchant not just for historical or contextual explanations, but, more specifically, for biographical explanations... 5) Somewhere in the background is the idea that the works the author revised and published during her or his lifetime cannot stand on their own. They need the supplement of the archive to be fully understood (Cohen, Colebrook and Miller 2012, 56-57).

Most, if not all, of the protocols Miller lists here inform Bailey's defense of archival research for the apprentice scholar of children's literature. Miller charges archival research with programming a Romantic humanist reading agenda. The author is cherished as the determining point of meaning for published texts, and the archival researcher can, in Bailey's words, excavate an 'author's intentions' (Bailey 2011, 45). As Miller suggests, the various ephemera curated in collections such as the Beatrix Potter collection produce readings that attempt insights into the author's psychology and personal history. However, the Anthropocene introduces a significant qualification to discourses that posit the author as a privileged determiner of meaning. Matthew Griffiths thus argues that because 'natural and cultural agencies operate at terrestrial and global scales, beyond immediate experience' they therefore 'destabilize many of the paradigms on which the notion of writing as the creation of an individual personality is based, making them problematic to articulate' (Griffiths 2013, 83). The archive maintains the fiction of Romantic artistic production, isolating the author and the culture that he or she inhabited from the natural-cultural agencies which complicate human autonomy. Further, deriving from this model of authorial production is a restricted economy of reading. In the quotation given from Bailey above, the apprentice scholar of children's literature is one who bases his or her reading on details gleaned from a phenomenological encounter with texts. The reader

is privy to 'a greater sense of the intimate involvement of real children with their books when you hold a small, scuffed volume which someone owned, scribbled on or coloured in, loved or hated' than those readers not lucky enough to have access to archival material (Bailey 2011, 45). The intimate, the personal and the local are emphasised in the kind of readings suggested by Bailey to the exclusion of the impersonal, the global and the abstract.

In consulting the archive then, the reader is granted an unmediated and privileged access to the mind of great author in the hope that the scholar in turn might be entered in the lists of notable writers. Framing this reading practice is Thomas Carlyle's understanding of the historian's craft. For Carlyle,

> Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterners, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realisation and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world: the soul of the whole world's history, it may just be considered, were the history of these (Carlyle 2013, 21).

But, as argued above, the most salient quality of our contemporary moment is not the result of personal agency, individually expressed by notable individuals. Rather, the Anthropocene, as a fact of history and a transformation of what we understand by history, is the product of an impersonal, species-wide agency irreducible to the actions of an individual person. The Anthropocene gives a new, more literal, inflection to Carlyle's idea of 'universal history'. History is now universal in the sense that its most important characteristics are the result of universal human

activities. The archive offers, at best, limited access to the new universality of history. It thus restricts the range of readings that can be produced by the scholar of children's literature.

The Discipline of Children's Literature in the Anthropocene

As the brief critique of the role of the archive in scholarly activity offered above suggests, the Anthropocene involves the academic study of children's literature in a crisis of methodology generic to the humanities at large. Colebrook summarises the crisis in our discipline thus:

> The very concept of the humanities in its dominant form — as critical and interdisciplinary — would need to be destroyed in a productive manner. This is because the idea of man that underpins the humanities as an interdisciplinary problem has been extensive: disciplines are activities, achieved by a division of labor, with man examining himself as a historical animal whose life creates him as a social and linguistic being capable of self-reflection and communication. It is not surprising that *this* man of reflexive knowledge and moral self-management confronts climate change as an extensive and managerial problem: how might we use less in order to live longer, how might we act more frugally in order to survive? But if we accept that there are capacities or potentialities that are not those of managerial man... then we would have to abandon the idea of earth as environment to which we might bear our proper and restorative relation, along with *the* humanities as some domain of communication that might return us to our better selves (Colebrook 2014, 184 emphasis in the original).

The academic study of children's literature, insofar as it has aligned itself with the broader reduction of the humanities into 'cultural studies', is particularly vulnerable to the challenge laid at the door humanistic scholars by the Anthropocene. As Clark argues, the cultural studies paradigm has become 'prominent to the point of self-

caricature' in the humanities (Clark 2005, 16). It is a paradigm with an emancipatory agenda that reads 'the major issues in a text as some sort of struggle for economic independence and/or personal fulfillment' so as to release and realise 'a suppressed or distorted essence, affirmed against inhibition to it' (Clark 2005, 16; 17). Cultural studies, as Clark observes, is most often prosecuted in terms of what Terry Eagleton calls the 'left triptych of class, race and gender' (Eagleton 2004, 5). It conceives its project as the recovery and articulation of lost, marginalised and disenfranchised voices. Readings produced under the auspices of cultural studies are, in Peggy Kamuf's damning caricature, a formula for determining someone's 'raceclassgender' coefficient (Kamuf 2000, 158).

Those strains of children's literature criticism that turn on a dialectic of power and subversion are framed by a discourse of liberation similar to the cultural studies paradigm. Maria Nikolajeva's monograph, entitled, *Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers* is exemplary in its working out of the adult/child hierarchies which the author takes as pervasive in children's literature. Indeed, she suggests that the triptych of race/class/gender might be complemented by the category of age. Nikolajeva thus suggests that

> while feminist theory has made us aware of male authors creating women characters as the Other, and while postcolonial theory reveals alterity in the images of ethnicity, a heterological approach to juvenile literature will examine power tension between the adult author and the implied young audience (Nikolajeva 2010, 8).

Nikolajeva discerns a norm in children's literature that she 'aetonormativity' which refers to the 'adult normativity that governs the way children's literature has been patterned from its emergence until the present day' (2010, 8). The individual readings

in her monograph consider the way children's literature either confirms or subverts this newly discovered and freshly theorised norm. Her discussion of Aidan Chambers's *Dance on My Grave* (1982) thus centres on a calculation of the raceclassgender coefficient of the protagonist Hal, here compounded by the addition of another variable, age:

> Hal's coming to terms through writing is a feature often pointed out in heterological studies as a liberation strategy. Many classical and modern girls' novels show young women struggling for recognition as writers and either finding their voices or becoming silenced by patriarchal structures. Hal's writing is affected by several power positions. He is empowered as male, but disempowered as young against the adults, as homosexual against heteronormal, as a working-class boy against the socially privileged, and as a criminal against the socially acceptable. His writing is therefore an extremely important weapon not only in his direct self-defense, but also in terms of power negotiation (Nikolajeva 2010, 107).

As Clark observes, the cultural studies vocabulary of emancipation and subversion is grounded in a poetic and political discourse of freedom which he traces back to Kant. This dominant paradigm 'rests on notions of freedom that look, implicitly or explicitly, to the traditional discourse of rights as it demarcates the claims of identities taken as already given' (Clark 2005, 12). In relying on this tradition, cultural studies, as a discipline, is fatally compromised by its assumption of the universality and legitimacy of the model of agency that animates its scholarship. Clark thus indicts the 'countless critical arguments' that read 'the major issues in a texts as some sort of struggle for economic independence and/or personal fulfilment' and 'often simply assume as a norm the model of autonomy or self-legislation' (2005, 16).

Nikolajeva's monograph focuses on the normative claims based around age, sex, class and race that she detects in children's literature. Her book is concerned with

articulating moments of resistance to this norm on the part of child characters. These moments of resistance consist of a child's expression of autonomy and agency in defiance of the adult/child hierarchy which normally holds sway. Thus, she characterises Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* (1945) as 'one of the most convincing examples of unconditional child empowerment in children's literature' because 'Pippi interrogates adult power and adult normativity in everything she does' (Nikolajeva 2010, 49). What I want to suggest is that Nikolajeva falls prey to the contradiction that Clark suggests is characteristic of the cultural studies paradigm. In relying on a vision of identity that turns on autonomy, individualism and freedom, Nikolajeva ends up implicitly reinscribing a normative vision of subjectivity. Her reading of children's literature is thus implicated in the general trajectory of cultural studies, which Clark summarises as follows:

> An entity, whether single or collective, is held to be striving for or asserting a unitary identity, one whose self-realisation is assertion against others. This is the 'ideal' whose seemingly built-in desirability shapes the contours of everything in a text being discussed... When a critical essay refers to the 'construction' of identity it is most often this implacable norm that is working itself out. In other words, the supposedly anti-essentialist gesture (identity is made or is a project, not a given) is not what it seems at all, for an assumed norm as to what identity *is* in the first place (made or given) is already decisive (2005, 22-23; emphasis in the original).

Colebrook detects, and indeed, promulgates a crisis of humanistic scholarship based on the redundancy of our existing image of man. Her injunction to reconceive the humanities can be interpreted as a challenge for children's literature scholarship to reevaluate the normative images of agency and identity that govern approaches such as Nikolajeva's. If, as Clark suggests, the assumptions of freedom, autonomy and self-determination are implicit to the project of cultural studies, then the problems

with this dominant trend of humanistic inquiry become particularly acute in the Anthropocene. As this dissertation has argued in chapters three and four, the Anthropocene represents the limits of the liberal humanism tacitly operative in Nikolajeva's reading.

Chakrabarty has suggested that, in bringing about the Anthropocene, we have fatally compromised the discourses of autonomy and self-sufficiency that underwrites Nikolajeva's critical project. Chakrabarty notes that 'philosophers of freedom [since the Enlightenment] were mainly... concerned with how humans could escape the injustice, oppression, inequality, or even uniformity foisted upon them by other humans or human-made systems' (Chakrabarty 2009, 208). However, these philosophical projects were not enlivened by any sense of the geological agency and destructive environmental effects which were the cost of this enlightenment and emancipation (Chakrabarty 2009, 208). In the early twenty-first century, when the cost of our autonomy cannot so easily be ignored, accounts of human freedom have been subjected to increasing qualification. In particular, many scholars have capitalised on the ambiguity of the Anthropocene to complicate human autonomy with accounts of the material agencies that nuance human subjectivity. As Tobias Boes points out, the Anthropocene 'is often characterized as a post-human condition, in which human agency intermingles with, and is more often than not drowned out by, non-human actants, such as unpredictable weather phenomena' (2014, 168). Jane Bennett's 'vital materiality' is a patient evocation of the agency of things, that is, 'the capacity of things... not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own' (Bennett 2010, viii). Bennett's project, which draws extensively on Latour's actor-network theory, has been joined by a host of new materialist

philosophies which stress the agency of matter. Object Oriented Ontology, championed by Timothy Morton (2013a), Graham Harman (2002) and Levi Bryant (2011) amongst others, emphasises a democratic metaphysics such that all objects are possessed of agency. Bryant explicitly couches this metaphysics as a response to climate change, writing, 'in an age where we are faced with the looming threat of monumental climate change, it is irresponsible to draw our distinctions in such a way as to exclude nonhuman actors' (2011, 24). Given the arguments of Bennett and the thinkers who align with Object Oriented Ontology, it is hard to see how the cultural studies program that dominates in the academy is adequate to reading the Anthropocene in children's literature. If the Anthropocene forces us to acknowledge the way human autonomy is nuanced and inflected by nonhuman agencies, then the liberal model of freedom and individualism which frames Nikolajeva's work appears more or less defunct.

The scholarly study of children's literature is thus imbricated in a more general transformation of humanistic inquiry in the Anthropocene. If scholarship in the humanities has, as Colebrook suggests, relied on a particular image of the human in prosecuting its readings, this image appears as less than coherent in the Anthropocene. However, the Anthropocene places a particular pressure on the assumptions of children's literature that are not generic to the humanities at large. This is because children's literature scholarship, however it chooses to define children's literature, defines its research object in relation to a category of life. In contrast to other subdisciplines in literary studies such as Renaissance studies, Romanticism or Modernism which define their disciplinary boundaries by historical period, the disciplinary boundaries of children's literature studies is defined by the child. Of course, what constitutes children's literature is far from settled, and more or

less productive debates continue to set new parameters for the field.[1] Nevertheless, insomuch as there is a discipline of literary studies which deals with children's literature, it is the figure of the child, as reader, character, or, indeed, author, which is invoked in setting out the ambit of children's literature studies.

Children's literature as a discipline is, then, defined by its relationship to a universal stage in the development of an organism. It is a discipline that is defined by a relationship to life. However, the Anthropocene names a time in which thinking in terms of categories and conditions set by life is called into question. Colebrook offers Maturana and Varela's account of *autopoeisis* as paradigmatic of the way the organism has being conceptualised in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries:

> A completely closed body that had no world would be deprived of the means of ongoing life; an absolutely open body without borders would not be a body at all, would have no ongoing identity. What is required then is a border or membrane that enables communion with an outside, but an outside that is always an outside *for* this bounded body, and that is managed so as to produce only the alteration or perturbation required for ongoing self-maintenance. The now widely cited and philosophically consecrated systems theory of Maturana and Varela (1987) deploys a series of terms to describe this necessity: *coupling* (where a body's autonomous or self-maintaining movements are established in relation to outside variables); *autopoeisis* (where the body does not interact mechanically with its outside but does so in a way to maintain its own balance and sameness); *relative closure* (so that a body at once maintains itself but also adapts to changing external perturbations); and *meaning* (for the outside of a body is always *its own outside or world*, experienced or lived in terms of a range of possible responses rather than an objective representation) (Colebrook 2014, 126; emphasis in the original).

The world experienced by the organism is, then, the world *for* the organism. To adopt

[1] Marah Gubar offers a useful appraisal of the various attempts at defining 'children's literature,' and argues for the futility of such definitional projects (Gubar 2011).

the terminology of Chapter Three, the organism conceived autopoeitically is one conceived in terms of correlationism. If the organism experiences an outside, this is always an outside for the organism. The world is not known as such, but is experienced as a milieu or environment. In human terms, the definition of life summarised by Colebrook above reduces the world as it is *in-itself* to the world *for-us*. As Colebrook puts it, 'the world of the organism is always the organism's own' (2014, 134).

Furthermore, the organism, in making sense of the world and reducing the world to a milieu, is a figure of interpretation. In other words, the organism is hermeneutic in the sense that it mobilises biological prejudices and vital schema in order to structure the world into a meaningful environment. In translating the world *as such* into the world *for the organism*, the organism anticipates and prefigures. The time of the organism, is then, closed off from the messianic time of the Anthropocene. For Colebrook, this means that the organism has no future:

> Any properly futural future would be a break with the self-constitution of the organism's always immanent time, and yet all theories of relational organic life posit that without some departure from its sphere of ownnness the organism would have no life. In itself, or if it remains in itself, the organism has no future. There can only be a time to come if we open out from our embodied, relational, world-attuned being. The world within which we are situated — if we accept that 'we' are nothing other than the situated and responsive beings that we are — is always a world encountered in terms of possible responses. We exist in meaningful milieus. Our condition as embodied, as relating to the world *as* the beings that we are, is that the world is given *as* this world for us (2014, 135; emphasis in the original).

The 'properly futural future' from which the organism is closed off is synonymous with Derrida's account of messianic time outlined above. The messianic future is one

that cannot be anticipated or prefigured. It names an event not adumbrated according to hermeneutic horizons. As an autopoeitic, hermeneutic figure the organism is, by definition, not open to the Anthropocene understood as a messianic event. The time of the organism is one oriented to the production of a world and a history *for the organism*.

However, as this dissertation argues in Chapter Three, what the Anthropocene requires is a form of thinking which negotiates the impasse of correlationism. That is to say, the Anthropocene solicits a form of thought which is brave enough to speculate as to what the world looks like as such, and not as it appears for us. Moreover, the Anthropocene, insofar as it exceeds what can be known phenomenologically, suggests the redundancy of initiating criticism from a position grounded in organic life. Thinking which begins from the organism and from life is, then, congenitally inadequate to the task of theorising the Anthropocene. This poses a particular problem for the scholarly study of children's literature. In defining its objects of research in relation to a stage in organic development, children's literature studies grounds its criticism in the vital and organic. However, in the Anthropocene, the organism emerges as a figure that constrains and co-opts the kind of speculative criticism which this new epoch requires.

Thus, Rose's argument for the 'impossibility' of children's literature is given a new inflection by the Anthropocene. As a discipline defined by its relationship to a stage of organic existence, children's literature is impossible in the sense that its ability to articulate the impersonal and messianic quality of the age is profoundly circumscribed. This dissertation has attempted to chart new ways of reading children's literature in the Anthropocene. It has argued for the redundancy of ecocritical readings of children's literature couched in terms of nature, life and

narrative.

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