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Modernist Anthropocene Aesthetics: Ecological Innovations in the
Novels of James Joyce, Djuna Barnes and Virginia Woolf

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Abstract

Modernist Anthropocene Aesthetics examines how James Joyce, Djuna Barnes and Virginia Woolf forged new and innovative ways of writing about the planet, nonhuman life and the figure of the human. It argues that the Anthropocene—a term that originated in the Earth sciences and which names the way in which humans are now directly influencing the climatological, ecological and geological composition of the planet—offers a new way to historicise and theorise modernist aesthetics, and that modernism can shed new light on pressing environmental challenges of the present moment. Drawing on and contributing to Anthropocene studies—an emergent interdisciplinary field that spans the sciences, social sciences and humanities—this thesis argues that the early twentieth century was a pivotal time in the history of the Anthropocene, not only in terms of the profound environmental changes taking place but in new and emergent ways of conceptualising planetary life, and that modernist literature was in dialogue with these developments.

Presenting how Joyce, Barnes and Woolf were responding to what can be called the modernist Anthropocene, I examine how their texts were informed by contemporary cultural and scientific ideas around materiality, evolution, climate change, and extinction. Moreover, by examining how these writers established innovative aesthetic modes through which to interrogate the relationship between the human and the nonhuman, I suggest that we can see Joyce, Barnes and Woolf as already theorising the Anthropocene. The highly inventive and often radical ways of thinking about materiality, species relations, environments and life itself that we encounter when we read modernist novels, I argue, can be brought into productive dialogue with the posthumanist theory and philosophy that has grown up and around the Anthropocene. In offering new and comparative readings of Joyce, Barnes and

Woolf through an approach that combines close readings, archival analysis, historical research and critical theory, *Modernist Anthropocene Aesthetics* looks to demonstrate how an ecocritical mode of modernist criticism can reorient established literary histories and open up new ways of understanding modernism.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters followed by a short afterword. The first chapter is an introduction, which establishes the degree to which the writers studied in this thesis were interested in challenging the dominant idea of the human and the nonhuman, as well as introducing the concept of the Anthropocene and historicising its conceptual origins in the early twentieth century. Chapter 2 and 3 focus on James Joyce. Chapter 2 examines Joyce's presentation of materiality in *Ulysses* in relation to the Celtic Revival's celebration of Irish nature, while Chapter 3 looks at Joyce's figuring of Molly Bloom as 'Gea-Tellus' and the planetary imaginary in *Ulysses*. Chapter 4 and 5 focus on Djuna Barnes. Chapter 4 looks at the way in which Barnes's broad oeuvre of writing presents beastly figurations that challenge the figure of the human, bringing her well-studied *Nightwood* into dialogue with her lesser studied writing and archive. Chapter 5 offers a reading of Barnes's *Ryder* that elucidates the novel's presentation of sexual difference and species relations. Chapter 6 and 7 take Virginia Woolf as their subject. Chapter 6 examines *Orlando*'s presentation of climate change and suggests that Woolf establishes a material climatic ontology. Chapter 7 looks at the way in which Woolf offers a radical aesthetics and ethics of extinction in her late writing, including *Between the Acts*. The thesis concludes with a short afterword that sets out how the Modernist Anthropocene is followed by what can be called a Nuclear Anthropocene, and reflects on how modernism's literary innovations might provide the materials for theorising and historicising our new planetary epoch.

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Primary Text Abbreviations

James Joyce

D	<i>Dubliners</i>
FW	<i>Finnegans Wake</i>
OCPW	<i>Occasional, Critical and Political Writing</i>
PE	<i>Poems and Exiles</i>
PA	<i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i>
JJL1-3	<i>The Letters of James Joyce</i>
U	<i>Ulysses</i> (References appear as episode number plus line number)
UCS	<i>Ulysses: A Critical and Synoptic Edition</i>

Djuna Barnes

CP	<i>Collected Poems with Notes Towards the Memoirs</i>
CS	<i>The Collected Stories of Djuna Barnes</i>
N	<i>Nightwood: The Original Version and Related Drafts</i>
R	<i>Ryder</i>

Virginia Woolf

BA	<i>Between the Acts</i>
CSF	<i>Complete Shorter Fiction</i>
E1-6	<i>The Essays of Virginia Woolf</i>
MB	<i>Moments of Being</i>
O	<i>Orlando</i>
RO	<i>A Room of One's Own</i>
TL	<i>To the Lighthouse</i>
TG	<i>Three Guineas</i>
VO	<i>The Voyage Out</i>
VWD1-5	<i>The Diary of Virginia Woolf</i>
VWL1-6	<i>The Letters of Virginia Woolf</i>

1. Modernism and the Anthropocene

In her conclusion to *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Virginia Woolf writes the following:

For my belief is that if we live another century or so—I am talking of the common life which is the real life and not of the little separate lives which we live as individuals—and have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves [...] then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. (*RO* 86)

That new century, which in 1929 Woolf was not entirely certain would be reached ('if we live'), is now nearly upon us. Her imperative that to take into account the material conditions that determine who writes and what is written then we need to see human beings not only in relation to each other but to a wider 'reality' presents itself as an increasingly urgent task. From the perspective of our current moment in which headlines frequently report the consequences of anthropogenic pollution, the instruction to look up into the sky takes on unforeseen significance. Even the possibility of extinction articulated in Woolf's 'if' seems uncannily prescient of scientific predictions of the sixth great extinction event, an event whose signs were already marked in the polluted skies and trees that Woolf encouraged her readers to

look at.¹ Unlike her description in *Orlando* (1928) of a sky composed of ‘an irregular moving darkness’ (*O* 206) or the threatening ‘livid, lurid, sulphurine’ sky described in her 1924 essay ‘Thunder at Wembley’ (*E3* 414), Woolf is not writing with anthropogenic pollution in mind in the above quotation. Yet, her instruction to turn to ‘the sky’ cannot help but sound like a warning unheeded in the Anthropocene, the emergent planetary epoch in which ‘humankind has become a global geological force in its own right’ (Steffen et al 842). The causes of the Anthropocene, already in full motion as Woolf wrote *A Room of One’s Own*, implicitly captured in her metonymic likening of London to a great ‘factory’ comprised of ‘machines’ (*RO* 72), reframe the relationship between humanity and the planet in a way that, with hindsight, Woolf seemed to intuit.

Combining the Greek *Anthropos* (‘man’) and the geo-chronological unit of the epoch (‘cene’) the Anthropocene recognises the ways in which human actions have unintentionally altered geological and ecological systems at local, national and planetary scales, influencing everything from global climate temperatures to ocean acidity to soil structures. The name speaks to the way in which, for the first time in planetary history, a species will have marked the ‘geological stratigraphic record’ so profoundly that their influence will be observable for millions of years into the future (Lewis & Maslin 171). While, on the one hand, it is an epoch that speaks to the power of the human, it also reveals the limitations to the ways in which humans have conceptualised the world, where myopic, rampant resource extraction and narrowly anthropocentric ideals of value have, as Claire Colebrook argues, positioned ‘nature as an unchanging standing reserve’ (‘Post-Anthropocene’ 14). With its origins located

¹ Trees are also harbingers of climate change; atmospheric changes are captured in tree rings (Waters et al 137).

in a historical reluctance to meaningfully respond to evidence of environmental degradation that, as Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz argue, stretches back to at least the eighteenth century (*Shock* 254-55), the Anthropocene arrives as a corrective to a world view which sees the nonhuman world only in instrumentalist terms of human utility. The unexpected rise of the term in recent years within popular culture, mainstream media and academic discourse has seen it become detached from its geological provenance and become imbued with multiple, often contradictory meanings, from ecological reference points in popular music to its refashioning as a positive term by a small number of commentators who see the techno-utopian possibility of a ‘good Anthropocene’ in which we might *fix* the world by further accelerating the anthropocentrism that got us here.² In contrast, this thesis will engage with a more critical understanding of the Anthropocene that has developed within both the sciences and the humanities under the banner of what Colebrook has called ‘Anthropocene studies’ (‘Victorian’ n.p.). This emergent, transdisciplinary field of study has come to see the Anthropocene not in terms of humankind’s predominance over the planet, but rather the way in which the Anthropocene fundamentally challenges existent ways of thinking about the human, the nonhuman and the planetary. It foregrounds the way in which human actions are always hybridised with nonhuman processes and, in recognising the way in which nonhuman systems are never static but actively shaping and responding to human actions, it relocates the human within a non-hierarchical worldview that more broadly distributes who or what is recognised as having agency. As Timothy Clark argues, the Anthropocene in this

² For evidence of its infiltration into pop music see the Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds song ‘Anthrocene’ [*sic*] (2016) and Oneohtrix Point Never’s *Age Of* (2018). For an overview of the ‘good Anthropocene’ hypothesis and the critiques that have been made of it see Lorimer, 125-6.

sense is broader than a geochronological measurement of time, rather it stands as ‘a cultural threshold’ that ‘blurs and even scrambles some crucial categories by which people have made sense of the world and their lives. It puts in crisis the lines between culture and nature, fact and value, and between the human and the geological or meteorological’ (*Ecocriticism* 9).

The Anthropocene, understood as such, challenges humanist and anthropocentric ideas of mastery, insisting upon a world no longer comprised of active human subjects and inert matter. Instead, as Bruno Latour asserts, in the Anthropocene the human must reconcile itself to ‘sharing agency with [nonhuman] subjects that have *also* lost their autonomy’ (*Facing Gaia* 62, emphasis added). In this light, the Anthropocene places questions of agency, exceptionalism and intentionality under fresh scrutiny, along with the urgent social implications of such questions. Fuelled by the industrial capitalism exported by the West to the rest of the world and set to disproportionately harm poorer populations, the Anthropocene poses the need to urgently reconceptualise how we think and write about the human in relation to politics and ethics. It is in this respect that the Anthropocene must necessarily be understood in relation to Western modernity. While Latour has claimed that we have never been modern since modernity’s claim to have mastered nature was always illusory (*Never* 7-10), the Anthropocene is nonetheless intertwined with the ascendancy of industrialisation, imperialism and capitalism from the late eighteenth century onwards, a trajectory that reaches a moment of crisis in the early twentieth century. As this thesis will show, the difference between Western modernity and the Anthropocene is one of scale. While the former is often seen in terms of historical development over the span of centuries, the Anthropocene locates our modern moment within a geological timeframe and examines it from a planetary perspective. In its various implications

and consequences, the Anthropocene reiterates Woolf's assertion that we should no longer see the human in isolation. Rather, the human must be seen in relation to a broader, planetary reality.

Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* is not only a text that speaks to the history of modernity, and what is now being called the Anthropocene, but importantly to the history of gender and sexuality, and her instruction to look beyond the human is bound up with the text's broader feminist literary critique. The conditional future of the 'common life' (notably Woolf does not explicitly delineate *human* life), 'which is the real life' and not the 'little separate lives which we live as individuals' must be achieved, Woolf argues, through bold new modes of literary expression (*RO* 86). Reiterating her commitment to a wider reality, Woolf insists that the women novelists of the future must recognise that 'it is a fact there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women' (*RO* 86). It is a conclusion that suggests questions of sex, gender and sexuality have consequences beyond notions of individual human freedom; the act of looking up into the sky and seeing the human not only in relation to binary sexual difference but situated within a broader nonhuman 'reality' suggests a feminist modernism that transgresses narrowly anthropocentric frames. In Woolf's own practices as a novelist this commitment is articulated through figurations in which the human is imbricated within the nonhuman world. From Terence Hewet's imagining of the 'vast stretches of dry earth and the plains of the sea that encircled the earth' (*VO* 403) in *The Voyage Out* (1915) to similar thoughts of prehistoric 'swamp[s]' and 'forests' (*BA* 196) that agitate Mrs Swithin throughout *Between the Acts* (1941), inhuman scales of space and time are a concern that stretch the breadth of Woolf's

oeuvre.³ As Gillian Beer has noted, concerns around prehistory, species extinction and evolution are present across Woolf's texts (26-7), and critics in the last decade have begun to examine how Woolf's interest in these subjects were informed by a sustained engagement with the natural sciences, particularly the emergence of life sciences such as ecology and ethology (Alt 2; 67-9), as well as the developing Earth sciences of geology and glaciology (Hollis 132-3), and the new planetary perspectives opened up by modern astronomy (Henry 1-3). As critics such as Derek Ryan have shown, Woolf's interests informed a radical understanding of materiality and life that 'extended beyond a purely human concern' (*Virginia Woolf* 2).⁴ Her fiction, then, can be seen to follow her own advice, by consciously placing her characters in relation to a reality that not only exceeds the human, but revises how we think about human life itself.

Compare the implicit disavowal of anthropocentrism in Woolf's remark that writers need to stop looking only at the human and start situating the human in relation to 'whatever it may be in themselves', with the remarks made by James Joyce about the 'Penelope' episode of *Ulysses* to Harriet Shaw Weaver in February 1922. Offering a gentle corrective to Weaver's description of the episode as 'prehuman', Joyce writes:

Your description of [the episode] also coincides with my intention—if the epithet "posthuman" were added. I have rejected the usual interpretation of her as a human apparition—that aspect being better represented by Calypso, Nausikaa and Circe, to say nothing of the pseudo Homeric figures. In

³ The inhuman, as Keti Chukhrov outlines, describes those 'alterhuman agencies and presences [that are] parallel to human existence' (201). The term can be seen as broadly synonymous with the term 'nonhuman' and similarly has the grammatical limitation of negatively framing its subject in relation to the human.

⁴ The difference between 'matter' and 'materiality' is, as Latour outlines, while the former describes that which has been 'de-animat[ed]', materiality speaks to a 'risky' mode of recognising the distribution of agency and history beyond human explanations of the world ('Agency' 15).

conception and technique, I tried to depict the earth which is prehuman and presumably posthuman. (*JLI* 180)

As in Woolf, Joyce's mode of theorising his own writerly practices presents itself in this instance in terms of a reimagining of the 'human' and 'the earth' that invite fresh scrutiny in the Anthropocene. If the final chapter of *Ulysses* bookends an epic that exhausts the novel as a genre and draws a line under it, Joyce's attempt to depict Molly as 'the earth which is [...] posthuman', a term that like Woolf's skyward instruction rings with an uncanny anachronistic intonation in contemporary critical discourse, suggests a future for literature that revises the figure of the human.⁵ Looking to move beyond the 'usual' anthropomorphic constructions of the Earth Mother goddess, Molly, seen by Bloom as 'Gea-Tellus' as he climbs into bed (*U* 17.2313), stands as both a figure of posthuman literary experimentation and an attempt to refashion the mythology of Gaia, who in ancient Greece was worshipped as the ancestral mother of all life and whose etymological influence is detectable still within modern sciences in words such as *geology* and *geometry*. In the context of the Anthropocene, Gaia is also important. Taken as the name for the hypothesis developed by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis, Gaia theory sees the planet as the sum of 'interweaving systems' that can be considered 'alive, [and] aware and conscious to various degrees' (Margulis 158), and which, in the era of climate change, offers a way to model and understand the complex, long-term consequences of human influence on those systems, such as

⁵ The OED's first listed instance of the term *posthuman* is in a 1916 textbook entitled *Poverty and Social Progress* by the now unknown Maurice Farr Parmelee, a work that was in neither Joyce's Trieste nor Paris libraries. It is likely that for Joyce 'posthuman' was a neologism that presented itself to him at the time of writing to Weaver.

biodiversity loss and extinction. Gaia theory, like Joyce's posthuman conclusion to *Ulysses*, looks to reanimate and reinherit the myths through which the Earth speaks.⁶

Jean-Michel Rabaté suggests that the 'posthuman' became a key idea for Joyce in the 1920s, arguing that it enabled Joyce to push Molly's 'character beyond [...] human psychology' so as to resemble the 'inhuman and posthuman figure of the revolving Earth' and signalled the beginning of an aesthetic intent to get beyond the confines of the human individual that would fuel the later innovations of *Finnegans Wake* (1939) (*Think* 38-9). Yet, like Woolf, Joyce's interests in thinking about the relation of the human to a broader nonhuman reality also stretches back to his earliest writing. His 1899 essay 'The Study of Languages' criticises the practice of vivisection on ethical grounds, insisting that for 'Science, human or divine' to have a morality it must first recognise man 'as an infinitely small actor, playing a most uninteresting part in the drama of worlds' (*OCPW* 14).⁷ Moreover, as this thesis will show, it is not only in the final episode of *Ulysses* that we find a developed account of the multiple scales at which human agency operates. Rather, a decentring of the human as an 'infinitely small actor' in the 'drama of worlds' takes place throughout the novel. As more critical attention is being paid to what Alison Lacivita describes as Joyce's lifelong intertwining of 'nature and climate [...] with issues of Irish nationalism and identity, colonialism, technology, suburbanization, gender [...] [and] questions of what it

⁶ Joyce's warning about the 'usual interpretation' could also be applied to Gaia Theory, which is often misrepresented. As Margulis writes, Gaia theory does *not* purport that the planet is a single 'organism' nor does it see the Earth as 'living goddess' who will reward humans for 'blessings to her body' (148).

⁷ Although this essay was written before Joyce had decided on a life of writing, critics have demonstrated how this interest in science and medicine remained influential in his later texts, whether in the context of what Vike Martina Plock has described as Joyce's ability to 'critically interrogate' the social and cultural politics attached to modern medicine (*Joyce* 23-4) or Andrew Gibson's analysis of Joyce's alertness to the imperial dynamics of 'scientific discourse' (227).

means to be human' (*Ecology* 18), the posthumanism of his writing is coming into clearer focus. Indeed, the importance of gender, along with sex and sexuality, to Joyce's posthuman vision in *Ulysses* can hardly be understated. As in Woolf's suggestion that situating the human 'in relation to reality' is central to a revising of 'women and fiction' (*RO* 1), Joyce's 'posthuman' refiguring of Molly arrives in the chapter in which we get the most forcible rebuttal to the male-dominated framing of the world that has preceded it. The episode's eight sprawling sentences comprised of non-normative grammar and syntax speak to a departure from what Woolf called 'a man's sentence' developed by men 'out of their own needs for their own uses' (*RO* 58).⁸ The posthuman voice of Molly is necessarily sexed and gendered.

Compare, too, Woolf and Joyce's ideas with those expressed in Djuna Barnes's letters to Emily Coleman in 1938, two years after her novel *Nightwood* had been published. Citing the image in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593) of the snail who 'Shrinks backward in his shelly cave with pain', Barnes explains:

That's just what I mean (try and do it Barnes) when I say nature, trees, animals, must for me, somehow, to be of any motion [must be] connected with the snail, say, and the lady, with human beings and with the garden, then I get the image, then it means something, then its wedded, then it is the snail. Don't you like it? To be able to write like that, is the only permission. Now we have none ~~in our time~~. (Barnes to Emily Coleman, 13 October 1938)

Reminiscent of the ecological aesthetic that emerges from the fluid yet webbed entanglement of humans, animals and plants in Woolf's short story 'Kew Gardens' (1919), Barnes offers an explicitly modernist explanation of her own approach to the

⁸ Woolf's public ambivalence about *Ulysses*'s 'sordidity' and 'incoherence' (*EA* 161) and her private assessment of it as a 'pretentious' 'mis-fire' by a 'queasy undergraduate squeezing his pimples' (*VWD2* 199; 188-9) suggests, however, that she would not likely have seen 'Penelope' in these terms.

nonhuman. It is a portrait of a world not *after* or *before* humans, but, instead, a quasi-holistic world in which human exceptionalism is displaced. The human and the snail find themselves not only on equal footing but ‘wedded’ together; species difference is reimagined. Here again we find parallels with the ecological implications of the Anthropocene, in which questions around who or what can be seen as having agency have been broadened, with the once apparently stable categories of ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ collapsing into one another (Latour, *Facing* 19-20). Barnes’s post-Darwinian refiguring of ‘nature’ in her letter to Coleman offers a configuration of the human and the nonhuman that correlates with the beastliness of *Nightwood*, a novel whose animalisation of its human characters unsettles ideas of human exceptionalism and, as Carrie Rohman states, renounces the ‘upright humanity’ that was being articulated by figures such as Freud in the 1920s and ‘30s (125). Moreover, it was not only the case that Barnes was inspired by post-Darwinian ideas around human animality, her work was in turn of interest to those at the forefront of evolutionary biology. When the biologist Julian Huxley (grandson of ‘Darwin’s Bulldog’ T.H. Huxley) read *Nightwood* in 1936 he felt so ‘enthusiastic’ about the novel that he asked Ottoline Morrell to invite Barnes to meet him at The Zoological Society in Regents Park (Morrell to Barnes, 19 October 1936). Barnes, then, was writing in a modernist moment in which ideas of animal life were migrating between the sciences and literature.

Importantly, however, Barnes’s description of nature to Coleman also speaks to the less commented upon body of work that both predates and postdates *Nightwood*, including her first novel *Ryder* (1928), a family saga set in rural America which satirises rather than celebrates ‘the miracles of nature’ (R 162), but also the works of journalism, poetry and drama which repeatedly return to the blurred lines between

human and animal life. Akin to the way Woolf and Joyce's interest in the nonhuman can be traced to their earliest work, Barnes's oeuvre speaks to a sustained interest in questions that unsettle the figure of the human. From the unsettling, often grotesque images of humans and animals with which Barnes illustrated her writing of the 1910s to her final work, a slim volume of poetry entitled *Creatures in an Alphabet*, published in 1982, four months after her death, and dedicated to Coleman, Barnes's interest in bestiaries and the beasts who populate them spans the near entirety of the twentieth century. Moreover, like Woolf and Joyce's configurations, questions of sex and gender are ever present in Barnes's idea of 'nature'. Even in her choice of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* as a point of reference in her correspondence with Coleman, and her singling out of the 'lady' in the 'garden', questions of the human and the nonhuman intensify categories of sex, gender and sexuality. Indeed, in Barnes's use of the term 'wedded' to describe the relationship between humans, animals and nature, one might discern an oblique reference to the suggestion of bestiality with which *Nightwood* concludes, a subject that was greatly discussed in the correspondence between Barnes and Coleman, scandalising the latter with its 'true implication' of interspecies intercourse (Coleman to Barnes, 27 August 1935). While, like Joyce, Barnes's feminist politics are harder to discern than Woolf's in *A Room of One's Own* (and, at times, more problematical to twenty-first-century notions of feminism), Barnes's modernist aesthetic reconfigures the categories of the nonhuman and the human without eliding notions of sex and gender. For Barnes, in the idiomatic vernacular of her correspondence, to write in such a way is 'the only permission'.

1.1 The Modernist Anthropocene

The concept of the Anthropocene originates from the Earth sciences and was coined by the Nobel Prize winning climatologist Paul Crutzen at a conference on Earth Systems Science in Mexico in 1999, where, in what is now an oft-repeated anecdote within discourse on the Anthropocene, during a heated discussion about human impact on the planet he is said to have had an epiphany that, as he put it to the other delegates, “We’re not in the Holocene anymore. We’re in the ... the... the Anthropocene!” (quoted in Davies 42).⁹ What Crutzen looked to indicate by his outburst was that the planet had entered a new geological epoch the indices of which can be seen to have been influenced by human activities, most notably through the 1,500 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide that have been cumulatively released into the atmosphere (Bonneuil and Fressoz xi).¹⁰ The mass extraction and use of natural resources, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, along with other forms of industrial chemical pollution and changes in land and sea use, has led to such profound shifts in the global environment that the planetary conditions of the Holocene, the geological epoch that began 12,000 years ago, have given way to a newly emergent set of geological and ecological conditions. The effects of the Anthropocene are striking both in the short and the long term, with an increase in the frequency of extreme weather events, rising sea levels and ocean acidification being some of the most widely reported phenomena, along with research forecasting a mass extinction event (the sixth in the history of the planet) in which approximately 75% of species stand to be lost (Waters et al 2622-8). The

⁹ Other accounts trace the term back to Eugene Stoermer, a University of Michigan ecologist, who is said to have used the word informally since the 1980s (Haraway, *Staying* 44).

¹⁰ Current atmospheric conditions exhibit levels of carbon dioxide not equalled for 4 million years, while projections suggest future conditions will reach levels not known for 15 million years (Bonneuil & Fressoz 12).

Holocene, the preceding twelve millennia of unusually stable climatic conditions which made possible agricultural modes of production and thereby provided the conditions for the rise of cities and sophisticated technologies, is in the process of being displaced by the very species that it enabled to flourish.¹¹

Exactly *when* the Holocene can be said to have ended and the Anthropocene to have begun remains a matter of some disagreement. In his early articles on the Anthropocene Crutzen suggested that the epoch could be traced back to the latter part of the eighteenth century where analysis of air trapped in polar ice shows ‘the beginning of growing global concentration of carbon dioxide and methane’. This time period, as Crutzen outlines, coincides with the beginning of British industrialism and, more specifically, James Watt’s design of the steam engine in 1784 (‘Geology’ 23). More recently, however, the Anthropocene Working Group (AWG), an international body of 35 members composed primarily of scientists (including Crutzen), have offered a much later date. Reporting in 2016 to the International Commission on Stratigraphy (the body responsible for formally ratifying new geological periods), the AWG recommended that the ‘stratigraphically optimal’ start date for the Anthropocene was 1945, with the radioactive fallout from the first detonation of the atom bomb and the spike in emissions from the post-war Great Acceleration cited as two influential geochemical markers.¹²

This later date, however, remains controversial, with voices from within the sciences and the humanities proposing that the Anthropocene should be seen as

¹¹ For analysis of the Holocene as an unusually stable climatic period that produced human culture(s) see Jeremy Davies’s detailed analysis in *Birth of the Anthropocene* (161-192).

¹² The Great Acceleration names the post-war surge in resource use, population levels and GDP (Bonneuil & Fressoz 10-11).

beginning even earlier than Crutzen's initial 1784 date.¹³ Moreover, the AWG's 1945 date, if accepted, would suggest that the beginning of the Anthropocene coincided with the end of the modernist period of creativity that I sketched out in my opening. By 1945 both Woolf and Joyce had died, while Barnes had retreated to a small apartment in New York where she remained an active, but reclusive writer until her death. If we accepted this date as the definitive beginning of the Anthropocene, the modernist interests in questions of the human and its relation to a nonhuman reality that I have mapped out above would situate Barnes, Woolf and Joyce as direct forerunners to the Anthropocene, somehow prescient of its imminent emergence but outside of its historical parameters. Yet, as Bonneuil and Fressoz have argued, locating the boundary between the Holocene and Anthropocene at 1945 risks concealing the 'deeper causes and processes' of the Anthropocene (17). For Bonneuil and Fressoz, the argument that a post-1945 acceleration in resource use justifies a later dating for the Anthropocene is not borne out by the historical facts; when the increase in global emissions from fossil fuels between 1880 and 1914 is plotted on a graph the curve it produces is similar to that of the supposedly singular acceleration in the second half of the twentieth century (see appendix 1). Such data, as Bonneuil and Fressoz argue, suggests that accelerationist arguments for a later date derived from quantitative evidence alone make for an unconvincing historical explanation and masks a much longer history of resource use, social developments and ecological change (53-55).

In particular, the 1945 date threatens to overshadow the significance of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in both producing the current conditions of

¹³ Influential earlier dates include 1492, with the Columbian expedition to the Americas that inaugurated a global exchange of biota and, even further back, 8000 BP, with the advent of agricultural practices and systematised resource extraction (Waters et al 2622-1; Lorimer 120).

the Anthropocene and shaping our understanding of it. Environmental history has drawn attention to the large-scale transformations that were taking place at the turn of the twentieth century, influenced by, among other factors, the continued rapid growth of industrialism and urbanisation, the development and use of liquid fuels, quickly expanding population levels, the nascence of motor travel and, later, air travel, the invention of humanmade nitrate fertilisers, the intensification of agricultural production and mining and widespread deforestation.¹⁴ The industrialised legacy of the nineteenth century, which had seen alterations of environments on a scale never before witnessed and the ‘spread of lasting anthropogenic traces from the biosphere into the atmosphere’, continued to accelerate in the early twentieth century, with atmospheric CO₂ levels surpassing ‘three hundred parts per million after 1900’ (Davies 98-99). Moreover, thanks to the ever-extending reach of European imperialism these developments were no longer restricted to Western nations. As Ted Howell suggests, the period witnessed the globalisation of the ‘Industrial Revolution through a period of spectacular economic growth’ (553), essentially remaking the world according to a blue print of extractivist industrialism. Moreover, planetary changes had local effects. James Winter has shown that from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, British ‘engineers and entrepreneurs [...] created a global environment where the results of building a new railway, digging a new mine or cutting an old forest’ in the colonies produced material transformations in Britain thanks to a new abundance of raw materials and commodities (20). The turn of the century, then, was hardly a period of calm before the post-1945 acceleration. Indeed, although the two world wars were responsible for great environmental harm,

¹⁴ For an in-depth environmental history that looks at the long twentieth century as a period of ‘unusual [...] intensity of change’ (xx) see John McNeill’s *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century* (2000).

especially in terms of lead and sulphate emissions, it has been speculated that had it not been for these global conflicts and the economic downturn after the First World War, the Great Acceleration would have occurred earlier, coming into full effect in the early twentieth century (Ruddiman et al 39; Steffen et al 850). The period between 1880 and 1945, then, saw large scale transformations that effected both qualitative and quantitative changes in the ecological fabric of the planet and shaped the modernity that Joyce, Barnes and Woolf were in dialogue with.

The early twentieth century was also a period during which science, philosophy, and geography were establishing a modern understanding of the earth, its environments and its geophysical systems. A nineteenth-century uniformitarian understanding of slow and unidirectional geological change was giving way to a modern understanding of planetary conditions as always in flux and which recognised the human as a geological actor.¹⁵ In an article co-authored by Crutzen and other members of the AWG, the case is made that a number of early twentieth-century figures can be seen to have developed ideas that are direct ‘antecedents of the Anthropocene concept’ (Steffen et al 844). These figures, who I will go on to discuss in the course of this thesis, include the Russian geochemist and naturalist Vladimir Vernadsky, the philosopher and geologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and the philosopher and mathematician Edouard Le Roy, all of whom advanced theories about ‘the anthropogenic transformation of the Earth’ (844). Moreover, as Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin have shown, the word ‘Anthropocene’ was itself first used in 1922.

¹⁵ It is important to note that although uniformitarianism was still predominant, its reputation had been in decline throughout the second half of the nineteenth century in favour of a more dynamic understanding of geological change. For an account of the developments of geology and ecology in the nineteenth century and its influence on Victorian culture see Adkins and Parkins, ‘Victorian Ecology and the Anthropocene’.

Arrived at by the Russian geologist Aleksei Pavlov, who suggested that it was a more fitting term than Holocene since it recognised humanity's longstanding influence on the Earth, the term, however, did not attract the attention of the international scientific community. Hampered by inconsistent translation from Russian (it was sometimes translated as the 'Anthropogene') and a Western prejudice towards what was perceived to be Soviet science's orthodox Marxist belief in the 'inevitability of global collective human agency transforming the world' (Lewis & Maslin 173), Pavlov's word would have to wait another eight decades until Crutzen discovered it for the second time to become influential.

Perhaps most directly striking for scholars of modernism, however, is the importance the AWG afford Henri Bergson's *L'Evolution Créatrice* (1907), outlining it as an early attempt to situate 'man' as continuous with the materiality of the 'planet's structure', firmly embedding the human within a geological continuum of organic and inorganic materiality and processes (Steffen et al 845). Bergson's significance for the Anthropocene is not that he was attuned to questions of environmental depletion, although he did anticipate the stress Crutzen would place on Watt's steam engine, describing how humanity was only 'beginning to feel the depths of the shock it gave us' and that in 'thousands of years [...] our wars and revolutions will count for little, even supposing they are remembered at all; but the steam engine, and the procession of inventions of every kind that accompanied it, will perhaps be spoken of as we speak of the bronze or of the chipped stone of pre-historic times: it will serve to define the age' (Bergson 153). Rather Bergson's significance lies in the way in which he resituated human life, including consciousness, in relation to material processes of evolution, an idea which greatly influenced scientists such as Vernadsky. For Vernadsky, whose work set out to chart 'human influence on biogeochemical cycles',

Bergson's philosophy made clear that the human could not be understood as a rational actor operating on a passive environment, but was an entity that was wholly entangled within the dynamic ecological and geological processes that it was shaping (Steffen et al 845). Here, then, we find a Bergsonian confluence between modernism and the Anthropocene. As Colebrook has shown, writers such as Joyce, Woolf and Eliot were also influenced by, or at the very least engaging with similar ideas to, Bergson's evolutionary theory of life as a 'force of differentiation' (*Death* 217). Indeed, Joyce had a copy of *L'Evolution Créatrice* in his library in Trieste, where he wrote the early episodes of *Ulysses*.¹⁶ For Bergson, the differentiating force that drives evolution does not occur through intentional, conscious choices made by autonomous individuals. Rather, this differentiating force operates as a constant negotiation between vitalism, understood as a chaotic and unceasing propulsion of *élan vital*, and counter-vitalism, understood as a tendency towards the stasis inducing structures of memory, identity and sameness (*Death* 208-9). In insisting that consciousness and memory be understood as physical processes, firmly embedded within the material world, Jeff Wallace sees Bergson as 'deconstruct[ing] the inside/outside dichotomy' and taking thought into a 'realm of unfamiliarity' beyond 'the human state' (*D.H. Lawrence* 30-1; 66). As Bergson wrote in *Mind and Matter* (1896), once consciousness and memory are understood as material processes, the 'separation between a thing and its environment cannot be absolutely definite and clear cut', instead, there is a 'close

¹⁶ Both Woolf and Barnes also had works by Bergson in their libraries. See Mary Ann Gillies's *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (1996) for a study of the French philosopher's influence on Joyce and Woolf, among others. Despite the suggestions in Barnes's library and correspondence that she was interested in Bergson, work has yet to be done outlining the clear points of sympathy between his ideas and her practices as a writer. For a recent account of Bergson's importance in modernism more broadly see Paul Adroin, S. E. Gontarski and Laci Mattison's *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism* (2013).

solidarity which binds all objects' (quoted in Wallace, *D.H. Lawrence* 112). While Wallace traces the influence of Bergson on D. H. Lawrence, Bergson's description can equally be read alongside the innovations of the writers in this study. Joyce's use of interior monologue, Woolf's innovations with free indirect discourse and Barnes's interest in species relations in *Nightwood* and *Ryder*, all work to reorient ideas of language and identity and suggest parallels with a Bergsonian vitalism that dehumanises the humanist ideal of the human, materially grounds consciousness and situates human life as just one force within a broader material milieu.

Bergson's philosophy, however, stands as only one instance within a broader cultural moment that was reassessing the relation between biological and geological processes. The now largely forgotten Cambridge geographer R. L. Sherlock's *Man as a Geological Agent*, published at the height of modernist activity in 1922, aimed to disseminate to a broad reading public the ways in which 'man's action on Nature has two aspects: a geological and a biological one' (*Geological Agent* 13). Sherlock's book offered empirical evidence to argue that earlier science had 'exaggerated the steadiness of Nature' and that the 'work of Man resembles that of natural agents that are known to have acted with exceptional power at intervals in the earth's history' (325). The book looked to chart anthropogenic changes to the geology and climate of Britain through statistical analysis of mines, quarries, civic infrastructure, roads, railways, waterways, coastal developments, agriculture and forestry (in the detailed lists of measurements and quantities the book presents a contemporaneous parallel to the parody of modern life reduced to statistics in the 'Ithaca' episode of *Ulysses*). Sherlock's work was, as Winter has observed, the first study that recognised the true extent of human 'geomorphological processes' (35). Moreover, as the British geologist Arthur Smith Woodward recognised in his foreword for Sherlock's book, it

also heralded the warning that '[man] may be approaching a stage when he should pause to consider whether his use and alteration of the crust of the earth itself are for future as well as for present advantage' (8). Yet, the book also exposes the gulf between early twentieth-century knowledge and that of the present day. Concluding that although 'a considerable increase in the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere [...] is likely to be in some degree inimical to the higher animals', in the final analysis Sherlock sees humankind's influence as 'probably no greater than that of some organic agents of the past' (343-5). Despite the fact that in 1896 the Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius had shown how large scale burning of coal might influence global temperatures, during the first half of the twentieth century the scientific consensus was that anthropogenic emissions would 'not change the radiative heat balances of the planet' (Fleming 107). Early twentieth-century scientists, philosophers and geographers were measuring and describing the Anthropocene without realising what it was nor its significance.

The importance of Bergson and Sherlock for contemporary Anthropocene studies, however, is that both were, to varying degrees, aware that modern scientific understandings of the planet were beginning to cast doubt on the established Enlightenment idea of humanity. While Sherlock's approach rests upon a much more conventional scientific positivism than found in Bergson's philosophy, he recognised, like Bergson, that '[p]erhaps the most difficult and at the same time the most interesting problem' of the present moment is 'the relation between Man's psychology and his geological activities' (343). For Sherlock, 'profound interferences with Nature have their origins [...] in thoughts' and any change in the relationship between the human and its actions towards its environments will require a shift in how we understand cognition itself (343). Like Bergson's rendering of life as a differentiating

force, Sherlock's study (albeit in a much less bold manner) registers the necessity to rethink a certain idea of, in his gendered terms, Man. Sherlock's locating of the human within the timeframe of geological processes, is, like Bergson's interest in evolution, a matter of reuniting the disparate scales of localised human agency and the eons of planetary time. For Dipesh Chakrabarty, in a 2009 essay that has subsequently been seen as a watershed moment within Anthropocene studies, the challenge of the Anthropocene derives precisely from this question of reconciling human and geological scales. Structured around four theses that outline the challenges the emergent planetary epoch poses to the humanities, Chakrabarty argued, firstly, that the disciplinary divide between human and natural history has 'begun to collapse' since cultural and environmental historical events now present themselves as part of the same narrative ('Climate of History' 207). Secondly, that the Anthropocene greatly qualifies histories of modernity since humanist idea of progress and liberalism can now be seen to have been blindly destructive (210-11). Thirdly, that the Anthropocene requires us to return afresh to the category of species in order to examine how 'human beings [became] the dominant species on earth' (218) and, fourthly, that due to all of the above, the Anthropocene exposes the limitations to 'historical understanding' since it departs from established social or cultural means of explaining the past (220-222). With the exception of perhaps the fourth thesis, we find Chakrabarty echoing, albeit in a much more explicit and forthright manner, the implications of the convergence of the human and the geological that were also being expressed in the early twentieth century. What Chakrabarty's article did for Anthropocene studies, however, was to help formalise a field that looks to bring philosophical and ethical questions into dialogue with the deep history of planetary change. Like Crutzen's re-coining of the Anthropocene, he helped to reignite a debate around ideas of human

and planetary co-evolutionary that were already beginning to be explored in the 1910s and '20s.

For Chakrabarty then, as for Bergson and Sherlock, the Anthropocene necessitates a revisionary history which recognises the human as a biogeological actor bound up with broader planetary processes. Moreover, as Chakrabarty's theses makes clear, the Anthropocene also necessitates a critical reassessment of the methodologies through which the humanities approach their objects of study. Indeed, within the fields of literary studies and critical theory, there has been a recognition that, as Tobias Menely and Jesse Oak Taylor outline in *Anthropocene Reading* (2017), 'the Anthropocene [is] a geohistorical event that may unsettle our practices of reading' (1). For Menely and Taylor, the Anthropocene might lead us to consider how 'literary history register[s] modes of affect and experience related to thermodynamic, geological and atmospheric processes' or how 'the accelerated transformation of literary forms [...] express patterns of change in energy production and the organization of biospheric systems' (12).¹⁷ Recognising the entanglement of human culture within nonhuman systems also necessarily involves revising the conceptual apparatus with which we make judgments about knowledge and value. As Claire Colebrook and Tom Cohen outline, the Anthropocene is an event whose 'shifting, unstable, and continuously receding climates [...] open a series of multiple and unsettled registers for inquiry' and challenge longstanding epistemological, ontological and aesthetic ideals and values ('Vortices' 133).¹⁸ Indeed, in what

¹⁷ For Clark, on the other hand, the Anthropocene poses serious challenges to established ecocritical approaches, particularly since it requires critics to 'rea[d] at several scales at once' (*Ecocriticism* 108).

¹⁸ *Critical Climate Change*, the book series edited by Cohen and Colebrook for the Open Humanities Press, is premised on these questions around the implications of the Anthropocene for critical theory.

Bonneuil and Fressoz have described as the ‘shock’ of the Anthropocene and its arrival as a ‘major rupture’ to categories of meaning and value (16-7), Anthropocene studies can be seen to implicitly privilege terms and ideas that again bring it into close proximity with modernism. Its shared rhetoric of rupture, which as Susan Stanford Friedman has argued has been formative to aesthetic definitions of literary modernism from the 1960s onward (‘Definitional Excursions’ 493), points to a joint willingness to revise the dominant ways of viewing the world and risk finding new ways of coming to understand it.

It would be wrong to imply, however, that there is widespread agreement around the implications of the Anthropocene within the humanities or even the usefulness of the term itself. Critics have argued that the name does not fully acknowledge the role of capitalism in shaping planetary conditions. Chakrabarty’s description of the Anthropocene as inaugurating a ‘negative universal history’ based on ‘a shared sense of catastrophe’ (‘Climate of History’ 222), for instance, has been singled out by Andreas Malm as overlooking the ‘realities of differentiated vulnerability in any impact of climate change’ (391). From Malm’s perspective the Anthropocene is a category error since both the causes and effects of emergent planetary conditions reveal ‘the geology not of mankind, but of capital accumulation’. A more ‘scientifically accurate designation’, Malm suggests, would be the Capitalocene (391). Chakrabarty, in response, has argued that global capitalism and global warming, cannot be seen as ‘identical problems’, since the deep causes and long-term effects of planetary environmental change occur at a geological scale that far exceeds the temporal boundaries of capitalism (‘Politics of Climate’ 25).¹⁹

¹⁹ Also see Amitav Ghosh’s insistence that capitalism and imperialism should not be considered synonymous in the history of planetary change (87).

Moreover, Malm's foregrounding of capitalism is not in of itself incompatible with the Anthropocene; indeed, his insistence on the importance of British industrialism to planetary change echoes Crutzen's initial 1784 dating for when the epoch might be seen to have begun (while Crutzen himself implicitly, and presumably unintentionally, echoes the significance Marx affords Watt's 1784 patent of the steam engine in *Das Kapital*).

Where Malm's account is limited is in its privileging of one scale over all others (modern human history), in contrast other accounts of capitalism and climate change have attempted to think on multiple scales at once. Most notable in this respect is Donna Haraway, who also uses the term Capitalocene but offers an account of planetary politics across scales, tracing the 'systemic stories of [...] linked metabolisms, articulations, or coproductions [...] of economies and ecologies' that emerged with the advent of global capital in the sixteenth century and evolved into the eco-imperialism that, as I have outlined above, reached its apotheosis in the Victorian and Edwardian era (*Staying* 49). Haraway, however, couples her account of imperialist capitalism to another 'cene, which she names the Chthulucene. For Haraway the Chthulucene, derived from the word 'Chthonic', meaning the ground or earth, enables a materialist view of life as being literally of the earth and which recognises that both political and biological history is 'made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices' in which 'humans are not the only important actors' (55).²⁰ Haraway's Chthulucene represents a position within Anthropocene studies that insists on examining the political implications of planetary change without reverting to a human-

²⁰ For Haraway, although 'Greek mythology depicts the chthonic as the underworld' the term can be traced further back to Sumerian and ancient Egyptian ideas of life and creation (*Staying* 173).

centred account of history. Yet, while Haraway is right in that emergent planetary conditions should be seen as an ‘ongoing temporality that resists figuration [...] and demands myriad names’ (*Staying* 51), the Anthropocene has clear advantages as an umbrella term, under which can shelter the Capitalocene, the Chthulucene and other ‘cenes. Firstly, it is the term being used by scientists currently measuring the climatic influence of human actions (as opposed to measuring the influence of, for instance, capitalism) and, while the Anthropocene does not need to remain a scientific concept, its geological provenance remains important to fully understanding the ways in which this new epoch is being measured and understood more widely. Secondly, and more importantly for this study, the Anthropocene critically foregrounds rather than resolves the problematics that I have highlighted above. Opponents to the term, such as Malm, have pointed out that the prefix of ‘Anthropos’ risks projecting a universalised human subject that equally apportioned culpability and vulnerability. Yet, as Latour argues, engaging with the Anthropocene does not entail blithely acquiescing to an uncritical understanding of ‘the human species’; rather it can become the starting point for examining how these terms and their associated knowledge practices emerged out of historically-situated compositions of certain peoples and social structures, and I would add texts and discourses (*Facing* 121-2). As Derrida, writing in 1968, observed, although the concept of Anthropos is indicative of a Western history that would ‘interiorize [...] difference, to master it [...] by affecting itself with it’, it cannot be simply disavowed since it continues to structure the ‘cultural, linguistic [and] political’ institutions within which knowledge is produced (‘Ends’ 112-3).²¹ As Derrida recognised, in too quickly claiming to have moved beyond Anthropos there is

²¹ Derrida is here talking about the ‘anthropos’ of ‘anthropology’, but it is equally applicable to the Anthropocene.

a risk of overlooking how a universalised idea of the human subject continues to shape the world at large. Following Derrida, we might instead, as Clark has suggested, see the Anthropocene as containing a ‘self-deconstructive force’ (*Ecocriticism* 3). The Anthropocene, understood as such, would arrive as an epoch that forcibly reorients the relationship between the human and nonhuman and attendant socio-political questions of relationality and responsibility, at the same time that it puts these very concepts under scrutiny.

Central to a critique of a universalised Anthropos within Anthropocene studies has been a greater attention to the intersection between planetary change and sex, gender and sexuality. In the same way that Joyce, Barnes and Woolf were interested in how an experimental approach to the relationship between the human and the nonhuman meant revising conventional modes of presenting gendered and sexual identity, a growing body of approaches to the Anthropocene have been alert to how reconceptualising planetary life has implications for sexed and gendered identity.²² Such approaches have not only pointed to the way in which, as Amitav Ghosh outlines, those most at risk from the consequences of climate change are women in the global south (88-90), but also the need for a new means of theorising what Haraway describes as the ‘material-semiotic’ composition of sexual difference (*Staying* 31). In her contributions to a volume entitled *Anthropocene Feminism* (2017), Rosi Braidotti offers four posthumanist feminist theses that respond to Chakrabarty’s aforementioned 2009 article, insisting that the Anthropocene not only necessitates ‘the critique of

²² These approaches contrast with and problematise the masculinist approaches to the Anthropocene evident in the ‘technofix’ approaches to planetary change (Lorimer 123-4) and even in the AWG itself, whose initial gender imbalance (29 men to 1 woman) provoked *Guardian* journalist Kate Raworth to suggest we are in the ‘Manthropocene’ (n.p.).

species supremacy' but the post-Enlightenment universalised idea of the human that equates humanity with whiteness and masculinity ('Four' 26). Recognising the human as bound up with material planetary processes, Braidotti argues, should entail seeing gender as 'a historically contingent mechanism of capture of the multiple potentialities of the body' and sexuality as a 'nonessentialist ontological structure for the organization of human affectivity and desire' ('Four' 36). As Colebrook suggests in the same volume, the Anthropocene requires a feminism that does not fall back upon the pastoral fantasy that claims 'woman' can 'offer a proper, connected, natural, and attuned relation to the earth', but which sees sexual difference as continuous with an unstable materiality that is always in the process of generating and undoing configurations of identity and meaning ('Post-Anthropocene' 19). As Colebrook elsewhere has shown, we might look to modernism itself for post-anthropocentric configurations of gendered human identity, whether in the 'deep time' and 'dynamism of perception' of Woolf ('Woolf' 71) or the inhuman disruption to the 'normalizing figure of bodily life' found in Joyce (*Death* 216). Colebrook's writing suggests that, in the same way that the word 'Anthropocene' was first arrived at in the early twentieth century, modernist writers can be seen to have been already theorising ideas of life, materiality and sexual difference that foreshadow the debates and discussions taking place under the banner of Anthropocene studies.

1.2 Modernist Novels and Nonanthropocentrism

In order to fully outline the degree to which modernism's challenge to anthropocentric ways of viewing the world was not incidental to but rather constitutive of its aesthetical innovations, it is necessary to situate Woolf, Joyce and Barnes within a broader literary

history of modern fiction. The eighteenth-century origins of the novel, Paul Sheehan has argued, are closely related to an idea of 'human life' that came to prominence with the rise of humanism (2). Greatly influenced by Cartesian thought, the novel reflected modern philosophy's foregrounding of 'individualism and innovation' as well as 'the quintessentially human attribute of logic' which, Sheehan argues, influenced a form of 'narrative logic' encoded in 'seriality [and] causal connection' (2; 5). In its commitment to mimesis and its formal ability to represent the entire duration of a human life, thanks to its extended length compared to earlier literary forms, the novel was seen to hold a mirror up to human life and became the literary form that most closely resembled the humanist idea of the human. Moreover, it also upheld the humanistic values that had been attached to life from Descartes onward. The high humanist credence of teleological progress, Sheehan argues, found its correlative in the Bildungsroman novel, where the end is built into the beginning, giving a sense of concordance, harmony and, ultimately, meaning to the world (12).²³ All of this, Sheehan suggests, made the novel an inherently anthropocentric form; it could assimilate the chaotic material reality of the world within an aesthetic framework predicated on a human sense of order and meaning. Theories of the novel and theories of human life were bound up together from the start, mutually confirming a reassuring anthropocentric humanist outlook.

This human-centred view of the world was, however, challenged during the course of the nineteenth century with the emergence first of geological discoveries that undermined orthodox Christian accounts of the Earth being 6,000 years old and, later,

²³ Sheehan is building on Frank Kermode's famous argument that narrative 'presupposes and requires that an end will bestow upon the whole duration and meaning' (Kermode 46).

with Darwin's resituating of the human within the animal kingdom. Indeed, the discovery of deep planetary time and the relocating of the human within a non-hierarchical genealogy of species that emphasised biological continuity rather than difference were events that, in dissolving the metaphysical boundaries between the human and the nonhuman, now present themselves as prefiguring the Anthropocene. For Sheehan, however, the implications of Darwin's discovery mark a crucial moment in literary history, ushering in the cultural decline of anthropocentric master narratives and 'lay[ing] bare narrative for what it is: a metaphysical scaffolding' (45). Modernism, Sheehan suggests, arrives on the scene as a response to this crisis in the figure of the human, its experimentations in form and content aimed at self-reflexively reconciling the 'nonextension of the mind (the human) with the extension of matter (the nonhuman)' by 'finding a space for the "inhuman" (antinarrative) with the ostensibly "human" (narrative)' (14).²⁴ If the humanist ideal of the human, so closely tied to the novel, had proven to no longer be secure, then the novel too needed reinventing. Indeed, in this account modernism's oppositional or revisionary stances towards mimesis and realism is precisely predicated on an attempt to re-examine the relationship between materiality and narrative. Gregory Castle offers a similar yet necessarily broader argument in the introduction to *A History of the Modernist Novel* (2015), arguing that although the modernist novel is a heterogenous genre covering many different approaches and intentions, it nonetheless can be defined by the fact that it 'was *always in an experimental mode* and it was *always engaged with realism*, and in this double-barrelled way it sought narrative access to the Real (i.e., to the

²⁴ It would be wrong, however, to suggest that anthropocentrism is the fault line that separates modernist novels from the fiction which came before it. For instance, Jesse Oak Taylor has outlined how the expansiveness of the Victorian novel provided a 'formal structure' that could reconcile the 'expansive timescales of evolution, climate and geological change with those of human history and everyday life' (*Sky* 11).

irreducible materiality of lived experience)’ (‘Introduction’ 3, emphasis in original). For Castle, drawing on Samuel Beckett’s *Molloy* (1951) as an example, the ‘creative and critical potential of anti-mimetic literature’ lies not in abandoning realism tout court, but reconfiguring representation so as to ‘dra[w] attention to the objects (cows, sky) that are merely background in the realist novel and to the subject’s inwardness, his reflections and affections’, producing not mimetic resemblance but rather ‘register[ing] in language and literary form the lived experience of the present’ (‘Introduction’ 7).²⁵ For Castle, echoing the sentiments of Woolf with which I began this introduction, modernist prose is predicated on the act of looking up into the materiality of the sky (and across to the cows) and reassessing the relationship of reality to language and literature. As in Sheehan’s account, it is a literary history that situates the emergence of the modernist novel with a double movement that both returns to the question of the human, expressed through an interest in consciousness, language, and experience, and also suggests that the long-established human-centred view of the world is no longer tenable.

While Castle only implicitly situates modernist aesthetics as a critique of anthropocentrism, more recently critics have begun to examine the way in which modernist writers were explicitly reimagining the relationship between the human and the nonhuman world, or what might be termed modernism’s nonanthropocentrism. These critics can be organised according to two distinct but overlapping approaches: ecocritical and posthumanist. Premised on what Bonnie Kime Scott has described as a ‘greening of modernism’ (*Hollow* 13), a number of ecocritical approaches have

²⁵ One might want to object to Castle’s sweeping characterisation of realist novels here; the novels of Thomas Hardy, for example, are highly attuned to the nonhuman world.

aimed to revise the traditional association of modernism with the urban and the metropolitan by showing how ‘nature’ is a ‘persistent, [...] presence in modernism’ (13) and by situating modernist texts in relation to the proto-environmentalist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁶ An occasional limitation to these ‘green’ approaches is a conflation of ‘ecology’ with ‘nature’. As Timothy Morton has argued, ‘nature’ is a term that is always already aesthetically and ideologically freighted, often associated with pastoral notions of purity, harmony, and order (*Ecological Thought* 3), something which, as this thesis will show, Joyce, Barnes and Woolf were all aware of. In contrast, other ecocritical approaches have looked not to the presentation of nature within modernism, but what Kelly Sultzbach describes in *Ecocriticism in the Modernist Imagination* (2016) as the way in which modernist texts pose ‘ecocritical theoretical questions’ around coexistence, materiality and nonhuman agency (4). For Sultzbach, the revisionary approach to the human and its environments that we find in modernist writing itself constitutes a form of ecocritical discourse, chiming with what Anne Raine has suggested is the way in which modernism might challenge us to ‘re-examine or historicize some of the assumptions about nature or ecology’ within ecocriticism itself (104).²⁷

Often intersecting with ecocritical approaches have been enquiries into how modernist innovations speak to a posthumanist understanding of life. As Derek Ryan

²⁶ See, for instance, Robert Brazeau and Derek Gladwin’s ‘greening of Joyce criticism’ (8) in *Eco-Joyce* (2014), as well as Lacivita’s *The Ecology of Finnegans Wake* (2015) and Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy’s *Green Modernism* (2015), which historicises modernism’s relation to early environmentalist discourse. Also see Joshua Schuster’s *The Ecology of Modernism* (2015) which, in contrast, examines how modernism’s break ‘from earlier narratives of nature’ does not always translate into progressive environmentalist values (x-xii).

²⁷ Also see Judith Paltin’s argument that modernism deconstructs the concept of ‘nature’ (778-9).

outlines in a special issue of *Twentieth-Century Literature* on ‘Modernist Ethics and Posthumanism’, the entanglement of ‘nonhuman materials, objects, animals and environments’ that we find in modernist writing point to posthumanist modes of thinking and require critics to approach them in a similarly nonanthropocentric fashion (‘Following Snakes’ 300). Indeed, although posthumanism might appear to be a relatively recent theoretical development, Wallace has argued that modernism’s interest in re-examining consciousness and ontology works towards an ‘emancipation from the narrow confines of the humanist self’ and enacts a ‘displacement of anthropocentrism’ in ways that not only foreshadow but lay the ground for later posthumanist theories (‘Modern’ 46-8).²⁸ As Aaron Jaffe similarly points out in a special issue of *Modernism/modernity* on ‘Modernist Inhumanisms’, modernist texts can be seen to offer a radical redistribution of ‘non-anthropocentric agency’ in which not only animals and organisms, but inorganic and seemingly inanimate things are recast with agential vitality (493). One might think here, as Jaffe suggests, of the apparently inert meteorite in Woolf’s story ‘Solid Objects’ that takes hold of its human owner, a work which Bill Brown also draws upon in his explication of ‘thing theory’ in which nonhuman materials always exceed the subject-object relationship within which they are typically assimilated (‘Secret Life’ 2-5).²⁹ Indeed for Brown, Woolf’s interest in a nonanthropocentric figuring of materials characterises a moment in literary history in which ‘things’ emerge as the ‘object of profound theoretical engagement’ both in philosophy and the arts (3).

²⁸ Also see Carrie Rohman’s posthumanist analysis of the way in which ‘early twentieth-century British literature is marked by a certain crisis in the human vis-à-vis the animal’ (21) and, more recently, Erin Edward’s posthumanist approach to modernism’s ‘troubling of the boundary [...] between the living and the dead’ (1).

²⁹ As Vike Martina Plock has shown, objects in *Ulysses* also ‘coordinat[e] emotional and textual transactions’ (‘Object’ 560).

Like Joyce's use of the term posthuman in his correspondence with Weaver, posthumanism in the sense used by Ryan and Wallace is not concerned with moving beyond the human or enacting a clean break with it (even if such a move were possible), but, rather, brings it into crisis from within. As Cary Wolfe writes, posthumanism is not "post" 'in the sense of being "after" our embodiment has been transcended—but is only posthumanist, in the sense that it opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism itself' (xv). Posthumanism does not aim to depart from a stabilised configuration of the human, but rather reveals that this idea of the human never existed to begin with; that it was always a transcendent or metaphysical ideal that obscured the material substance of that which calls itself human. Posthumanism, as such, argues that the human is in a certain sense *inhuman*, since it is 'a prosthetic creature that has coevolved with various forms of technicity and materiality, forms that are radically "non-human" and yet have nevertheless made the human what it is' (xxii). For Braidotti, this is a key aspect of what she calls 'critical posthumanism': it does not erase the situated, embodied subjectivity of the human, but rather transposes this figure within an 'eco-philosophy of multiple belongings, as a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity, [...] a subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated, but still grounded and accountable' (*Posthuman* 49). In contrast to transhumanism, which reimagines the human's relationship to technology in utopian terms, often intensifying enlightenment ideas of mastery and progress, this critical understanding of posthumanism critiques humanist tenets and situates the human within broader nonhuman processes and environments.

For both Wolfe and Braidotti the philosophical tenets underpinning critical posthumanism can be seen to have evolved out of the critiques of humanism made by

poststructuralism, albeit in different ways (Wolfe draws on Derrida and Lacan, Bradiotti on Deleuze). In their accounts, posthumanism is the inheritor to poststructuralist thought, further developing the earlier theory's sometimes explicit but often implicit critique of the anthropocentrism at the core of Western philosophy and culture. In this aspect of posthumanism we again find ties linking it with modernism, since the poststructuralism of Derrida, Lacan and Deleuze developed out of a modernist context. Derrida's early studies of Husserl, for instance, draws on *Finnegans Wake* for its concept of the 'radical equivocality' of history (*Origin* 102),³⁰ while Deleuze and Guattari look to Woolf, as well as Kafka and Lawrence, to explain concepts such as 'becoming' in *A Thousand Plateaus* (322-3). As Stephen Ross writes in his introduction to *Modernism and Theory* (2009), the 'most important theoretical figures of the last half of the twentieth century were reading and thinking about modernism directly' and, as such, their intellectual endeavours should be seen as, in a certain sense, a continuation of the modernist project (13-14). For Ross, attending to modernism's importance within critical theory involves both historicising theory and theorising modernism, and opens up a position from which modernist critics might deploy an historically alert mode of theory and a theoretically informed historicism (12). Posthumanism, then, understood to be the latest iteration within this genealogy, presents itself as a way of seeing modernism's radical innovations within a specific historical context, while also bringing it into dialogue with contemporary theoretical debates around the figure of the human.

³⁰ Rabaté recounts how Derrida 'read more on Joyce than on Husserl in the Widener Library during his stay at Harvard where he had been sent in 1956-7' ('Two Joyces' 281). Lacan famously also turned to Joyce in the explication in his seminars on the *sinthome* (Rabaté, 'French Theory' 262-3).

In recent years, critics have begun to synthesise ecocritical, and posthumanist approaches to assess the question of how climate change might inform how we read modernist texts. Jesse Oak Taylor concludes a survey of smog in Victorian novels by turning to what he terms the ‘climatic modernism’ of Woolf and Joseph Conrad, arguing that modernist innovation ‘gives form’ to the changing atmospheric conditions of the early twentieth century (188). Similarly, Matthew Griffiths has argued that T.S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Basil Bunting and David Jones figure environments and climates in such a way as to demonstrate how ‘the cultural and the natural are always already entangled’ (10).³¹ In a similar vein, Howell has examined how the ‘anticarbon and anticar’ aesthetics of E. M. Forster’s *Howards End* (1910) make it an exemplar ‘mid-Anthropocene novel’ (550).³² These critical assessments establish the degree to which modernist writers were thinking and writing about topics that we would now associate with climate change, such as air quality, industrial pollution, environmental degradation and resource scarcity. Moreover, they have tended to foreground the way in which modernist texts might be brought into dialogue with recent developments around planetary change. Against accusations of anachronistic presentism, Taylor outlines a ‘strategic presentism’ where ‘[i]nviting the Victorians and Edwardians into our conversations about anthropogenic climate change is valuable not in spite of the historical distance between their worldview and our own but because of it’ since the

³¹ Also see Griffiths’s ‘Climate Change and the Individual Talent’ which suggests that Eliot’s model of accumulative knowledge offers a metaphor for the way in which anthropogenic climate change forces us to reassess the past (83). For an earlier reading that suggests the ‘objective correlative’ of *The Waste Land* might now be ‘the greenhouse effect’ see Thomas Pogue Harrison (149-50).

³² Howell’s notion of the modernist period as occurring in the middle of the Anthropocene (i.e. halfway between the beginning of the industrial revolution and the current moment) offers a further temporal configuration to those outlined above.

alterity of the past can reveal blind spots in our own thinking (9).³³ Griffiths too situates modernism in terms of a proleptic agency, arguing that modernist poetry is able to engage with climate change precisely because its formal operations work towards an ‘indeterminacy’ in which a ‘text’s meaning is only settled at each reading’ (40). For Griffiths, modernist experiments in form ‘internaliz[e] the possibility of [...] future’ readings (41), thereby enabling them to express ideas that seem to speak with an uncanny directness to contemporary ecological crises.

By engaging with the far-reaching implications of the Anthropocene, this study builds upon but departs from Taylor’s, Howell’s and Griffith’s focus on modernism and climate change, a term that is not synonymous with the Anthropocene even though in both informal contexts and academic writing the two are often used interchangeably. While the longer recognised and more familiar category of climate change is a symptom of the Anthropocene, and is certainly its most widely associated symptom, it is but one manifestation of a larger phenomenon whose implications are far broader. Indeed, speaking on the *Energies of Culture* podcast, the geologist and founding member of the AWG Jan Zalasiewicz has gone so far as to suggest that ‘climate change [occupies] a relatively small part’ within stratigraphic measurements of the Anthropocene (Boyer & Howe n.p.). As Haraway expresses it, the Anthropocene is ‘more than climate change, it’s also extraordinary burdens of toxic chemistry, mining, nuclear pollution, depletion of lakes and rivers under and above ground, ecosystem simplification, vast genocides of people and other critters [...] in systemically linked patterns that threaten major system collapse after major system collapse after major system collapse’ (*Staying* 100). Despite this, within literary studies the conflation of

³³ ‘Strategic presentism’ was first developed by the ecocritic Dan Brayton in *Shakespeare’s Ocean* (2012).

global warming with the Anthropocene has meant that, by and large, critical accounts of the Anthropocene are accounts of climate change. For instance, Adam Trexler's *Anthropocene Fictions* (2015) treats climate change and the Anthropocene as near synonymous terms and, as such, limits its study to post-1950s novels that take anthropogenic climate change as their explicit subject matter.³⁴ Yet, as this introduction has already outlined the Anthropocene extends far beyond the remit of climate, both in geological terms, where the Anthropocene defines an epoch that is stratigraphically distinct from what comes before it, and in eco-philosophical terms that insist on the urgency to understanding human agency and relationality within emergent and complex ecological systems.

By engaging with the broader concerns that have been articulated within Anthropocene studies, not only can modernism be read back through the concept of the Anthropocene, but its aesthetic innovations can be seen as already actively theorising ideas of life, materiality, species relations and planetary change. If the Anthropocene, as Cohen and Colebrook suggest, is an event which inaugurates a new modality of critical theory, then this thesis aims in part to suggest how modernism, itself a formative event in the genealogy of critical theory, can continue to shape and influence theoretical accounts that are increasingly thinking beyond the human. In order to do so it draws on original archival research and historical research to map out points of confluence between literary modernism and the modernist Anthropocene.

³⁴ This limitation is also reflected in special issues of literary criticism journals on the Anthropocene. *South Atlantic Quarterly's* 2017 'Autonomia in the Anthropocene', *Frame's* 2016 'Perspectives on the Anthropocene' and *C21's* 2018 'The Literature of the Anthropocene' all focus on works of literature from the last fifty-years that foreground climate change. One recent exception to this trend is the 2018 special issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* on the Anthropocene which looks to 'critically expand' the field and includes an article on Conrad and global capitalism (Marzec 2).

Indeed, one of the key claims that the thesis looks to make is that by returning to archival and historical materials we can see how Joyce, Woolf and Barnes were already engaged with concerns that we would now describe as ecological. This is not to claim that Joyce, Woolf or Barnes occupied a political or ethical position akin to twenty-first-century ideas of environmentalism. Rather it is to argue that reading modernist novels through and alongside the archives that surround them helps to clarify and qualify their willingness to suspend anthropocentric thinking and to figure the human and the nonhuman in new ways.

In synthesizing history and theory, then, the thesis aims to remain alert to what Derrida describes as ‘the internal historicity of the work itself’, an historicity which means a text can never be fully present in a moment of ‘absolute simultaneity or instantaneousness’ but is open to both the present and the past (‘Force’ 14). Such an approach acknowledges that an archive, understood in either the narrow sense of a repository of stored materials or in the broader sense of the material traces through which we encounter history, does not offer unmediated or empirical access to the past. But it also acknowledges that literary texts offer a way of historicising theory, of substantiating or giving depth to occasionally universalising theoretical claims. Braidotti’s assertion that the Anthropocene necessitates a vital materialism that recognises sexuality as a ‘generative ontological force’ (‘Four Theses’ 36), for instance, finds not only aesthetical expression but historical depth in Joyce, Woolf and Barnes where an attention to the relationship between sex and nature is always situated within specific contexts and locations. Similarly, Chakrabarty’s instruction to think ‘of human agency over multiple and incommensurable scales at once’ (‘Postcolonial’ 1) is taken up ahead of time in the experimental approach to scale and narrative we find in *Ulysses*, *Orlando*, *Nightwood* and other modernist texts considered in this

thesis, where scale is not an abstract concept but related to lived experience, historical events and geographical contingency.³⁵ In this latter respect, this thesis looks to engage with the turn in the new modernist studies towards transnationalism. Influenced by what Jessica Berman describes as a ‘transnational optic’ that, rather than privileging one scale over any other, ‘operates both locally and globally’ (*Modernist* 30), the chapters that follow attend to the way in which the geographical and cultural specificities of Ireland, England and the USA shape the respective planetary imaginaries of Joyce, Barnes and Woolf, while also delineating the lines of influence and transmission that intersect and migrate between spaces and places. Bringing texts into dialogue with contemporary Anthropocene theory is, this thesis will show, a means of understanding, rather than ignoring, their historicity.

Modernism, in this respect, allows us to reassess how we both historicise and theorise the Anthropocene. Yet, this study also looks to suggest how the Anthropocene offers new ways of theorising and historicising modernism. In bringing Joyce, Woolf and Barnes together this thesis surveys three writers whose work is not often considered together. While Joyce and Barnes knew each other during the early 1920s and his influence on her writing has been discussed and disputed, within Joyce studies she is rarely considered an important figure.³⁶ Barnes is even more rarely read alongside Woolf, despite the fact that they moved in similar circles and shared a number of acquaintances, most notably Ottoline Morrell, Vita Sackville-West and T.S.

³⁵ As Thomas S. Davis and Nathan K. Hensley have shown in a recent cluster of essays themed around the relationship between scale and form for *Modernism/modernity Print Plus*, modernism ‘uniquely addresses the conflicts of “modernity” across space and time’ in such a way that might intervene in contemporary debates around ‘critical scale’ (n.p.).

³⁶ Phillip Herring locates Barnes’s reading of *Ulysses* as ‘a turning point’ in her writing (102), while Carolyn Burke has argued that Barnes’s ‘idiosyncratic modernism’ should not be seen only as a diluted Joycean aesthetic (73).

Eliot. Moreover, their letters show that they were aware of one another's activities as writers. Barnes, for instance, alludes to *A Room of One's Own* in her correspondence with Coleman while discussing her mother's living conditions (Barnes to Coleman, 20 March 1936), while Woolf, implored to read *Nightwood* in December 1936 by Morrell, promised to 'read it, as soon I've cleared off a heap of slippery manuscripts', adding that Eliot had also told her it 'was a remarkable book' (VWL6 95-6). Similarly, while Woolf and Joyce are not infrequently compared in modernist studies, the ambivalence and indifference that coloured their feelings towards each other has sometimes influenced their later reception as novelists who had more in difference than in common. This thesis looks to suggest new correspondences between these writers, arguing that, while their interests and approaches were undoubtedly different, they were united by their interest in the relationship between aesthetic innovations in the novel and the refiguring of the human's relation to the nonhuman world. In doing so, it engages with both canonical texts within modernism, such as Joyce's *Ulysses*, and noncanonical texts, such as Barnes's *Ryder*, as well as texts that historically have occupied an ambiguous or disputed place within modernism, such as Woolf's *Orlando*.³⁷

As such, although this thesis takes as its subject three well-studied figures (to varying degree), it nonetheless takes stock of the new modernism's commitment towards 'a pluralism or fusion of theoretical commitments' and its attention to the 'larger cultures in which [modernist works] developed' (Mao and Walkowitz 2) in its

³⁷ In what is currently the only book length study of Joyce, Barnes and Woolf, AnnKatrin Jonsson argues that these authors can be paired on the basis of their ethical interest between human subjectivity and textual innovation (14). As will become clear in the chapters that follow, this ethical engagement is not limited to human interests alone.

aim to present a different way of thinking about the development of the modernist novel. Taking an ecocritical and posthumanist approach to modernism and the Anthropocene opens up new theoretical and historical lenses through which we might better understand the historical forces modernism was responding to and its continuing influence and agency. Responding to what Susan Stanford Friedman describes as the new modernist studies' attempt to '[rethink] modernity on a planetary scale' (*Planetary* 3), this thesis sets out how modernist writers were themselves already reimagining the planetary, often through experimentation with scale, but also through aesthetic innovations that refigured ideas of species, materiality, evolution and climate.

1.3 Chapter Summaries

'Chapter 2: Revivalist Ecologies in *Ulysses*' begins by situating James Joyce within the cultural milieu of the Irish Literary Revival. Arguing that Joyce's engagement with Revivalist figures such as W.B. Yeats and George Russell is strongly influenced by his ambivalence over their treatment of the natural world, I suggest that *Ulysses* is premised on a re-examining of the Revival's natural aesthetics. Showing how Joyce was alert to the centrality of nature within the Revival's construction of a cultural national identity, the chapter outlines how the formal innovations that we find in the 'Scylla and Charybdis', 'Aeolus' and 'Cyclops' episodes work as competing configurations of the relationship between the nonhuman world and politics. Rather than asserting a clean break between Joyce and the Revival, this chapter instead argues that Joyce was interested in but sceptical of proto-environmentalist ideas articulated by Revivalists as well as other Irish nationalists. In doing so, it brings Joyce's novel

into dialogue with Félix Guattari's *The Three Ecologies*, a text whose willingness to discuss the interstices between the nonhuman world, subjectivity and social relations make it an important work of proto-Anthropocene philosophy, and which shares with *Ulysses* an interest in reimagining the relationship between materiality and meaning.

'Chapter 3: The Revenge of Gea-Tellus: The Planetary Imaginary of *Ulysses*' turns its attention to Joyce's interest in configurations of planetary life. Taking Joyce's description of Molly as Gea-Tellus as its starting point, the chapter revisits the highly gendered cosmological symbolism through which Joyce characterised the 'Penelope' episode and asks if it is possible to reread Molly in light of recent reinterest in Gaia theory, in which the planet is understood to be comprised of multiple symbiotic systems. To answer this question, the chapter traces the roots of contemporary Gaia theory to the concept of the Noosphere, developed, like *Ulysses*, in Paris after the First World War and which, in its revolutionary idea that cognitive processes need to be considered in any geophysical account of the biosphere, shares similarities with Joyce's interest in the relationship between interiority and exteriority. Reading the idea of the Noosphere alongside *Ulysses*, I examine how both Stephen and Bloom share a gendered perception of materiality in which matter is aligned with femininity and passivity. I then consider how Joyce's figuring of Molly as a Gea-Tellus enacts a form of revenge on this gendered perception of matter, unpacking the way in which Molly's critical reception has coincided and overlapped with the emergence of Gaia theory and feminist responses to it. Finally, I suggest how we might read 'Penelope' alongside the renewed interest in a posthumanist understanding of Gaia by theorists such as Latour and Haraway.

'Chapter 4: The Beastly Writing of Djuna Barnes' looks at how Barnes's writing offers a beastly aesthetic through which she puts the idea of the human under

pressure, arguing that Barnes's oeuvre foreshadows a number of the critical debates around the figure of the Anthropos foregrounded in the Anthropocene. Rather than focusing on a single text, this chapter traces the beastly instances that we find across Barnes's writing, bringing the well-studied *Nightwood* into a fresh dialogue with her broader body of published writing—including her first novel, *Ryder*, and her early journalism—as well as turning to the wealth of materials in her archive to substantiate and further develop how we understand Barnes's interest in the relationship between the human and the nonhuman. Drawing on Derrida's final seminars on 'la bête', I suggest that we can identify beastliness as a distinct tropological mode in Barnes's oeuvre that differs from either the animal or the creaturely. Arguing that in texts such as *Nightwood* we can see how a beastly negativity is central to the novel's queering of desire and identity, I show how Barnes complicates the idea that the Anthropocene calls for a more harmonious idea of species identity. Instead, by looking at Barnes's interest in a self-reflexive mode of anthropomorphism, I highlight how beastly points of difference and separation might in themselves become the grounds of an ethical interspecies aesthetics.

The question of difference remains central in 'Chapter 5: Sex, Nature and Animal Life in *Ryder*'. Offering a sustained analysis of Barnes's little studied first novel, I argue that *Ryder*'s narrative of family life on an unconventional farmstead in rural America writes back to the overdetermined relationship between sex, nature and animal life. Making a claim for the importance of Barnes's highly experimental deconstruction of the family saga genre, Chapter 5 elucidates how the novel's presentation of polygamy and genealogy is expressed not only through a revisionary approach to sexual difference, but species difference. Suggesting that Barnes is already aestheticising what contemporary theorists, such as Kelly Oliver, have

described as the centrality of species to the sexual imagination (and vice versa), I begin by examining Barnes's polemics on nature and naturalness in her journalism and letters, suggesting that Barnes was alert to the way in which cultural practices around nature often looked to naturalise heteronormativity. I go on to look at how *Ryder* demonstrates that even seemingly radical or transgressive ideas around nature—such as those articulated by nineteenth-century American Transcendentalists—can be made to serve anthropo- and androcentric ideas of life. Analysing the presentation of *Ryder*'s main character, Wendell Ryder, I suggest that Barnes shows his seemingly transgressive views on sex and animality to be constitutive, rather than contradictory, of his male authority. Finally, the chapter suggests that *Ryder* also presents the reader with a radically oppositional view to Wendell's heteronormative idea of nature and animal life. In the alternative genealogies that we find expressed through both the novel's thematic content and formal innovations, I argue that we find a queer ecology that opens up new ways of thinking about sexual difference, familial structures and species kinship.

'Chapter 6: The Sympathetic Climate of *Orlando*' turns both to Woolf and the question of climate change that is often at the forefront of discussions around the Anthropocene. Offering the provocation that *Orlando* might not have its origins in Woolf's love affair with Vita Sackville-West but in her earlier remarks on the insufficient attention paid to the way in which climate has shaped literary history, I suggest that *Orlando* can be read as a novel that is premised on the entanglement of climate, history and identity. Taking Woolf's description of how 'the climate changes in sympathy with the age' in *Orlando* (*VWLA* 100), I show that we find a model of history in which human and nonhuman systems are bound together through structures of reciprocity and response. Irony, the chapter argues, is central to Woolf's

presentation of climate, and can be seen in the satirical presentation of Orlando as a pastoral poet whose conservative ideas of seasonality lead him to become a proto climate change denialist and in the hyperbolic figurations of climate change that force Orlando to change his view. While Orlando's change of sex midway through the third chapter is sometimes read as the off-centre centre of the novel, I locate another off-centre centre in the extensive description of the Victorian climate that bridges the fourth and fifth chapter. Looking in detail at how Woolf presents this crucial episode in the history of the Anthropocene, I outline how it not only restages a moment of historical climate change but rewrites the nineteenth century's heightened attention towards climate itself. By resituating the novel within this Victorian climatological milieu, I suggest that we can now see how the novel is informed by and writing back to John Tyndall, the Victorian scientist responsible for discovering the way in which human activity might warm up the climate. Showing how for Woolf, as for Tyndall, the implications of climate science suggest a radical materiality, I conclude the chapter by examining how what can be called a climatic ontology is central to *Orlando's* presentation of sex, gender and sexuality, and broadens what is at stake when we think about climate change in the Anthropocene.

The final chapter, 'Chapter 7: The Disturbing Future of Woolf's Late Writing', turns to the question of extinction and futurity in the final texts of Woolf. Situating Woolf within the historical moment of the late 1930s and early 1940s, where the threat and eventual arrival of World War Two had brought the threat of the end of the world to the forefront of her thinking and writing, I look at how Woolf's texts reconsider and reconceptualise questions of extinction that are now being theorised within Anthropocene studies. Beginning by tracing an interest in extinction in Woolf's late diaries, letters, memoirs and essays, I outline how we find a heightened awareness to

the way in which the relationship between life and death has to be revised when faced with the possibility of no future. Suggesting that thinking about a possible future extinction event provides Woolf with a way of reconceiving the present, the chapter moves on to examine how questions of a futureless future are further developed in *Between the Acts*, a text that is interested not only in human life but the nonhuman worlds which subtend it. Looking at how ideas of futurity and extinction structure Woolf's presentation of human identity in her final and unfinished novel, I bring the text into dialogue with Lee Edelman's writing on queer futurity. Suggesting that Woolf, like Edelman, identifies the figure of the child as a key trope when it comes to anxieties around posterity and futurity, I argue that *Between the Acts* reveals the anthropocentric and heteronormative ideals that structure our relation to the future and, in doing so, queers a dominant narrative of extinction.

The thesis concludes with a short afterword. Looking at how the decade of the 1940s marks the end of the literary historical trajectory I have been charting, I examine how the Modernist Anthropocene is followed by what I see as a Nuclear Anthropocene. Suggesting that Woolf, Joyce and Barnes foreshadowed ideas around planetary vulnerability that would be more explicitly articulated in the post-nuclear world, I look at the legacy of modernism for contemporary questions around the Anthropocene. For Bonneuil and Fressoz, the Anthropocene means the 'forging [of] new narratives [...] and thus new imaginaries' (xiii). The modernist novel, this thesis will argue, presents an aesthetic mode that is profoundly engaged with reimagining the human and the planetary. In Joyce, Barnes and Woolf we find a modernist Anthropocene aesthetic already at work theorising and historicising the emergence of a new epoch in which questions of life and death, materiality and meaning, human and nonhuman are being posed anew.

2. Revivalist Ecologies in *Ulysses*

The bard's noserag! A new art colour for our Irish poets: snotgreen. (*U* 1.73)

Buck Mulligan's remarks to Stephen Dedalus in the opening scene of *Ulysses* establishes one of the central, recurring preoccupations of Joyce's *Ulysses*: the relationship between materiality and meaning. Stephen's noserag, lent to Mulligan to wipe his razor, provides the opportunity for an obscene joke at Stephen's expense, as the matter of his bodily waste is elevated to a symbol of national literary importance. Joyce offers a variation on the joke a short while later in the 'Proteus' episode, where Stephen's musings on the senses that mediate the outer world and his inner life concludes with him covertly wiping 'dry snot picked from his nostril on a ledge of rock' (*U* 3.500). Stephen's deliberations on the protean relationship between the visible material world and the perceiving self, or what might be reframed in contemporary terms as the relationship between the human and the nonhuman, is brought back to the mundane, in the sense both of the everyday and that which is from the earth. The repeated joke not only has a comic effect but establishes one of the novel's recurrent thematic movements: the drawing into close proximity of the usually separate categories of the highbrow and the low, the sacred and the profane, the transcendence of thought and mundanity of brute matter. Meaning and materiality in *Ulysses* are shown to stand not in opposition to one another but, rather, are always co-involved. It is Joyce's interest in materiality, and more specifically the material confluence between the human and the nonhuman, in which he can perhaps be seen most clearly to anticipate contemporary theoretical approaches to the Anthropocene

where the material is foregrounded and the human is understood to be, as Donna Haraway describes it, a kind of ‘humus’ (*Staying* 32). Indeed, in Bloom’s observation that we are all destined to become ‘a tallow kind of a cheesy’ substance in the ‘damp earth’ (*U* 6.778) we find a near direct expression of Haraway’s view of the human as humus. For Bloom, musing on the continuity between life and death as he stands in Glasnevin cemetery, it is precisely the body’s status as humus, or ‘corpsemanure’, which mean that the ‘bones’ ‘flesh’ and ‘blood’ from corpses ‘sinking in the earth gives new life’ (*U* 6.770-776).

Buck’s joke to Stephen, however, is doubly barbed, equating the ‘snotgreen’ colour of Stephen’s mucus with the colour associated with Irish cultural nationalism and implicating Stephen in what is implied to be a crudely politicised approach to art. Moreover, despite the fact that Joyce later gave the opening episode the colours ‘White’ and ‘Gold’ in the schemas he produced for the novel, a green materiality continues to dominate the scene as Mulligan and Stephen turn their attention to the Irish Sea at the foot of the Martello tower.³⁸ While for Stephen the ‘dull green mass of liquid’ recalls the bowl of ‘green sluggish bile’ beside his mother’s deathbed (*U* 1.108-110), for Buck the ocean presents an alternative maternal configuration. He asks Stephen: ‘Isn’t the sea what Algy calls it: a great sweet mother? The snotgreen sea. The scrotumtightening sea. [...] Our mighty mother!’ (*U* 1.77-85). Buck’s insistence on a maternal ocean establishes another overarching motif, one that finds its structural counterpoint in Molly’s concluding monologue which, channelling a feminised and

³⁸ See Ellmann’s *Ulysses on the Liffey* for both schemas (186-7). In the schema Joyce prepared for Carlo Linati in 1920 the ‘Cyclops’ episode is assigned the colour green, which fits with the episode’s interest in Irish nationalism and, as I shall show, an Ireland comprised of forests and agriculture. In the 1930 schema published in Stuart Gilbert’s critical study of the novel, Joyce reassigned the colour green to ‘Proteus’.

sexualised idea of the Earth, reaches its crescendo with an invocation of ‘that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson’ (*U* 18.1598).³⁹ Molly, figured as ‘Gea- Tellus’ (*U* 17.2313), an amalgamation of the Greek and Roman Earth-goddesses, becomes a voice of pre-human and post-human life and a modernist reconfiguration of Mother Earth, a theme which I examine in detail in the following chapter.

In addition to snot and seawater, there is one further shade of green in this opening movement, more oblique than the other two but equally important. It is found in the poet Mulligan alludes to but, unlike Algernon Charles Swinburne, does not name. As Don Gifford suggests, Mulligan’s invocation of the sea as ‘Our mighty mother!’ reiterates a phrase used in a number of poems by the Revivalist poet George ‘AE’ Russell (Gifford 15), a figure whom Joyce knew and who makes repeated appearances in the novel. That within the first 100 lines of Joyce’s novel we find an allusion to a key figure in the Irish Literary Revival substantiates Len Platt’s claim that the Revival is ‘fundamental to the quality of *Ulysses*, to the kind of text that *Ulysses* is’ (8). As Platt and other critics have more recently argued, *Ulysses* is on one level an extended response to the Irish Literary Revival, the cultural movement associated with W. B. Yeats, Lady Augusta Gregory, as well as Russell and others, who looked to assert an Irish cultural identity and establish the cultural foundations for national autonomy and, eventually, a form of independence.⁴⁰ Part of a broader

³⁹ The crimson, rather than green, sea here is an allusion both to Homer’s wine-dark sea and Molly’s menstrual blood.

⁴⁰ Emer Nolan’s study of Joyce and nationalism was the one of the first studies to challenge the dominant critical perception of Joyce’s ‘repudiation’ of the Literary Revival (24-7), while Gregory Castle has also shown that *Ulysses* is structured by an ‘immanent critique of Revivalism’ that nonetheless gives confirms its relation to it (*Celtic Revival* 175). The 2015 volume of *Joyce Studies in Italy*, which takes the subject of ‘Joyce, Yeats and the Revival’, has continued to revise how the Revival is

and multifaceted cultural revival in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century, which also encompassed a revival of the Gaelic language and traditional Irish sports, the Irish Literary Revival (herein capitalised so as to differentiate from revivalism more broadly) presents itself as one of the cultural contexts that Joyce can be seen to be writing back to in his novel. Yet, Joyce does not simply invoke the Revival in this initial reference to it, rather he gestures to a specific aspect of the Revivalist cultural milieu: its reverence for, if not worship of, the natural world. Informed by what I will show to be an amalgamation of late-Victorian Romanticism and Celtic mythology, Mulligan's ventriloquizing of the Revivalist devotion to a benevolent nature introduces into the opening scene a nineteenth-century tradition of 'green writing' that takes as its subject the natural world.

In the first few pages of *Ulysses*, Joyce presents the reader with a snotgreen materiality that opens on to a convergence of cultural configurations around Irish nationalism, nineteenth-century romantic ideas of nature and mythic constructions of the sea as a maternal goddess. It establishes what we can now see to be one of the novel's *ecological* preoccupations, even if this is not a term Joyce would have used, in the dynamic relationship between nonhuman materiality and human structures of meaning. One of the central claims of this chapter is that by focusing on these ecological aspects of *Ulysses* it becomes possible to reassess Joyce's position in relation to the Revival and other forms of Irish nationalism. Critics reading Joyce in relation to the Revival have tended to situate him in terms of a complete break with Revivalist interests in nature and rural life, taking his denigration of the 'cultic

seen in relation to Joyce, affirming Joyce's 'sincere and profound interest' in Yeats specifically and the Revival more broadly (McCourt 17-8). For a recent repudiation of attempts to recuperate Joyce within the 'suffocating forces [of revivalism] he was trying to escape' see Aleksander Stević (52).

twalette' (*FW* 344.12) in *Finnegans Wake* as a position that speaks for the breadth of his entire writerly life.⁴¹ Certainly, it is the case that Joyce's ideas of the nonhuman world contrast sharply with the romanticism and pastoralism that coloured much of the Revival's creative output. Nonetheless, this chapter looks to situate a more complicated relationship between Joyce and the Revival. Instead of an absolute break with or rejection of Revivalist ideas of nature, we find in *Ulysses* a textual ambivalence around the Revival that leads to a refashioning or reshaping of ideas about nonhuman life and environmental politics. Joyce achieves this ambivalence through a triangulated relationship between himself and the Revival in *Ulysses*. That is to say, we not only find Joyce presenting his own views of the Revival contemporary to the moment of his writing *Ulysses* (1914-1921), but, through Stephen Dedalus we see an ironic reconstruction of Joyce's earlier views (as he remembers them) of the Revival circa 1904, at a point in time when the Revival's literary development and political influence were still yet to be determined. There is clear evidence that Joyce intends this to be the case in his giving Stephen dialogue taken from his own writings from the period during which the novel is set. Stephen's ironic assertion, for instance, that the *generosity* of the English is one of 'those big words [...] which make us so unhappy' (*U*2.264) is a variation on Joyce's own formulation from a polemical review of Revivalist poetry in the *Daily Express* in 1902.⁴² Later Mulligan reminds Stephen

⁴¹ Platt pits the Revival's 'evocations of a timeless idyllic rurality' against Joyce's 'excessively time-specific urban fictions' (8) while Brandon Kershner argues that Joyce 'explicitly rejects' Revivalist notions of nature (126). Lacivita, who reads *Finnegans Wake*'s interest in rural Ireland as 'an extension of the revival's project' (*Ecology* 43), is so far the only critic to have attended to how Joyce's writing does not constitute a complete break with the Revival's ecological interests.

⁴² Joyce was reviewing *Poems and Ballads* by William Rooney, a nationalist who had co-founded the *United Irishman* with Arthur Griffith. Rooney, Joyce writes, might have 'written well if he had not suffered from one of those big words [patriotism] which makes us so unhappy' (*OCPW* 62).

of a hostile review he wrote of Lady Gregory's book of Celtic mythology in the *Daily Express*, also paralleling Joyce's own activities as a reviewer as a young man (*U* 9.1158-61). While these connections between Joyce's early writings and his figuring of Stephen in *Ulysses* have long been acknowledged, I aim to show how this triangulated presentation of the Revival enabled a mode of writing through which he could carefully engage with a pivotal moment in Irish literary history while also distancing himself from it.

This chapter's analysis also draws upon another theory of triangulation: Félix Guattari's notion of tri-ecology that he outlined in his late work *The Three Ecologies* (1989). For Guattari there are three ecological categories: 'the environment, social relations and human subjectivity' (28). Each of these categories are actualised through 'existential Territories', or what might be described as finite, singular instances. Importantly, these Territories are not closed off from one another nor do they exist in opposition to one another, but rather they exist in a transversal and dynamic relation of co-production, not unlike Joyce's presentation of the relationship between materiality and meaning with which I opened this chapter. Foregrounding 'process' over 'system or structure', Guattari outlines how the 'principle common to the three ecologies is [that] each of the existential Territories [...] is not given as in-itself [*en-soi*], closed in on itself' but instead is a 'for-itself' that intersects with each of the other Territories (53). In light of contemporary developments, Guattari's intent to both broaden and politicise what is understood as ecology, and his recognition that the 'only true response to the ecological crisis is on a global scale, provided that it [...] also take into account molecular domains of sensibility, intelligence and desire' (28), situates his late work as a key volume of philosophy in Anthropocene studies and its influence can be seen in the posthumanist materialism of philosophers actively theorising this

new epoch, such as Braidotti and Haraway.⁴³ Moreover, Guattari's philosophy resonates with *Ulysses*.⁴⁴ Firstly, this is since Guattari identifies Joyce (alongside Goethe, Proust, Artaud and Beckett) as a writer able to present an 'ecosophical [...] conception of subjectivity' in which rather than self-enclosed 'subjects' we find a 'subjectification' which always exceeds the 'terminal' of the 'individual' (35-7). Here, we might think of the way in which Joyce shows subjectivity to be produced by bodies (human and nonhuman) that are themselves materially open rather than closed. It is an idea memorably captured in Bloom's thoughts of the human as an open system, 'stuffing food in one hole and out behind: food, chyle, blood, dung, earth, food' (*U* 8.929-30), an example that speaks clearly to what Vike Martina Plock argues is *Ulysses*'s 'sustained scepticism about discourses that emphasise the singularity and wholeness of the human' ('Bodies' 184). In moments such as this in *Ulysses*, subjectivity is shown to never entirely coincide with the subject. Secondly, and just as importantly to the concerns of this chapter, Guattari attends to the close ties between environmentalism and nationalism, or what he describes as the necessary 'search for an existential Territory or homeland' in which one can live in a more ecologically attuned way (65). For Guattari this search for a 'homeland' does not necessitate 'nationalitarian movements (like the Irish or the Basques) [that] have turned in on

⁴³ Braidotti in particular sees the 'Anthropocene condition' as expressing Guattari's three ecologies ('Critical Posthuman' 84). Also see the 2016 *Deleuze Studies* special issue entitled 'A New Earth: Deleuze and Guattari in the Anthropocene' for a range of essays examining how their body of work 'presaged much of the concept of the Anthropocene' (Saldanha and Stark 427).

⁴⁴ Far less attention has been afforded to the points of confluence between Joyce and Guattari than with other poststructuralist such as Derrida or Lacan, and, even less work has considered Joyce in relation to Guattari's solo writing as opposed to that which he co-authored with Deleuze. The 'Deleuze-Guattari Cluster' of essays in the Winter 1993 issue of the *James Joyce Quarterly* and Beatrice Monaco's *Machinic Modernism: The Deleuzian Literary Machines of Woolf, Lawrence and Joyce* (2008) currently represent the most sustained analysis, but also reflect the greater attention paid to Deleuze over Guattari.

themselves’, rather ‘all sorts of deterritorialized “nationalities” are conceivable’, even ‘music and poetry’ might themselves become spaces for collective identity (65).⁴⁵ As this chapter will show, Joyce’s own ambivalent understanding of the close ties between nature and nationalism, and the alternative configuration of both that we find in *Ulysses*, similarly looks to reimagine their terms of relation.

In suggesting affinities between Joyce’s figuring of the nonhuman world and later Anthropocene philosophy, this chapter looks to contribute to a fast-growing body of studies demonstrating the degree to which Joyce should be considered an ecological writer. Alison Lacivita’s *The Ecology of Finnegans Wake* (2015) argues that Joyce’s late work is organised around ‘a self-conscious aesthetic appropriation of nature’ that makes it an ‘exemplary’ work of modernist eco-writing (1-2), a claim that has been furthered strengthened by more recent articles examining the novel.⁴⁶ Similarly, Robert Brazeau and Derek Gladwin’s edited collection *Eco-Joyce* (2014) offers an ecocritical appraisal of Joyce’s entire oeuvre, ranging from essays focused on identifying the presence of nature in Joyce’s texts to accounts that suggest Joyce’s use of language in *Finnegans Wake* might itself be read as constituting a kind of ecosystem.⁴⁷ A strong sense of the entangling of the human and the nonhuman in Joyce’s work also appeared in the 2017 special issue of *Humanities* themed around

⁴⁵ The allusion to Ireland here refers to the conflict in Northern Ireland at the time of Guattari’s writing in the 1980s.

⁴⁶ See Lacivita’s more recent article on Joyce’s historicising of parkland and hunting, ‘Troubles in Paradise’; Adam Barrows’s study of the ecological dimension to Joyce’s use of Victorian time, ‘Joyce’s Panarchy’; and Rachel Nisbert’s analysis of anarchism and ecology in ‘Joyce’s Eco-Anarchism’.

⁴⁷ Earlier ecocritical work on Joyce can be found in Margarita Estévez Saá’s and Marisol Morales Ladrón’s chapters in *New Perspectives on James Joyce* (2009) which look at the romanticism of his early poems and his urban ecology respectively, and Michelle McSwiggan Kelly’s chapter on Joyce’s ‘sea-side’ ecology in *Joyce in Progress* (2009). Also see James D. Cardin’s ecofeminist reading of *Dubliners* ‘Minding the Body’.

‘Joyce, Animals and the Nonhuman’ edited by Katherine Ebury, which collected essays ‘explor[ing] connections between [...] Joyce and the “nonhuman turn”’ (‘Special Issue Information’) and opened up points of confluence between ecocritical and posthumanist approaches to Joyce’s writing. This chapter looks to build on the theoretical advances of these approaches by engaging with the way in which Joyce’s ecological aesthetic is responding to the early twentieth-century Anthropocene, as well as advancing the careful eco-historicism that has looked to reconstruct the environmental history of Ireland during Joyce’s lifetime. If, as John Brannigan argues in his study of modernism and geography, ‘Joyce’s work can be read for its preoccupation with the signs of nature, and with the question of how natural forms might or might not imply correlation with cultural identities’ (68) then this chapter will show that central to this question of identity and ecology is an engagement with the Revivalist configurations that shaped his experiences as a young writer and to which in *Ulysses* he forged a distinctly modernist response.

2.1 Resistance and Revival

The turn of the twentieth century, as outlined in the Introduction, was a period of accelerated technological developments which saw the development of refined oil and gas fuels, further expansion of industrialism, a greater mechanisation of agricultural production and the growth of a transport system comprised of trains, cars and, later, airplanes, that would become the blueprint for the carbon intensive societies of the current moment. Yet, this acceleration, even within Europe, was uneven rather than uniform. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Ireland’s carbon economy was still in its nascency, not least since Ireland had not undergone widespread

industrialisation as rapidly as England. This was changing, however, and we find this change reflected in *Ulysses*. Bloom's ideas for 'a [livestock] tramline from the parkgate [cattle market] to the quays' (*U* 6.400) that would take the cattle drovers off the roads, for instance, speaks to the future transformation of the city's highways and byways. But it also emphasises the fact that the Dublin of 1904 had yet to witness the kind of mass industrial changes that had transformed other Western European countries.⁴⁸ Indeed, this fact has been long acknowledged in criticism around *Ulysses*, which has historically tended to frame Joyce's Dublin as a city still on the cusp of modernity, with P. J. Mathews going so far as to suggest that Joyce presents Dublin as a 'large rural market town' rather than a 'metropolis' (111).⁴⁹ Yet, while Ireland had not seen mass industrialisation, it had nonetheless been subject to significant environmental transformation. As Bonneuil and Fressoz outline in their history of the Anthropocene, Ireland is an example of one of several countries that suffered ecological 'predation' throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because of British Imperial policy (256). Although their analysis does not expand upon what this predation entailed, in broad terms it can be seen to have occurred through the intensive agricultural regime implemented through the introduction of a landlord system and enclosure, of which the famines were a direct consequence, and where by the end of the nineteenth century, with the Irish population depleted and entire rural communities

⁴⁸ See Chris Otter for how animal transportation underwent mechanisation in England and France from the mid-nineteenth century onwards (96).

⁴⁹ Much like the broadening of what is understood by modernity within the New Modernist Studies, work on Joyce since the 1990s has tended to emphasise how Joyce problematises a singular understanding of modernity in which Ireland is seen as peripheral. See, for example, Nolan, xi-xv.

lost in places, more than fifty-percent of the country's land surface was being used for grazing livestock destined for England.⁵⁰

In Britain, where the acceleration towards a carbon economy was more visible, a recognisably modern strain of anti-industrial, proto-environmentalist literature had begun to emerge in the late nineteenth century. The work of Victorian writers and socialists such as John Ruskin, William Morris, Robert Blatchford and Edward Carpenter declared the need for a return to artisanship and small-scale production in the face of industrial standardisation. For these essentially late-Romantic figures, the dehumanising and unnatural progress of urbanisation and industrialisation inspired a 'Back to Nature' aesthetic discourse that has since come to be seen as prefiguring contemporary environmental debates around sustainability and ethics.⁵¹ As Bonneuil and Fressoz outline, this late Victorian interest in 'protect[ing] the countryside against the aggression of the modern world' can now be seen to have been a key moment in what they call the 'Polemocene' (271-3). The Polemocene, Bonneuil and Fressoz explain, is their name for what they identify as a transnational intellectual history that starts in the eighteenth century and takes the form of polemical writing that registers an 'environmental reflexivity and [awareness of] environmental inequalities' (253). Its iteration in late nineteenth-century Britain, they argue was predicated on a 'global critique of industrial capitalism' that mixed 'environmental and health observation, social demands and cultural criticism' (271).⁵²

⁵⁰ My figures here are taken from Eric B. Ross's *Food and Evolution*. For analysis of the politics of cattle in *Ulysses* see Adkins, 'The Eyes of that Cow'.

⁵¹ See Peter Gould, *Early Green Politics* (vi-x; 15-28) and Wendy Parkins's introduction to *Victorian Sustainability in Literature and Culture* (2018).

⁵² Bonneuil and Fressoz draw attention to how such concerns were also being voiced in Germany and France.

Crucially, the late Victorian romanticism that produced ‘Back to Nature’ socialism was also a formative influence on the Irish Literary Revival. It was within this milieu in which the young Yeats immersed himself in the 1880s, in the years immediately prior to his co-founding of the Irish Literary Society in 1892. Yeats, who lived in London at the time and had befriended William Morris, later described the aesthetic mode of both Morris and Ruskin as profoundly influencing his early development as a poet (*Agate* 120) and, as Brannigan has argued, the ‘vision of harmony with nature, and creative labour’ that characterises Yeats’s early Revivalist poetry is suggestive of Morris’s mentorship (26).⁵³ While it is important not to see the Revival only through the lens of Yeats’s poetic vision, it is the case that the poetry and prose he produced in the 1890s were decisive in setting many of the aesthetic preoccupations that came to define the Revival. A key aspect of this Yeatsian Revival was, as critics have long argued, a return to the ‘natural world’ and a ‘pronounced hostility’ to the ‘modern, urban, industrial culture of empire’ (Kiberd & Mathews 182-3). Indeed, in this light the Revival can also be seen as contributing to the Plemocene insofar as it incorporated elements of an early environmental consciousness being articulated in Britain, but with the important difference that Revivalist ecological ideas were *also* working towards the construction of an Irish national identity.⁵⁴ Yeats’s ‘The Lake of Innisfree’ (1890) presents a clear example of this, in that the poem’s speaker aspires to build ‘a small cabin’ made from ‘clay and wattles’ in the idealised setting of Innisfree in the west of Ireland (*Collected Poems* 44). The poem, as Yeats

⁵³ Yeats also knew Edward Carpenter, joining in with the older writer’s seventieth birthday celebrations in 1914.

⁵⁴ It is important to note that there was not always political or cultural agreement across various forms of revivalism and there were a number of strong disagreements between Gaelic revivalism (often aligned with Catholic nationalism) and the Anglo-Irish Celtic revivalism that I am focusing on here. Although I touch on these differences, Mathew’s *Revival* provides a more comprehensive overview.

would later reveal in his *Autobiographies*, was inspired by his adolescent reading of *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau's narrative of living in a cabin in the woods, a text which had become an important point of reference for 'Back to Nature' socialists in Britain, such as Carpenter and Blatchford (*Autobiographies* 71-4). Indeed, *Walden* had grown to become of significant social influence in both Britain and the US at the turn of the century, influencing writers and politicians, and as I discuss in Chapter 4, inspiring a gendered pastoral idealism that both Woolf and Barnes were suspicious of.⁵⁵ Yet, for Yeats *Walden* was an unproblematic influence. In 'Innisfree' Yeats coupled a Thoreauvian ecological ethos of simplicity and holism to a Celtic mythology of Ireland's west in such a way that, as Brannigan argues, the poem has come to be seen as 'deeply formative of the aesthetic vision and cultural programme his work came to exemplify' (26). For Yeats, ecological revival and national revival were constitutive of one another. As he wrote in 'The Celtic Element in Literature' (1898), rural Ireland presented itself as the potential site for the remarriage of 'spirit and nature', which in turn would enable the emergence of a new Irish consciousness through the retrieval of 'ancient beliefs about nature' (*Irish Folklore* 190).

In his poems and essays of the 1890s, Yeats was writing in the shadows of the failed 1886 Home Rule Bill, which had dashed hopes for Irish autonomy. He was also writing in the shadows of a post-Darwinian English cultural imagination that figured the Irish as racially primitive, where in texts such as Matthew Arnold's *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867) the Irish were defined in terms of an enfeebling and effeminate affinity for 'nature and the life of nature' (Arnold 82). Yeats's response was to subvert rather than discard such racialised essentialism by celebrating the

⁵⁵ For an overview of the influence of *Walden* on British socialism and the 'Back to Nature' movement see Adkins, 'Transatlantic Dialogues in Sustainability'.

archetypal ‘Celt’ as an ‘ancient farmer and herdsman, who sits bowed with the dreams of his unnumbered years, in the gates of the rich races, talking of forgotten things’ (*Irish Folklore* 190). While ‘Matthew Arnold thought he was criticising the Celt’, Yeats explains, ‘he was really criticising the [...] ancient worship of nature’ that has been lost in most of the modern world, but which can still be recovered among the ‘beautiful places’ of Ireland (191). ‘Surely if one goes far enough into the woods’, Yeats asserts, again drawing on a Thoreauvian register, ‘there one will find all that one is seeking?’ (194). While in Britain, ‘Back to Nature’ socialists were proclaiming that becoming attuned to the natural world might overthrow the alienation of modern capitalist life, Yeats was drawing on a similar proto-environmentalist rhetoric to articulate the conviction that a renewed national consciousness might emerge from the retrieval of an earlier and now forgotten relationship with the natural world. Yeats was not alone among the Revivalists in this respect. J. M. Synge’s *The Aran Islands* (1907) presents the inhabitants of Ireland’s westerly isles in terms of an elsewhere forgotten primitive mode of authentic living, while Lady Gregory published books on the myth and folklore of Ireland’s rural west, including *Poets and Dreamers* (1903) which, as aforementioned, Joyce disparagingly reviewed.

While, as Lacivita points out, the Revivalist ‘idealisation of the environment and of the peasant’s intrinsic connection to the land fostered a false conception of the Irish landscape’ that enforced ‘patronising stereotypes of rural Irish culture’ (‘Wild Dublin’ 28), other Revivalists offered a more politicised assertion of the importance of the Irish environment to national identity.⁵⁶ The Revivalist writer and librarian John

⁵⁶ Joyce’s letters from the period also register this sentiment. Writing to his brother, Stanislaus, in 1907 Joyce describes Yeats as ‘a tiresome idiot’ ‘quite out of touch with the Irish people to whom he appeals’ (*JJL2* 211).

Eglinton (real name, William Kirkpatrick Magee), who plays a central role in the ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ episode of *Ulysses*, argued in *Anglo-Irish Essays* (1917) that ‘Mother Nature’ might unify Ireland since nature worship predated all racial and religious differences in Ireland and that, for this reason, the ‘future of Irish literature is mainly an affair between the poet and this kindly mother’ (9). Here, Eglinton takes a political idea that is implicit in Yeats’s romanticism and makes it explicit: nature serves as an organic foundation that can unite religious, class and political difference. An early example of Latour’s description of the way in which contemporary environmentalism often presents ‘nature [as] already composed, already totalized [and thereby] already instituted to neutralize politics’ (*Politics* 3), in the writing of Eglinton and others we find an intrinsically Irish nature, bound up with discourse around racial essentialism and placed in contrast with an urbanised modernity. The presentation of Irish nature is at once political and depoliticising, in its assertion of a natural (as opposed to political) foundation for a future Irish state. While John Rignall and Gustav Klaus have argued that the colour green, associated throughout the nineteenth century with a romantic idea of ecology, is eclipsed at the turn of the twentieth century by its association with Irish nationalism (1-2), in the Revival we see these two shades of green merge and work to strengthen one another in the service of an organic construction of national identity, an idea which Joyce, through Mulligan, articulates on the very first page of *Ulysses*.

The final Revivalist of note in this respect is George ‘AE’ Russell, the poet who Buck invokes in his gendering of the sea. As I have already outlined, Russell’s writing, like Eglinton’s, drew on the mythology of a Mother Nature, often presented through the Celtic mythology of Dana, and through which he combined Irish folklore with his wider interests in theosophy and Neo-Platonism. Yet, Russell’s employment

within Horace Plunkett's Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS) presents a pragmatic complement to his poetry and mysticism. The IAOS, as Mathews outlines, aimed to 'better the material circumstances of the emerging class of small farmers' and it did this through 'forming co-operative societies and credit unions' within small rural communities (29). Founded in 1894, at a time during which a succession of land reforms were beginning to dismantle the large estates through which Ireland's agricultural economy had been run via absentee landlords and urban managers, registered in *Ulysses* with Bloom's noting of the now largely idle 'land agents' offices along Sackville Street (*U* 6.316), the IAOS looked to assist the emerging class of small farmers. While the IAOS's political aims were to reorganise and thereby strengthen Ireland's agricultural economy and they embraced technological advances in food production, its ethos of self-reliance and sustainability present themselves in aesthetic terms that are again not dissimilar to those articulated under the 'Back to Nature' idealism in Britain. This aesthetic was most clear in the Society's newspaper, *The Irish Homestead*, edited by Russell. The *Homestead*, referred to in *Ulysses* as the 'farmer's gazette' (*U* 14.525) was a paper where, as Mathews has shown, readers might encounter a new poem by Yeats 'published side-by-side with an article on fertilizers' (32).

Joyce synthesises both aspects of Russell, the agrarian reformer and the theosophist poet, in his presentation of him in *Ulysses*. In 'Scylla and Charybdis', he is presented as a 'tall figure in bearded homespun' wearing a 'cooperative watch' (*U* 9.269-70). He is a man who mixes mysticism and politics in his pronouncements on how the 'movements which work revolutions in the world are born out of the dreams and visions in a peasant's heart on the hillside' and that '[f]or them the earth is not exploitable ground but the living mother' (*U* 9.104-6). Stephen recounts 'A. E. I. O.

U.’ (*U* 9.213) acknowledging a monetary debt he owes to Russell, but also Joyce’s ambivalent indebtedness to Russell for having published his first work of fiction, ‘The Sisters’, in *The Irish Homestead*. Here, then, we find a textual acknowledgement for why the Revival figures so prominently in *Ulysses*; it was the literary milieu in which his work first appeared, and, in a material sense, it framed his early writings. Joyce’s first short story, published in the *Homestead* on 13 August 1904, was placed above a large advertisement for ‘dairy machines and appliances’ (‘The Sisters’ 677).⁵⁷ Indeed, the material archive that survives from Joyce’s early work demonstrates the degree to which he would have been aware that his writing was being put to the use of an agricultural agenda. While the July 1904 letter from Russell to Joyce, asking him to write something ‘simple, rural’ for the paper is often quoted, examining the physical letter in Joyce’s archive at the Beinecke Library at Yale University presents the larger material context of their correspondence. The headed stationery, boldly proclaiming the paper’s subtitle of ‘The Organ of Agricultural and Industrial Developments in Ireland’ (see figure 2.1), foregrounds the degree to which Joyce would have been aware of the agrarian socio-political context within which his work would be published (Russell to Joyce, July 1904). The material circumstances around Joyce’s early writing insist on an agricultural and political context that firmly situated him within a Revivalist discourse that he could not and, as his often-hostile reviews emphasise, *did* not ignore. By the time he had come to write *Ulysses*, however, we find not only a continued preoccupation with the literary culture that had shaped his

⁵⁷ Dathalinn O’Dea’s recent analysis of Joyce’s contributions to *The Irish Homestead* situates his writing as ‘in dialogue’ with the agricultural material context of the paper (485). Katherine Mullin has also analysed Joyce’s contributions to the paper, identifying the way in which his fiction subverted ‘the kind of nationalism [the newspaper] expected its stories to dictate’ (172). Facsimiles of Joyce’s stories in the paper can be viewed at www.ricorso.net.

fortunes as a young writer but also a strong sense of ambivalence, not only about the Revival, but the relationship between literary culture, ideas of the natural world and the political agendas that mediate the two.

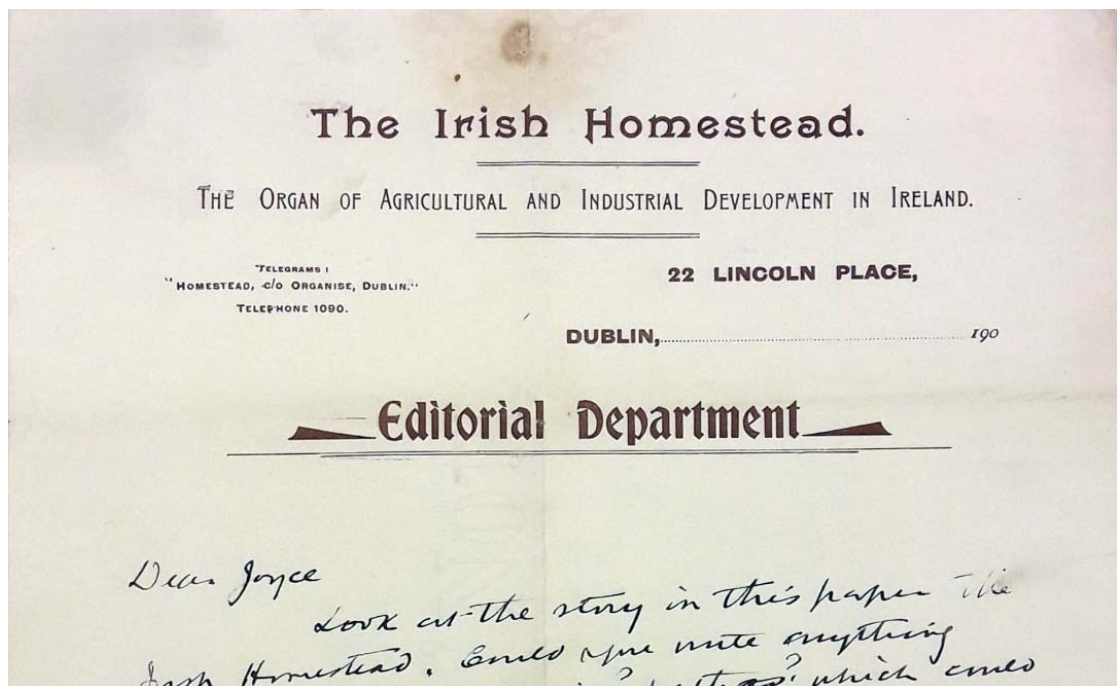


Figure 2.1- Letter from George Russell to James Joyce, July 1904. James Joyce Collection. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Box 2, Folder 42.

2.2 The Revival as figured in *Ulysses*

In approaching questions of national identity and nationhood through the lens of nature, in Yeats's and Eglinton's case, or in reforming the relationship between workers and the land, in the case of Russell, the Irish Revival might be seen to have intuited the emergent demands of the Anthropocene, in which the terms through which the nonhuman world is conceptualised are not only highly politicised but are

understood to be bound up with imperial and counter-imperial histories. In their coupling of nature and nation we also find a clear point of connection with Guattari, for whom any successful environmental movement, or ‘ecosophical revival’ as he terms it, must also resemble the ‘separatist’ nationalitary demands seen in postcolonial struggles in the twentieth century (31-35). In Guattari’s writing, a nationalitary struggle is distinguished from a nationalist struggle on the grounds that while the latter works towards the founding of a nation state, nationalitarianism opens on to a *collective singularity*. One of the three existential territories of ecology in addition to the physical environment and individual subjectivity, nationalitarian collectives exist on their own terms and in opposition to imperialist or capitalist hegemonies (31-35). Yet, while Guattari might use the language of ‘revival’ (at least in Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton’s posthumous English translation), unlike the Yeatsian understanding of revival as retrieval of a lost mythic past, Guattari rules out any attempt ‘to return to the past in order to reconstruct former ways of living’ (42). Indeed, Guattari arguably goes too far in the opposite direction, embracing the ‘futurist’ technologies that present themselves as potential catalysts for the construction of new ecological singularities (37-8) and thereby, as Arun Saldanha and Hannah Stark point out, staking a position that foreshadows those who argue for accelerationist and geo-engineered responses to the Anthropocene (‘New Earth’ 437). Yet, it is not only on the basis of technology that Guattari rejects the possibility of retrieving past forms of identity. More fundamentally, for Guattari it is because he associates attempts to revive pre-historical narratives and myths with psychoanalytic paradigms that rely on an archetypal understanding of human nature that limit how individuals and collectives come to fashion themselves (37-8). In the light of Guattari’s philosophy, Yeats’s figure of the

ancient Celt farmer represents not a possible ecological future, but the narrow limits imposed by ‘archaic fixations’ with the ‘collective past’ (38).

Joyce’s vulgarising of Homeric myth, for instance, in presenting his Odysseus in the act of defecation in ‘Calypso’, and the interest in a technological modernity, such as in the attention to Dublin’s future transport network that I outlined above, enables *Ulysses* to occupy an intermediary position between the Revival and Guattari’s Anthropocene philosophy. The ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ episode, set in Dublin’s National Library and largely focalised through Stephen as he converses with John Eglinton, George Russell and, assistant director of the library, Richard Best, has long been acknowledged as one of the novel’s clearest engagement with the Revival and, more specifically, with its material culture. As Frank Budgen suggests in his 1934 book *James Joyce and the Making of ‘Ulysses’* (written, like Gilbert’s study, with Joyce’s involvement), the episode’s entire motivation plausibly resides in Stephen’s aim to get ‘a commission for an article in *Dana*’ (117), the literary journal edited by Eglinton and fellow revivalist Frederick Ryan, and which takes its name from the aforementioned Celtic earth goddess figure. More recently, Len Platt has shown in his analysis of the specific writers, poems and books referenced in the episode that Revivalism is the ‘cultural *environment* of the episode’ (74-5, emphasis added). Similarly, Clare Hutton has argued that the conversation in the library presents the ‘historical specificity of the [Revival] movement’ and allows ‘Joyce to reflect on both the nature of literary culture in Dublin in 1904 and the conditions of authorship in that *environment*’ (125, emphasis added). Although Platt’s and Hutton’s respective use of the word ‘environment’ is meant in a broadly descriptive sense, there is nonetheless a sense in which the episode presents the more qualified definition of environment that

we find in Guattari, in which it names the more-than-human assemblage within which subjectivities and social collectives are couched.

This environmental aspects of ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ operate on two registers: thematic and formal. Thematically, the question of the environment finds expression in the specific set of Revivalist references that Joyce chooses for the episode, many of which speak to the Revival’s interest in pre-modern rural life and mythology. The first clear example of this is when Stephen is reminded of ‘Gaptoothed Kathleen [and] her four beautiful green fields’, a reference to the heroine of Yeats’s *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902), another maternal symbol of Irish identity, and the four fields that represent the four provinces of pre-Norman Ireland (Gifford 195). A short while later we discover that Haines, the Englishman staying with Stephen and Mulligan at the Martello tower, has been with Best, examining *The Irish Mythological Cycle and Celtic Mythology*, a nineteenth-century study of Celtic mythology by the French literary critic Marie Henri d’Arbois de Jubainville that Best translated into English in 1903. The ‘enthusiastic’ Haines, it is revealed, has snubbed his appointment with Stephen in favour of going to buy Douglas Hyde’s *Love Songs of Connacht* (1895), a collection of Gaelic poems translated into English whose subject is also pre-modern Ireland and which had become a key text in the Gaelic revival (*U* 9.93-95). Eglinton’s comment that ‘[t]he peatsmoke is going to [Haines’s] head’ reiterates the pastoral romanticism that characterises both the Gaelic Revival and the Yeatsian Celtic Literary Revival, while Stephen’s unspoken thoughts associate Haines’s romanticism with the cliché of an ‘emerald set in the ring of the sea’ (*U* 9.100-102). In an episode in which Shakespeare figures so prominently, the proximity of this phrase to John of Gaunt’s famous description in *Richard II* of England as ‘This other Eden [...] This precious stone set in the silver sea’ hardly seems a coincidence (Shakespeare 388). Stephen, it is implied,

sees the Revival's reverence for nature as in fact more English in its literary provenance than Irish, a fact borne out by Haines's enthusiasm. In contrast, Stephen, who, as he walked along Sandymount Strand earlier in the day, has been reminded of the mass beaching of whales on Dublin's shores in the thirteenth century, in which '[g]alleys of the Lochlanns ran [...] from the starving cagework city, a horde of jerkined dwarfs [...] hacking in green blubbery whalemeat' (U 3.300-6), sees the nature of pre-modern Ireland not in terms of bucolic idealism, but scarcity punctuated only by a providence that is squalid and violent.

As in the earlier episodes, the thematic content of the library discussion is inseparable from the formal innovations through which Joyce presents the scene. The transversal movement between interior monologue, free indirect discourse and a more distant third-person narration are presented on the page without explicit delineation, so that at any given point the reader is liable to encounter Stephen's thoughts, focalised description or a more objective account. The effect of a porous rather than rigid boundary between interior and exterior that this technique produces finds further expression in Joyce's presentation of dialogue, in which the absence of conventional speech marks (a style which he established in *Dubliners*) also suggests continuity rather than separation. The effect is ecological in Guattari's sense of ecology, in which subjectivity, social assemblages and the material environment are understood as distinct existential territories yet constitutive of each other. Indeed, reading the presentation of the relationship between Stephen, the social sphere of the library and its physical space through an ecological understanding of material continuity helps to understand the ambivalence that dominates both the tone of the episode and Joyce's attitude towards the Revival. Stephen's assertion to Eglinton that, 'As we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave our bodies [...] from day to day, their molecules shuttled

to and fro, so does the artist weave and unweave his image' (*U* 9.376-79), for instance, appears to venerate the Celtic earth goddess and assert a gendered notion of the autonomous artist, ideas endorsed by the Revival. Rather surprisingly, given the incipient Neo-Platonic idealism at the heart of Stephen's assertion, Pindar and Sutton in their introduction to Guattari's *The Three Ecologies* cite Stephen's remark as an example of Joyce's intuitive understanding of Guattari's idea of life as an 'ongoing aesthetico-existential process' ('Introduction' 12). Noticeably, however, they elide the highly gendered reference to 'mother Dana' (as I discuss in the following chapter, Joyce, like Guattari, is interested in refiguring rather than reiterating Earth Goddess myths) and, more importantly, overlook the degree to which Guattari's ecology furnishes us with a critical paradigm that can bring to light the way in which Stephen's speech is made in bad faith. The reader knows from Stephen's earlier internal decision to use '[l]ocal colour' in his telling of Shakespeare's biography in order to 'make them accomplices', that he is happy to manipulate his interlocuters in the library by appealing to their rhetorical sensibilities (*U* 9.158). As such his decision to invoke the Revivalist earth goddess figure of Dana presents itself as a calculated attempt to appeal to those in the room, in both its Celtic allusion to Dana and in its apparent appeal to ideal forms that Russell has earlier propounded in his argument for the merits of 'Plato's world of ideas' (*U* 9.57).

Indeed, although Russell has just left the library since he is 'due at the *Homestead*' (*U* 9.271), Stephen's uncharacteristic assertion appears to invoke Russell's poem 'Dana', with its description of an Earth goddess enchanting the 'lonely wanderer by wood or shore' by 'weaving [her] spells' (A.E. 37), as well as Eglinton's earlier affirmation of the importance of 'Mother Nature' for 'Irish literature' (*Anglo-Irish* 9). There is perhaps also a motivation beyond appealing to the Revivalists with

whom he is speaking. In invoking Mother Dana Stephen is also able to subtly remind Eglinton that he hopes to secure an article for *Dana* based on his theory of *Hamlet*.⁵⁸ Eglinton appears to pick up on this suggestion, informing Stephen that since he has admitted he does not believe his own theory he ‘should [not] expect payment for it’ and adding that he is the ‘only contributor to *Dana* who asks for pieces of silver’ (*U* 9.1071-1082). The implication is that Stephen’s primary interest in making a living from his writing puts him at odds with Revivalist writers for whom (implicitly politicised) aesthetical and philosophical concerns are foremost. Reading the scene through Guattari’s ecological understanding of subjectivity enables us to see how Joyce draws on formal innovations to present a transversal relationship between Stephen’s subjectivity and the larger social collective, while at the same time thematically presenting Revivalist constructions of the physical environment. Subjectivity, sociality and spatiality converge and bear upon one another in the contested space of the National Library.

In the closing moments of the episode Joyce emphasises Stephen’s break with the Revival precisely through an inability to share the Revival’s romantic ecology. As Stephen leaves the library he thinks:

Here I watched the birds for augury. Aengus of the birds. They go, they come.
[...]

Kind air defined the coigns of houses in Kildare street. No birds. Frail from the housetops two plumes of smoke ascended, pluming, and in a flaw of softness softly were blown. (*U* 9.1206-1220)

⁵⁸ Eglinton published a poem by Joyce in *Dana* in 1904 but rejected his experimental work of autobiographical prose ‘A Portrait of the Artist’, the first iteration of what would become *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Stephen's reflections that '[h]ere I watched the birds for augury' is both a textual presentation of memory as shaped by environmental stimuli and an intertextual reference to the final chapter of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). In *A Portrait*, on the same spot outside the library a multitude of birds in the evening sky, perceived through their 'dark darting quivering bodies' and 'inhuman clamour', move Stephen to a 'soft liquid joy' and provide the catalyst for the novel's final epiphany: that he must fly away to Paris to become an artist (*P* 188-90). While, as Jeff Wallace, suggests this moment constitutes an instance of modernism's 'heroic mode of the posthuman' articulated through 'the pursuit of aesthetic autonomy' ('Modern' 44), it is also caught up in Revivalist discourse. Having decided that 'he was to go away for they were birds ever going and coming [...] ever leaving the homes they had built to wander', Stephen, apparently spontaneously, recollects Countess Cathleen's farewell speech in Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* (1892), in which the self-sacrificing heroine likens herself to the 'swallow' who must 'wander the loud waters' in exile (*P* 190). While a short while earlier he has declared how he will 'fly by those nets' of 'nationality, language, religion' (*P* 171) at this crucial moment of epiphany Joyce presents Stephen as a bird entangled within, rather than free of such nets. Stephen's desire that, like the swallows, he might enjoy autonomy and free expression, is undermined by their symbolic assimilation within a Revivalist codification of the natural world. The lines from *The Countess Cathleen* suggest not a break with nationalist discourse, but the degree to which he is already steeped within its literary culture. The ambivalence we find in *A Portrait* is further heightened in *Ulysses* where Stephen's observation that there are '[n]o birds' (*U* 9.1218) suggests both an absence of readily available symbols to be found in the nonhuman world and a sense that those which do present themselves, such as the springtime swifts he had previously seen, as

already compromised.⁵⁹ The entities of the natural world, which had previously afforded Stephen an apparent insight into truth and which continue to sustain the Revivalists he has just encountered, now present themselves as distorted by the human imagination.

The last episode in *Ulysses* that is focalised primarily through Stephen, ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ not only marks a shift in the novel but brings to a close a narrative trajectory which Joyce had begun himself in 1904 in his unfinished early version of *A Portrait, Stephen Hero*.⁶⁰ Through *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait* and the first half of *Ulysses*, Joyce examines through Stephen what it means to be a writer caught up in and struggling against the cultural politics and aesthetic ideals of the Irish Literary Revival. That he concludes this trajectory with Stephen’s rejection of the Revival’s mode of aestheticizing the nonhuman world emphasises the degree to which Joyce understood the veneration for nature to be constitutive of the Revival’s artistic practices and politics. What Joyce does not suggest, however, is that Stephen can finally become the autonomous artist that he has long desired to be. The ascetic clarity of Stephen’s observation that there are ‘no birds’ is softened by its proximity to the uncharacteristically romantic description of the ‘kind’ and ‘frail’ ‘flaw’ of smoky air coming from ‘the coigns of houses’ in Kildare street. Perhaps surprisingly, Dublin temporarily presents itself to Stephen in terms of a pastoral scene, not unlike Haines’s

⁵⁹ Stephen’s observation of ‘no birds’ is also possibly a reference to Keats’s ‘no birds sing’ in ‘La Belle Dame sans Merci’ (1819), I am grateful to Tim Conley for suggesting this connection. The same poem also inspired the title of Rachel Carson’s ground-breaking work of environmental science *Silent Spring* (1962), which, as I outline in Chapter 4, was an influence on Djuna Barnes’s late poetry.

⁶⁰ In ‘Wandering Rocks’ the narrative does return to Stephen, but the collage-like presentation of simultaneously occurring scenes situates him as only one character among many, an idea which is further reflected in the fact that, unlike earlier chapters, during the scenes in which Stephen appears the narrative switches focalisation between characters.

idealising of cottage peat-fires earlier in the episode. The use of archaic language to describe walls (coigns) and gusts of wind (flaw) suggest that Stephen's perception is, as Gifford writes, still being influenced by the language of Shakespeare's plays (256). Although he might have stepped out of the library and have rejected the Revival, Stephen's subjectivity and his way of encountering the nonhuman world remain bound up with the texts and discussions from which he has departed. In Joyce's innovative textual rendering of these transversal movements between an individuated subjectivity, a social collective and a physical environment (whether that be the environment of the library or the broader geography of Ireland) the novel presents an ambivalence towards Revivalists configurations of nation and nature that does not find easy resolution.

2.3 Pastoralism and Nationalism in 'Aeolus'

As I have suggested, *Ulysses* does not constitute a clean break with the Revival. Rather the Irish Literary Revival is referenced and thereby refashioned within the fabric of the novel. Joyce achieves this refashioning not only through the intertextual presentation of historical figures and works of Revivalist literature, but also by self-reflexively examining the relationship between modes of discourse and the material world. Jessica Berman has argued that literary narratives have the agency to 'provide the grounds for our constructions of communities' (*Modernist* 17), an argument which Revivalist literature reveals is true also of poetry, oral folklore, journalism and literary essays. Yet, Berman also insists that a text is 'inseparable from the rhetorical exigence that it calls into being; it cannot refrain from acting in the world' (26). That is to say, texts cannot be seen to reside in a realm outside of the material culture that they aim

to mimetically represent, present or even create. Instead, they are firmly embedded within it. Although Berman's approach is via a humanist tradition of political philosophy, her insistence on the material performativity of texts suggests a non-hierarchical relationship between texts and history that is also present in Guattari's monistic understanding of the way in which aesthetic practices 'open up new futures' (40). In fact, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is singled out by Guattari as a prime example of how 'authors having [no] prior recourse to assured theoretical principles or to the authority of a group, a school or an academy' can produce a text whose 'concrete performance' is a non-teleological 'Work in progress!' that produces new ecological singularities (40).⁶¹

In *Ulysses*, Joyce not only self-reflexively presents this relationship between literary and material history, but also gestures to the political implications of such a relationship in turn-of-the-century Ireland. The seventh episode, 'Aeolus', is particularly notable in this respect. Largely set in the print room and editorial office of the nationalist newspaper the *Freeman's Journal*, the episode is assigned the art of rhetoric and the bodily organ of lungs in the schemas Joyce prepared after publication. Unsurprisingly, it is one of the noisiest episodes: Joyce presents a cacophony of voices, both human and nonhuman, clamouring to be heard. These include the men in the editor's office, who are described in terms of having 'cried', 'shouted' and 'crowed' (*U* 7.359; 7.363; 7.367) amidst the 'screams of newsboys' (*U* 7.390), as well as the 'thump, thump, thump' made by the printing machines (*U* 7.101) and the 'Sllt' that

⁶¹ One might want to quibble with Guattari's characterisation of the *Wake* as without recourse to theoretical authority, given the influence of Giambattista Vico's cyclical notion of history on its structure. It is true, however, that Joyce's *Wake* does not present itself in terms of intellectual fidelity to Vico nor any other authority, nor even to the logocentric tradition of Western writing itself.

comes from the ‘nethermost deck of the first machine’ in the print room that sounds ‘almost human’, reminding Bloom that ‘everything speaks in its own way’ (*U* 7.174-177). This cacophony becomes the basis for Joyce to draw a parallel between bodies and newspapers, established through puns on ‘circulation’ and ‘daily organs’ (*U* 7.71; 7.84), and allows him to emphasise the materiality of discourse and the way it is distributed. Yet, while this might seem to imply that the episode is primarily aural, its formal qualities instead foreground the way in which *written* texts function and perform. This is most clearly established by the fact that it is the first episode to depart from a broadly naturalistic narrative presentation in favour of a schematic structure that foregrounds its own textual artifice, a technique that becomes steadily more amplified in the second half of the novel. This is achieved through the mock newspaper headlines that appear above the episode’s textual fragments which did not appear in the serialised version of the episode in *The Little Review* but were added by Joyce as he revised it for publication as a book. The relationship between the headlines and fragments of narrative is sometimes clear, such as the opening headline ‘IN THE HEART OF THE HIBERNIAN METROPOLIS’ above a description of Sackville Street in central Dublin (*U* 7.1-2). Other times the relationship is less immediately apparent, such as the title of ‘SHORT BUT TO THE POINT’ that heads a section of dialogue between Bloom and the men in the editorial office (*U* 7.272). In the first case, the headline seems to give meaning to the fragment of narrative, while in the second case, the reader looks to the narrative to retrospectively give meaning to the title. As such, rather than the headlines simply framing or defining the narrative that appears below them, the episode presents the way in which the narrative also frames or defines the headlines. A transversal, co-constitutive relationship is established between the textual artifice of the headlines and the material events described in the narrative. Or, phrased

slightly differently, Joyce emphasises the way in which the relationship between textuality and materiality cannot be decided in advance.

Under the section entitled 'ERIN, GREEN GEM OF THE SEA', the novel turns to the veneration of nature associated with Revivalist rhetoric. Beneath the headline, Ned Lambert is sardonically reading aloud the political speech by a nationalist named Dan Dawson that has been printed in that day's newspaper, entitled 'Our Lovely Land':

- Or again, note the meanderings of some purling rill as it babbles on its way, tho' quarrelling with the stony obstacles, to the tumbling waters of Neptune's blue domain, 'mid mossy banks, fanned by gentlest zephyrs, played on by the glorious sunlight or 'neath the shadows cast o'er its pensive bosom by the overarching leafage of the giants of the forest. What about that, Simon? he asked over the fringe of his newspaper. How's that for high? (U. 7.243-249, emphasis in original)

Both Gifford and Platt trace the historical figure of Dan Dawson back to Charles Dawson, one of Dublin's merchant-politicians who had been lord mayor of the city in the 1880s and a key figure arguing for the city's industrialisation (Gifford 107; Platt 63-4). Yet, the content and rhetoric of the speech presents itself as much closer to the romantic, idealised reverence for a pre-industrial Ireland characteristic of the Anglo-Irish Revival literature and, indeed, the Celtic Twilight is clearly invoked in the speech's later reference to the '*mild mysterious Irish twilight*' (U 7.323-4).⁶² This theme is sustained as Lambert continues to read the speech, describing the '*serried*

⁶² The 1904 article by Charles Dawson that Platt suggests is the inspiration for the quoted passage strikes a rather contrasting register in its description of a plan to tap into 'resources which lie buried in the fertile womb of earth, in the rivers and mountains' to 'fill the air with the hum of industry all over the land' (Quoted in Platt 63-4).

mountain peaks’ and *‘luscious pastureland of vernal green’* that constitute the *‘peerless panorama of Ireland’s portfolio’* (U 7.295; 7.323; 7.320). Within the broader context of the novel Dawson’s speech presents itself as a poor derivative of the Revivalist nature poetry produced by what the newspapermen describe as the *‘hermetic crowd’* spearheaded by Russell and Yeats (U 7.783). Importantly, however, the classical imagery, strained assonance and alliteration also work towards a clumsy imitation of an English pastoralism that the reader has already been introduced by way of the appearance of Milton’s *‘Lycidas’* earlier in the novel when Stephen teaches the poem to the school boys in Dalkey (U 2.25). Here then, we find part of the political thrust of the passage. Vincent Cheng has argued that the scene in the school presents the way in which canonical writers such as Milton upheld the hegemony of British imperialism through the education system (164-5), and Dawson’s rhetorical assertion of an Irish national identity via an aesthetic mode that the novel has already implied is steeped in English cultural politics presents the way in which the retrieval or revival of a lost Irish nature might, in fact, be more English than anything else.⁶³ This connection with English pastoralism presents a further politically unpalatable aspect to Dawson’s speech, perhaps one that Joyce himself was unaware of, but which is present in the text itself. As Timothy Morton has argued, English pastoral celebrations of sparsely populated landscapes were, in reality, aestheticising the forced land clearances from the early modern period onward (*Ecology Without Nature* 86). In this light, Dawson’s veneration for *‘undulating plains’* (U 7.322) that noticeably lack

⁶³ *‘Lycidas’* continues to echo through Stephen’s mind throughout the novel, with fragments of it present in his interior monologue in *‘Proteus’* and *‘Scylla and Charybdis’*, while in *‘Eumaeus’* the ironic narrative voice draws upon the poem in the description of the Irish sailor *‘dreaming of fresh woods and pastures new’* (U 16.632-3), all of which suggests that the imperially exported English poem has become deeply engrained in Dublin’s collective consciousness.

human life or habitation, might be seen as complicit with, if not actively aestheticising the Cromwellian clearances of Ireland and the subsequent changes in agriculture that culminated in the famines of the nineteenth century.⁶⁴ Read as such, Dawson's speech becomes less an assertion of an Irish identity, than an unintentional ode to the imperial history of the Anthropocene in Ireland.

Dawson's speech also very clearly works to highlight the gap between idealised constructions of Ireland's rural interior and its material political realities. Indeed, while the men in the office dismiss Dawson's speech as 'shite and onions' and 'high falutin stuff' (*U* 7.331; 7.260) and tell themselves that they will not be 'led away by words, by sounds of words' (*U* 7.485), they are blind to the ways in which their own configurations of national identity are also discursively constituted. Professor MacHugh, having just warned against being led away by words, immediately goes on to assert that:

The jews in the wilderness and on the mountaintop said: *it is meet to be here. Let us build an altar to Jehovah.* The Roman, like the Englishman who follows in his footsteps, brought to every new shore on which he set his foot (on our shore he never set it) only his cloacal obsession. [...]

They were nature's gentleman, J. J. O'Molloy murmured. But we have also Roman law. (*U* 7.489-500, emphasis in original)

McHugh unintentionally emulates Dawson's aestheticisation of nature in the service of national identity, as the Irish are aligned with nature and the natural against the polluted and polluting English. Unlike, the Jews, however, the Irish 'have also Roman law'. That is to say, they have both nature *and* culture. Like Yeats's Celtic farmer as

⁶⁴ Milton was, of course, a civil servant within Cromwell's Commonwealth Council of State.

a figure of Irish essence, at the crux of MacHugh's assertion of Irish identity is a notion of an essentialised Irish 'nature' located in a 'wilderness' that, similarly to Dawson's poem, trades on a configuration of isolation in which nature and the natural operate in opposition to the polluting and unnatural influences of modernity. When Bloom, who arrives in the office midway through Dawson's pastoral speech being read aloud, asks 'whose land' is being described by Dawson, MacHugh wryly responds not by giving him an answer but pointing to the 'pertinent[ence]' of the question being asked by Bloom (*U* 7.273-275). That MacHugh who identifies with the historically oppressed Jews directs an indirect anti-Semitic hostility towards Bloom throughout the episode presents a further intended irony to his not being 'led away by words'. Bloom's Jewish ethnicity, an ethnicity described earlier in terms of an alien influence 'eat[ing] up the nation's vital strength' (*U* 2.348-9), is aligned with all that is *unnatural* to Irish nature, an idea that, as I explore below, becomes further developed in the 'Cyclops' chapter.

2.4 Forests and Environmental Justice in 'Cyclops'

Bloom's question of 'Whose land?' (*U* 7.273) is reiterated back at him in the 'Cyclops' episode set in Barney Kiernan's pub, when the citizen demands of Bloom, 'What is your nation, may I ask?' (*U* 12.1430). 'Cyclops' presents the novel's most sustained engagement not only with nationalism and the mythic constructions of an Irish nature that underpin it, but also the environmental catastrophes that English imperialism had inflicted upon Ireland. Moreover, the episode's interest in Irish nature is not only present in the discussion that takes place in Barney Kiernan's pub, where questions of land are a repeated point of concern, but also in the thirty-three nonsequential parodies that intertwine the pub narrative and which are generally seen as interpolations or

interruptions.⁶⁵ As Len Platt notes, a large proportion of these interpolations present themselves as parodies of the Revival in some form (144-5) and, moreover, these Revivalist parodies more often than not operate through an ironic presentation of the Revival's veneration for Irish nature. The description of the 'land of holy Michan', for example, where in 'the mild breezes of the west and of the east the lofty trees wave in different directions their firstclass foliage' (*U* 12.74-6), presents itself as only a slightly exaggerated version of Dan Dawson's lurid Revivalism encountered in 'Aeolus' or the mysticism avowed by Russell in 'Scylla and Charybdis'.

The militant patriotism of the citizen is to outward appearances a stark contrast to the cultural nationalism of the Revival. Introduced by the narrator as a 'rapparee' (*U* 12.134), the name for the Catholic landowners forced to turn to plundering after the Cromwellian clearances dispossessed them of their land, the citizen is presented in terms of a more militant nationalism than has been encountered either among the cultural nationalists in the National Library or the figures congregated in the offices of the *Freeman's Journal* (many of whom reappear as drinkers in the pub). The citizen's confrontational assertion to Bloom that '*Sinn fein amhain!* The friends we love are by our sides and the foes we hate before us' (*U* 12.523-4) aligns him with nationalist movements that emphasised the importance of the Irish language, such as the Gaelic League, and who, as Roy Foster has described, were responsible for the 'radicalization of Irish politics' at the turn of the twentieth century (456-7). The citizen's Gaelic assertion also points to the text's triangulated aesthetic: Joyce wrote the episode in 1919, the year after Sinn Féin's electoral triumph.

⁶⁵ The notion of the parodies as interpolations is present both in the foundational works of modernist criticism on *Ulysses* (Kenner 100; Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* 111) and later criticism that has taken a more political or historical approach (Nolan 91; Sandquist 207).

The question of the exact historical location of ‘Cyclops’ is a vexed one. Joyce, for instance, has the men refer to the ‘report of lord Castletown’s’ (*U* 12.1260-1), a government report published in 1908 on the exhaustion of forests owing to recent changes in land legislation and which outlined recommendations for afforestation schemes. This apparently anachronistic remark is made in a section of the episode that explicitly foregrounds the ecological consequences of colonisation, in which the citizen and the other drinkers in the pub discuss the British exploitation of forests and rivers, and the financial recompense ‘the yellowjohns of Anglia owe us for our ruined trade and our ruined hearths’ (*U* 12.1254-5). The collective lament for the damaged river beds of the ‘Barrow and Shannon’, the ‘acres of mash and bog’ that threaten populations with ‘consumption’, and the ‘trees of the conifer family [that] are going fast’ are for the nationalists in the pub connected with the material and the symbolic decline of Ireland (*U* 12. 1240-1265). Both Yi-Peng Lai and James Fairhall have argued that the conversation reflects the political sensitivity around land usage and deforestation in nationalist circles at the turn of the century, a fact which Joyce makes clear in the citizen’s epithet ‘Save the trees of Ireland for the future men of Ireland’ (*U* 12.1263-4) (Fairhall, ‘Ecocriticism’ 373-4; Lai, 94-5). Moreover, as Fairhall states, the reference to Castletown’s report is a direct gesture to the consequences of the Land Purchase Acts which had led to an increase in Protestant landowners selling woodland that could be felled and transformed into agricultural land (373). Indeed, Joyce’s notes for the episode substantiate Fairhall’s analysis, where a description of ‘timber’ as ‘a crop that must be cut’ suggests that Joyce understood and was interested in the multivalent currency of trees in Irish politics (*Notesheets* 458).⁶⁶ Neither Lai nor

⁶⁶ British attempts to dampen Irish nationalism in the late nineteenth century also involved trees; Prime Minister William Gladstone’s planned to plant three million

Fairhall, however, address why Joyce includes a reference to a 1908 report produced by a government committee that had not even been formed by 1904. One possible answer is that Joyce, like the citizen, is making a political point. Joyce's early writing exhibits, in places, an understanding of what would now be termed environmental justice, and this is particularly true of the political writing he produced in 1907 while living in Trieste. In these pieces of writing, intended for an Italian audience unfamiliar with Irish history, Joyce rehearses the arguments that he will later have the men in the pub make, arguing that imperial control had been historically established through a 'system of agriculture' that 'reduced the power of the native leaders and granted huge estates to her soldiers' (*OCPW* 119). Elsewhere Joyce, like the citizen, misidentifies Ireland's 'vast central bog' with a waste land, asserting that the English government owes both a moral and financial debt to the Irish for 'not having seen to the reforestation of this disease-ridden swamp' (*OCPW* 144).⁶⁷ Deforestation would have also represented a broader political point in 1918 when Joyce returned to the subject in *Ulysses*. As Bonneuil and Fressoz have shown, the demand for wood during the First World War saw Britain 'fell nearly half of its commercial woodland in order to satisfy military needs' (126) and Joyce describes in his notes for 'Cyclops' the practice of 'deforesting for military reasons', again insisting on a close proximity between material and political transformations within a colonial context (*Notesheets* 460).

As such, on one level, the conversation in the pub sees Joyce exploiting the triangulated aesthetic of *Ulysses* to present a history of the Anthropocene through

acres of new trees in Irelands as a means of restoring 'peace and quietness' (Lacivita, *Ecology* 190).

⁶⁷ As Fairhall has pointed out, Joyce was wrong to suggest deforestation created Ireland's bogs, many of which had developed after the last Ice Age ('Bog of Allen' 574).

colonial conquest and environmental destruction, or what Haraway names the Plantationocene, in which the story of planetary change is one of ‘diverse kinds of human-tended farms, pastures and forests [transformed] into extractive and enclosed plantations’ (*Staying* 206). Yet, to see the figures in the pub as straightforwardly ventriloquising Joyce’s earlier stated views on the politics of afforestation is to overlook the way in which the episode’s formal operations reveal the limitations of the arguments being made by the citizen and his fellow drinkers. The discussion around deforestation is immediately followed by one of the parodic vignettes, often referred to as The Tree Wedding, in the style of a marriage announcement for ‘Jean Wyse de Neaulan, grand high chief ranger of the Irish National Foresters [and] Miss Fir Conifer of Pine Valley’, in which all the guests present at the ceremony have names such as ‘Miss Grace Poplar’ or ‘Miss Blanch Maple’ (*U* 12.1268-73). The Tree Wedding is an example of the way in which a number of the interpolations operate in terms of what Gregory Castle has described as ‘stylistic travesties of the Revival’s ethnographic imagination’ (*Celtic Revival* 241) and, in some senses, present a Revivalist parody that brings into sharp relief the comparatively historically and politically incisive analysis of the nationalists in the pub, such as their interest in the stalled civic engineering projects to drain fetid standing water from arable land into ‘the beds of the Barrow and the Shannon’ (*U* 12.1256).

Yet, while the parodies work in one sense as counterpoints, they also operate to present points of similarity between the Gaelic nationalists and the Anglo-Irish Revivalists around the question of Ireland’s natural environment. For instance, the citizen’s declaration that they must ‘save’ the ‘giant ash of Galway and the chieftain elm of Kildare’ presents itself as a foray into gigantism that operates in not dissimilar terms to the tree wedding (*U* 12.1262-3). Moreover, in this racialised description of

trees, and the further insistence that the ‘future’ of Ireland’ is bound up with the ‘trees of Ireland’ (*U* 12.1263-4), Joyce has the citizen make a point that, in both tone and content, is similar to John Eglinton’s essay ‘Reafforestation’ in his book *Anglo-Irish Essays* (1917). In the essay Eglinton argues that it will be the responsibility of any new Irish state ‘to restore the balance of nature where it has been upset by the reckless behaviour of man in the past: to determine, for example, what portions of the earth’s surface it can now afford to set apart for the ancient races of the trees’ (112). Although critics have not historically suggested its influence on the episode (Gifford, for example, does not list it), Eglinton’s essay is a very plausible source of inspiration for the pub conversation; Joyce had a copy of the book in his library while writing *Ulysses* and lists Eglinton’s name in the notes for the Cyclops episode despite the fact that he does not make an appearance (*Notesheets* 119). If Eglinton’s essay was the source for this section of ‘Cyclops’ the implications are striking: the firebrand pub nationalist and the mannered librarian Revivalist share common ground insofar as they rely on an idealised Irish nature for the basis of an essential Irish national identity. Eglinton’s proto-environmental rhetoric might differ from the citizen’s in its mystical underpinnings, but both look to the retrieval of a lost Irish environment which might rekindle and sustain a racial identity capable of self-determination.

Furthermore, if Joyce’s insinuation is that the citizen and Eglinton unwittingly share certain rhetorical strategies, the schematic arrangement of ‘Cyclops’ can also be read as insisting on a close proximity between the citizen’s Gaelic nationalism and the parodies that take the cultural nationalism of the Literary Revival as their subject. This is possible if the parodic fragments are read not as interpolation, but seen to operate in a supplementary mode. Indeed, semantically this is how they are presented, since they fall into three broad supplementary categories. They either redramatise what has just

occurred in the pub, stand in for a section of the narrative in the pub that is not otherwise presented to the reader or expand on a theme that has either been discussed or will be discussed in the pub. Importantly, as with the relationship between the narrative fragments and the headlines in 'Aeolus', the pub discussion cannot be straightforwardly seen as the primary narrative to which the parodies are secondary, since in certain instances the parodies give meaning to the pub narrative, while at other points the relationship is reversed. For instance, the parodic description of Ireland as a 'pleasant land' with 'murmuring waters' in which 'heroes voyage from afar to woo' the '[l]ovely maidens' sat at the roots of 'lovely trees' (*U* 12.70-83) appears immediately prior to the introduction of the citizen, serving to presage the mock-heroic description of the citizen as an agrarian freedom fighter and establishing the central concerns that will come to colour the lively nationalistic discussion. In this sense the episode is structured by a logic akin to Derrida's description of the way in which the desire for a primary source or origin will always be frustrated by the discovery that the foundation itself is already a kind of supplement (*Grammatology* 304).⁶⁸ We see this clearly in the episode's presentation on the page where, rather than there being breaks between the two narrative strands that clearly demarcate and differentiate them, there is a continuity which gives both a visual and narratological quality of intertwining. This was even more clearly the case when the episode was serialised in four instalments in *The Little Review* where a number of them opened with the parodies, implying not a secondary or interpolative relation to the pub narrative, but a much more equal standing.

⁶⁸ The 'supplement is always the supplement of a supplement. One wishes to go back *from the supplement to the source*: one must recognize that there *is* a supplement at the source' (*Grammatology* 304).

In intertwining the Gaelic nationalism of the citizen and Revivalist cultural nationalism, the 'Cyclops' episode looks to establish points of continuity between their respective constructions of nationhood and nature. In both narrative strands we find a rhetoric of race which is reliant upon and constructed through a natural aesthetic. The parodic descriptions of the 'gentle declivities of the place of the race of Kiar' that sustain a dairy herd who produce 'superabundance of milk' (*U* 12.113-4), the heroic 'brawnyhanded hairylegged ruddyfaced' figure 'seated on a larger boulder' wearing a 'long unsleeved garment of recently flayed oxhide' (*U* 12.151-168) and the importance of the 'revival of ancient Gaelic sports' for the 'development of the race' (*U* 12.898-911) supplement and are supplemented by the citizen's racialised constructions of agriculture, traditional clothing, and masculine athleticism. When the citizen pointedly remarks to Bloom that '[w]e want no more strangers in our house', he invokes Ireland's 'peasants' as figures of a naturalised racial identity at risk from exploitation and contamination from outsiders (*U* 12.1150-1). A short while later he will invoke the myth of Kathleen ni Houlihan to the same effect (*U* 12.1375). Indeed, in this context, a further possible rationale behind the anachronous inclusion of Lord Castletown's report becomes clear. Castletown was not only the author of an influential report on the deleterious effects of Ireland's deforestation, but as Kaori Nagai has shown, was an Irish landlord whose endorsement of pan-Celtic revivalism was bolstered by the perception that his aristocratic lineage represented 'the quintessence of not only Irish-Ireland but also the ancient Celtic *race*' ('Octophanes' 61, emphasis added). His appearance in the 'Cyclops' episode not only carries with it political authority, but an implicit endorsement of a racialised Irish nature that would have been only too apparent to Gaelic nationalists and Revivalists alike.

2.5 Cyclopean Signs of Nature

In 'Cyclops' the Revivalist celebration of a racialised Irish nature and the citizen's more explicit racism foreground the way in which aesthetic constructions of nature can be put to work in the service of a racialised nationalism, or what Guattari describes as the way in which 'an ecosophical revival' can 'suddenly flip into reactionary closure' (35). As in *Ulysses*, there is a Cyclopean dimension to Guattari's description of racist nationalism, in which he warns of a 'fascinating and repulsive [...] one-eyed man' who 'force[s] his implicitly racist and Nazi discourse onto the French media and into the political arena' (58). Although, on one level, this is an overt reference to the eye-patch wearing Jean-Marie Le Pen, whose National Front party were enjoying political ascendancy while Guattari was writing in the 1980s, it is also a reference to the theory of 'one-eyed' 'Binder-Gods or magic emperors' that he developed with Deleuze in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari 494). For Deleuze and Guattari, the 'one-eyed men' represent a pole of political sovereignty in which power is accrued through 'capture, bonds, knots and nets' and which stands in contrast to the 'jurist-priest-king' who proceeds by 'treaties, pacts, contracts' (494). These one-eyed men amass their sovereignty through acts of monolithic encoding, in which they '[emit] from their single eye signs that capture [and] tie knots at a distance', establishing their dominance through a 'regime of signs' (494).

Deleuze and Guattari's 'one-eyed' tyrant invites identification with the violently singular-minded citizen in 'Cyclops', whose vision of a naturalised Ireland actively excludes those who he sees as unnatural or foreign. Although Joyce might be sympathetic to the environmental injustices inflicted under British Imperialism, over the course of the episode the recourse to rhetoric around the 'revival of [...] ancient Ireland, for the development of the race' (*U* 12.899-901), along with the citizen's

desire that Ireland be restored to a pre-modern society in which ‘our potteries and textiles [...] our wool [...] our flax and our damask’ were ‘the finest in the whole world!’ (*U* 12.1240-2), are shown to project an ideal and limiting symbolic order, in which the material that Joyce has shown to be dynamic and transformative is subsumed and mastered. Indeed, despite the citizen’s protestations around deforestation, descriptions such as those of the ‘giant ash of Galway and the chieftain elm of Kildare with a fortyfoot bole’ subordinate real trees to extravagant figures of masculine Irish human identity (*U* 12.1262-3). The natural environment in ‘Cyclops’, then, is repeatedly reduced to a standing reserve, exploited in the service of an aesthetic construction of national and racial identity. The pastoralism we find in both the parodies and the pub conversation paradoxically works to cultivate and regulate Ireland’s natural features, subjecting it to a form of mechanical reproduction from which modern Ireland can be fashioned. The symbolical trees of Ireland are presented as standing timber for the construction of national identity. In this respect ‘Cyclops’ presents itself as prescient of the environmental exploitation that would follow Irish independence in 1922. As Dipesh Chakrabarty has argued, any history of the Anthropocene is complicated by the fact that industrial ‘acceleration’ and ‘decolonisation’ often went hand in hand as countries looked to modernise, become autonomous and increase the standard of living for their citizens (‘Convergence of Histories’ 52). The intensive waves of industrialised agriculture that proceeded the founding of the Irish Free State offers one such example, with the resultant environmental degradation surpassing even that which had been witnessed during Imperial occupation (Viney 308).⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Alison Lacivita has shown this post-independence ecological context shaped Joyce’s presentation of the nonhuman world in *Finnegans Wake* (*Ecology* 8-9).

In contrast to the citizen, Bloom might be seen as the novel's countervailing jurist-priest-king to use Deleuze and Guattari's term. Bloom's fantasy in 'Ithaca' of accruing a smallholding through a 'feefarm grant, lease 999 years' (*U* 17.1519) and becoming 'a justice of the peace' 'upholding the letter of the law' (17.1610-27) invokes the 'treaties, pacts, contracts' of Deleuze and Guattari's description (494). The extensive description in 'Ithaca' of Flowerville, Bloom's imaginary '5 or 6 acres' of smallholding (*U* 17.1511), both parallels and departs from the pastoral fantasies of 'Cyclops' in its mechanistic detailing of the livestock and plants that would comprise it, along with an inventory of the tools and instruments with which he would tend it. As William Kupinse has recently argued, in Bloom's attention to Flowerville's solar energy and self-sufficiency, the passage appears 'invested to a surprising extent in what we today would understand as discourse of sustainability' (597).⁷⁰ Yet, while Bloom responds to the citizen's nationalism in 'Cyclops' by arguing against the 'use' of 'force, hatred, history' (*U* 12.1481), occupying an apparent, position of measured diplomacy within the episode, his figuring in 'Ithaca' as the jurist-priest-king of Flowerville reveals that, like the citizen, Bloom is similarly invested in structures of sovereignty and punishment. In his exhaustive attention to the organisation and cultivation of a 'country residence' according to a pleasing anthropocentric aesthetic (*U* 17.1657) and his hope that this will provide the impetus for him to be invested with a judicial power over 'all menial molesters of domestic conviviality' (*U* 17.1632), Bloom's Flowerville presents itself as fantasy that proceeds via contracts and laws, 'lays out a field [...] makes it principled, imposes a discipline upon it, subordinates it to political ends' (Deleuze & Guattari 496). As Bloom's fantasy enlarges, turning to

⁷⁰ Kupinse finds parallels between Bloom and William Morris's arts and crafts aesthetics (609), suggesting further English romantic influences on constructions of Irish nature. I discuss the limitations to discourse around sustainability in Chapter 7.

the ‘vast wealth’ that can, in turn, be generated through ‘the exploitation of white coal (hydraulic power)’ obtained by developing a ‘hydroelectric plant’ on the North Bull, an undeveloped coastal area rich in wildlife, to be accompanied by ‘golf links and rifle ranges’ as well as ‘casinos, booths, shooting galleries, hotels, boarding houses [and] readingrooms’, it becomes clear that there is a managerialist logic, as opposed to an ecological ideal, behind Flowerville (*U* 17.1699-1718). If the citizen’s vow to save the trees of Ireland relies on a political rhetoric that, in fact, reduces them to a kind of symbolic timber ready to be literally felled after independence, Bloom’s vision is explicitly destructive. Although according to Joyce’s design, Bloom’s humanitarianism might be preferable to the citizen’s xenophobia, Bloom’s dispassionate and moderate politics is shown to be just as complicit with the force and systemic violence that is all too readily observed in the citizen’s cyclopean demeanour.

The cyclopean vision of ‘Cyclops’, however, is not limited to the character of the citizen. A cyclopean gaze also emerges from the intertwining of the two narrative strands of the episode. If, as I have argued above, the two narratives are seen to be in so close a proximity that at repeated points they appear to converge, then these points of convergence can be seen to project a singular Cyclopean gaze that encodes Ireland’s physical environment within a monolithic ‘regime of signs’ (Deleuze and Guattari 498). The convergence between the pub conversation around ‘Irish sports [...] and putting the racy of the soil and building up a nation’ and the parodic description of a ‘most interesting discussion in the ancient hall of *Brian O’Ciarnain*’ on the ‘revivability of the ancient games’ (*U* 12.889-906), for instance, both project a blood and soil rhetoric that further establishes a racialised Irish identity through an

essentialised understanding of the Irish environment.⁷¹ In moments such as this, the singular cyclopean gaze of the chapter is shown to encode the physical environment within a foundational idea of Irish nature that can be appealed to or represented through language, but which seems to stand outside of it. If as I argued at the start of this chapter, *Ulysses* begins by foregrounding the overdetermined relationship between materiality and meaning, in the ‘Cyclops’ episode we see the political stakes to insisting on a bountiful, homeostatic and essentialised Irish nature that, once purged of the contaminating influences of either modernity or imperialism, can provide the foundations for a self-determining, decolonised future. This then is a regime of signs that looks to mask its own artificiality and contingency, akin to what Morton describes as the way in which appeals to nature are a ‘rhetorical device [that] usually serves the purpose of coming clean about something “really occurring”, definitively “outside” the text, both authentic and authenticating’ (*Ecology without Nature* 31).

Yet, the schematic structure of the episode, intertwining the relative realism of the pub with the hyperbole of the parodies, also serves to foreground the fictiveness of such claims, illustrating how the stronger you look to assert an authentic or *natural* nature, the more artificial it appears. While recourse to the category of nature looks to conceal its aesthetic mediation by claiming to be *natural*, Joyce foregrounds the degree to which there can be no representation that does not involve active mediation and which in the context of colonial Ireland cannot help but be shaped by political motivations and allegiances. Although not all of the parodies in ‘Cyclops’ take Ireland’s natural environments as their subject, all of them ironically foreground the

⁷¹ Rhetoric around race and soil had been a feature of both Gaelic and Anglo-Irish revivalist rhetoric since Douglas Hyde’s ‘The Necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland’ (1892).

materiality of writing and textual mediation, an idea that finds further emphasis in the text's triangulated aesthetic which repeatedly draws the reader's attention to its own fictive status and their own process of reading. Here, then, we find a further instance of Joyce presenting the relationship between human meaning and materiality as neither binary nor static. Moreover, while the reader is confronted with the way in which Revivalist and nationalist discourses of nature are both aesthetically and politically compromised, Joyce resists offering an alternative presentation of a true Irish landscape. Instead, it is only through this composite of textual mediation that *Ulysses* offers an understanding of the natural world and any human relation to it. This, then, is an anti-essentialist vision of materiality not unlike Claire Colebrook and Tom Cohen's argument that materiality 'is not some unified, real, present, and empirical field that will enable "us" to grasp things as they really are' but a substance that, akin to a text, both invites and resists being fully read, 'precluding any notion of a return to what would supposedly precede and cause the text' (Cohen and Colebrook, 'Vortices' 135). There is no 'nature', let alone 'Irish nature', which can be safely represented in a language of nationalism; instead nationalism can only ever produce the signs through which an aesthetic of nature is read back onto the environment.

Morton argues that the 'notion that we are living "in" a world—one that we can call Nature—no longer applies in any meaningful sense, except as nostalgia or in the temporarily useful local language of pleas and petitions' (*Hyperobjects* 101). Aesthetic invocations of nature work to assert an apparently self-evident foundation that can naturalise and legitimise collective identities, as well as police their boundaries. Nature, in this sense, is at its most political at the point at which it is claiming to be natural and, therefore, apolitical. In 'Cyclops' both the mythical Irish forests and the idealised racial purity of the Celt are called into question, while at the

same time the civic fabric of national identity is revealed to be a dense weave of subjective, social and environmental processes. Indeed, we find a precursor of sorts to this idea in Joyce's writing on nationalism from 1907, in which he argues that 'civilization is an immense woven fabric in which very different elements are mixed' and that it is 'pointless searching for a thread that has remained pure, virgin and uninfluenced by the threads nearby' (*OCPW* 118). Here then, we find a fundamental point of difference between Joyce and his Revivalist contemporaries. While, as I argued earlier in this chapter, Joyce and Yeats are comparable insofar as both can be seen to have been looking to develop a literary aesthetic sufficient to the demands of reality, for Yeats all 'art theories depend upon [a] rooting of mythology in the earth' (Yeats and Moore 114). In contrast, Joyce, writing to Harriet Shaw Weaver in 1919 while working on 'Cyclops', described how 'each successive episode [of *Ulysses*], dealing with some province of artistic culture (rhetoric or music or dialectic), leaves behind it a burnt up field' (*JLLI* 129). Where Yeats invokes an aesthetic of rootedness and a rhetoric of blood and soil shared with other revivalists, Joyce frames his aesthetic in terms of an uprooting and a creative destruction. Joyce, writing in the aftermath of the First World War, likely had in mind the environmentally devastating 'scorched-earth' strategy of destroying fertile ground that might be used by enemy forces and civilians.⁷² Yet, despite the bravado of his sentiment to Weaver, Joyce's burning of 'artistic culture' in *Ulysses* more closely resembles the way in which fire is now understood to be ecologically restorative, rejuvenating the soil and countering the effects of intensive cultivation. In *Ulysses*, we find Joyce burning through the tropes

⁷² Joyce may have also been aware of the importance of the scorched-earth policy during the British colonisation of Ireland in the early seventeenth century (Montaño 9-10).

that have grown up and over Ireland's cultural and political environments in order to recuperate the relationship between materiality and meaning.

Joyce's presentation of the Revival and other forms of nationalism in *Ulysses*, then, is not one of straightforward rejection but rather ambivalence. This is partially conveyed through the novel's formal development. While the earlier, less-schematic, more naturalistic episodes tend to present the Revival through the subjectivities of Stephen and Bloom, the later more schematic episodes critically examine Revivalist ideas through their formal operations. In both approaches nationalism is shown to be a phenomenon that cannot be simply disavowed. The Cyclopean eye of the 'Cyclops' episode, gazing out and submitting the Irish landscape to its regime of signs, might be a satire of the organic nationalism of both the Revival and the Gaelic League, but Joyce also presents the way in which the existing literary and political materials necessarily provide the basis from which new literary assemblages are composed. To think otherwise is to be like the men in 'Aeolus', laughing at Dawson's florid prose but not seeing how they replicate the very same logic in what they think and say. It is through actively reinheriting rather than rejecting traditions of writing that *Ulysses* suggests new ecological singularities—at the subjective, social and environmental levels—might be found. Such a mode of critical reinheritance implies both proximity to tradition, but also distance from it. Guattari emphasises the importance for 'individual [...] subjectivities' to 'pull out' from collective orders so as to arrive at new kinds of 'creative expression' that might foster new 'ecosophical' modes (52). Joyce, whose self-imposed exile surely places him in such a category, demonstrates that acts of deterritorialization are not limited to the Thoreauvian retreats into the woods, but can be formed from the quotidian materials of everyday life, even as innocuous as a noserag.

3. The Revenge of Gea-Tellus: The Planetary Imaginary of *Ulysses*

In August 1921 Joyce wrote from Paris to Frank Budgen to inform him of the progress of the final episode of *Ulysses*. ‘*Penelope* is the clou of the book’, Joyce explained, before continuing:

The first sentence contains 2500 words. There are eight sentences in the episode. It begins and ends with the female word *Yes*. It turns like the huge earthball slowly and surely and evenly round and round spinning. Its four cardinal points being the female breasts, arse, womb and cunt expressed by the words *because*, *bottom* (in all senses, bottom button, bottom of the glass, bottom of the sea, bottom of his), *woman*, *yes*. Though probably more obscene than any preceding episode it seems to me to be perfectly sane full amoral fertilisable untrustworthy engaging shrewd limited prudent indifferent *Weib*. (*JLLI* 170, emphasis in original)

Joyce’s characterisation of Molly as ‘the huge earthball’ spinning in a slow orbit would likely not have come as a surprise to Budgen, who was already alert to the planetary scale Joyce envisioned for the novel’s conclusion. Earlier in 1921, Joyce had explained that ‘Ithaca’ took the ‘form of a mathematical catechism’ in which ‘[a]ll events are resolved into their cosmic, physical, psychical etc. equivalents [...] Bloom and Stephen thereby become heavenly bodies, wanderers like the stars at which they gaze’, while ‘[t]he last word (human all-too-human) is left to Penelope’ as the ‘indispensable countersign to Bloom’s passport to eternity’ (*JLLI* 159-60). By the time he had finished the episode and sent it to Harriet Shaw Weaver he was describing Molly’s monologue as an attempt to ‘depict the earth which is prehuman and presumably posthuman’ (*JLLI* 180). No longer constrained to a ‘human apparition’ (*JLLI* 180),

Molly's expansive monologue could instead take the form of the Earth itself speaking. Indeed, this is exactly how Bloom, climbing into bed at the end of 'Ithaca', perceives her: 'reclined semilaterally, left, left hand under head, right leg extended in a straight line and resting on left leg, flexed, in the attitude of Gea-Tellus, fulfilled, recumbent, big with seed' (*U* 17.2312-4). An amalgamation of the Greek Earth Goddesses, Gea, or Gaia as it is now more commonly written, and her counterpart in Roman mythology, Tellus, Bloom's odyssey concludes with him returning to the 'amoral fertilisable untrustworthy' Earth Mother herself.

Despite this brief description of Molly as Gea-Tellus in 'Ithaca' being the only place in the novel in which Gaian mythology is explicitly mentioned, the connection between Molly and classical Mother Earth myths were foregrounded in accounts of *Ulysses* by Joyce's modernist contemporaries. Valéry Larbaud, in an article that appeared in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* in April 1922 and in English in the October 1922 issue of the *Criterion*, explained to readers that 'Bloom's wife' is 'the symbol of Gaea, the Earth' ('*Ulysses*' 103). In a favourable review of *Ulysses* in the June 1922 issue of *The Dial*, Ezra Pound further developed this highly gendered connection, describing how Bloom's 'spouse Gea-Tellus the earth symbol is the soil from which the intelligence strives to leap, and to which it subsides *in saeculurn saeculorum* [unto the ages of ages]. As Molly she is a coarse-grained bitch, not a whore, an adulteress, *il y en a*' (*Pound/Joyce* 198, emphasis in original). Although T.S. Eliot's 'Ulysses, Order and Myth', published in *The Dial* a year after Pound's essay, noticeably avoids any direct mention of the novel's content, he makes a comparable point to Pound's description of the relationship between matter and meaning, arguing that Joyce submits 'living material' to myth as a way 'of ordering, of giving a shape and significance' to the 'futility and anarchy' of history (*Selected Prose* 117). These early

critical alignments of Molly with Gea, including Eliot's more allusive insinuation, reached their culmination in Stuart Gilbert's *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Study*, a work that was shaped by Joyce's guidance, and which argues in detail that Molly represents 'Gaia, the Earth mother, [who] according to the Greek, [was] the first being that sprang from Chaos' (339). She is assigned the symbol of 'Earth' in the schema Joyce produced for the book and Gilbert goes on to describe in detail the chapter's 'geotropic' structure (340).⁷³ As Suzette Henke and Elaine Unkeless describe in their feminist analysis of Joyce's reception, these early accounts ensured that the dominant critical approach to Molly in the decades to come would see her 'not only as an "earth-goddess" but as a sensuous embodiment of material inertia' (xii). If Bloom's glimpse of Molly as Gea-Tellus in the closing moments of 'Ithaca' is relatively brief, Joyce and his circle of friendly critics went some way to make sure that his early readers nonetheless saw her in this highly gendered planetary light.

The figure of Gaia, as I briefly touched on in the Introduction, has returned to prominence in the Anthropocene, with a renewal of interest in the Gaia theory of planetary life. First developed by James Lovelock in the late 1960s and subsequently co-developed with the biologist Lynn Margulis from the early 1970s onwards, the Gaia hypothesis outlines how all planetary systems are co-dependent on one another and that, furthermore, these systems regulate themselves in such a way so as to be amenable to the over-all life of the planet. Lovelock, who worked for N.A.S.A. in the 1960s on the possible presence of life forms on other planets, had been struck by the unlikely combination of gases that were needed for life on Earth. In studying the relationship between the planet's atmospheric gases, surface rocks, water and

⁷³ 'Penelope' noticeably lacks a symbol in Joyce's earlier Linati schema.

organisms, he discovered that the Earth's unlikely composition resembled a 'physiological system [that] appears to have the unconscious goal of regulating the climate and the chemistry at a comfortable state for life' (*Revenge of Gaia* 19-20). In a reversal to Joyce's intent to remove any 'human apparition' from Molly as Gea-Tellus, Lovelock decided to re-animate the Earth by figuring his discovery through the gendered metaphor of the Greek God of Gaia, the primordial deity and ancestral mother of all life, suggested as a model to him by the novelist William Golding.⁷⁴ If the Earth could be likened to a physiological system, then Gaia, Lovelock felt, was a good name for that system.

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in Gaia Theory, as philosophers and scientists return to the hypothesis in light of the Anthropocene. For Bruno Latour, one of the most notable recent proponents of Gaia, the concept's usefulness resides in its resistance to a simplistic holism. For Latour, Gaia does not imply unity or coherence, rather it is premised on 'captu[ring] the distributed intentionality of all [...] agents, each of which modifies its surroundings for its own purposes' (*Facing Gaia* 98). In this respect, Gaia speaks to one of the Anthropocene's most urgent epistemological provocations: 'how to speak about the Earth without taking it to be an already composed whole' (*Facing Gaia* 86). Lovelock himself has also returned to his theory in response to planetary change. In a 2006 book entitled *The Revenge of Gaia: Why the Earth is Fighting Back – and How We Can Still Save Humanity*, Lovelock turned his analysis to rapid anthropogenic changes in planetary life. For Lovelock, the 'metaphor' of Gaia is more important than ever, since 'to deal with, understand, and even ameliorate the fix we are in now over global change

⁷⁴ Golding lived in the same Wiltshire village of Bowerchalke as Lovelock at the time.

requires us to know the true nature of the Earth and imagine it as the largest living thing in the solar system, not something inanimate' (21). Others advocates of Gaia have been more cautious. In her 1998 book, *The Symbiotic Planet*, Margulis makes clear that self-regulation should not be confused with the teleological idea of a 'living planetary system [that] behaves together to optimize conditions for all its members' (155-6). Gaia is not normative in the sense of proscribing how the planet *should* be composed—instead it is a useful scientific theory for 'mapping the interweaving network of all life' (158).⁷⁵ Gaia, then, should not be confused with planetary conditions conducive for human habitation. Indeed, for Isabelle Stengers, this is precisely why the figure of Gaia has critical purchase in the Anthropocene: it becomes the name for an 'intrusion' within global capitalism, a 'being' with 'its own regime of activity and sensitivity' that we have been ignoring for too long and whose 'brutality [...] corresponds to the brutality of what has provoked her' (45; 53).

This chapter builds on the insights and concerns of the previous chapter by continuing to look at Joyce's interest in the dynamics between materiality and meaning. Yet, where Chapter 2 focused on the relationship between nature and nation, this chapter shifts in scale, examining how Joyce engages with and reimagines configurations of the Earth in *Ulysses*.⁷⁶ By focusing on Joyce's interest in materiality

⁷⁵ Although Margulis, who died in 2011, is not writing directly about the Anthropocene, her insistence here and elsewhere on the way in which science undoes pervasive cultural configurations of the Earth situates her a forerunner of Anthropocene studies.

⁷⁶ Recent criticism has begun to elucidate how Joyce's writing might be read alongside contemporaneous ideas of the planet from early twentieth-century science and philosophy. Katherine Ebury has examined how *Ulysses* moves towards a concept of relativity akin to that being explored in the new physics (80). In comparison, Ruben Borg takes Husserl's genetic phenomenology as a way of reading how Joyce figures the 'phenomenality of the earth' as a 'process of constitution and synthesis' (1). This chapter shares certain interests with Borg's posthumanist approach and his alertness

and his refiguring of Gea-Tellus, it will suggest that *Ulysses* can be brought into dialogue with contemporary attempts to rethink the planetary in the Anthropocene. In doing so, it will foreground the way in which, as Joyce was all too aware in the letters he wrote to Budgen, the story of Gea-Tellus is also a story of how sex and gender influence how we figure the Earth. Not just in the final episode, but throughout *Ulysses* we see this fact presented through the cosmological perspectives of Bloom and Stephen. While their ideas on planetary life might vary, Joyce presents them as sharing a gendered perception of matter that is complicit with a long but overdetermined cultural tradition that associates women with the Earth. It is in this respect that we might see Molly as a Gaian figure who takes revenge on the gendered cosmology that has preceded her monologue. Here, too, we can find parallels with contemporary interest in Gaia. Margulis wrote that she ‘regret[ted]’ the personification of Gaia as ‘a living goddess’ who ‘will supposedly punish or reward us for our environmental insults or blessings to her body’ and offered an alternative figure of Gaia as a ‘tough bitch’ who is ‘not at all threatened by humans’ (148-9). For Margulis, the principles of resilience that characterise Gaia are best represented not by classical goddesses, but the ‘bacteria thriving in the water tanks of nuclear power plants’ (161). More recently, Donna Haraway has argued that the sexual politics of Gaia are further heightened in the Anthropocene, with a pressing need not to see a singular Earth Mother but to recognise multiple ‘Gaians’ as a ‘queer planetwide litter of chthonic ones’ (*Staying* 175). Importantly, Haraway’s insistence on multiplicity and queerness rejects binary oppositions between sex and gender. Instead, Gaian imaginaries should ‘unrave[1] the supposed natural necessity of ties between sex and gender’ and work towards new

to gender dynamics, but focuses on how Joyce reshaped received myths and metaphors of the Earth, especially Gaia.

modes of imagining and theorising the material-semiotic composition of sexual identity (102). With these recuperative readings that look to reclaim the figure of Gaia for a feminist Anthropocene in mind, this chapter looks at how Joyce's own highly gendered Gaian design of Molly as the Earth might challenge both the metaphors through which we conceptualise planetary life and how we read *Ulysses*.

3.1 Dedalus in the Noosphere

In his account of the time he spent with Joyce, Budgen recounts how Joyce described the theme of 'Proteus' as the way that 'Everything changes—sea, sky, man, animals' (*James Joyce* 49). The opening to 'Proetus' establishes the degree to which this theme of transformation will be presented through the sensory relationship that mediates human structures of meaning and the materiality that composes such meaning but extends beyond it:

Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: coloured signs. Limits of the diaphane. But he adds: in bodies. Then he was aware of them bodies before of them coloured. How? By knocking his sponce against them, sure. (*U* 3.1-6)

This opening establishes how Stephen's thinking has been shaped by his reading in Aristotle, recounting the argument in *On the Soul* on the 'proper' objects of each sense, in which 'the visible' is the proper object of sight. As Aristotle explains, what is visible is in the first place colour but also 'a certain kind of object which can be described in words but which has no single name' (Aristotle 1457). Aristotle's nameless object of sight is the transparency through which we see colour, or what Stephen refers to as the

'[l]imits of the diaphane'.⁷⁷ As we can see, Stephen's preoccupation is not only with material entities but the 'modality' through which he comes to sense those entities, namely through a mode 'of thought through my eyes', a sentence which insinuates the shared etymology of 'sight' and 'form' in the Greek word *eidos*, from which the English word 'idea' can be traced. Although, as Gregory Castle points out there is a danger in too neatly mapping this episode back onto the philosophies that are being invoked since Stephen's 'promiscuous (if not flawed) use of philosophical theories' makes it hard to know if he is using them in 'bad faith' or 'intentionally misusing them' ('Almosting' 285), his indebtedness to Aristotle is important here. Over the course of the novel it enables him to take an oppositional position to the Neo-Platonic Revivalists he encounters. In 'Scylla and Charybdis' Aristotle is repeatedly denigrated in comparison with Plato, with John Eglinton describing how it makes his 'blood boil' to hear anyone compare the two, further supporting the argument in Chapter 2 that Stephen's Platonic invocation of Mother Dana is duplicitous (*U* 9.80-1). It also, as I shall argue later in the chapter, provides a way of understanding how Stephen's ideas of materiality are gendered.

Rather than adhering too closely to Stephen's own background reading, undoubtedly important in how he imagines the universe, Joyce's protean presentation of Stephen also invites itself to be read alongside the contemporaneous concept of the 'noosphere'. Developed in Paris at the same time that Joyce was writing *Ulysses*, the concept of the 'noosphere' looked to further develop the late-nineteenth-century concept of the biosphere by examining how cognitive processes play a part in the shaping of biological and geological processes (with 'noo' deriving from the Greek

⁷⁷ As Gifford's annotations highlight, Stephen's thoughts here amalgamate ideas from both *On the Soul* and *Sense and Sensibilia* (Gifford 44-5).

for mind, *nous*).⁷⁸ The concept was the work of three scientists whose theories on the material world extended into a broader interest in philosophy: the Russian geochemist Vladimir Vernadsky, the mathematician turned natural philosopher Edouard Le Roy and the palaeontologist and Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. As Paul Samson and David Pitt outline, through their collaborations in Paris in the 1920s and in their subsequent work, Vernadsky, Le Roy and Teilhard de Chardin looked to map how ‘cognitive and humanistic processes’ operate within broader physical processes (Samson & Pitt 2). What was missing from mechanistic accounts of the biosphere, they argued, was a dynamic model of how the mind’s operations are embedded within, rather than extrinsic to, biological and geological processes. The noosphere aimed to bring together the ‘creative world of our imagination and the physical domain of our material existence’ (2).

The term ‘creative’ has a specific provenance here, pointing towards the documented influence of Bergson’s theory of creative evolution on all three men, in which creativity is understood as a vital force which produces ‘essentially unpredictable’ change (Samson & Pitt 3). The importance of unpredictable change also foregrounds the concept’s temporal, as well as spatial, dimension. The noosphere not only offered a revised way of understanding the surface of the planet, but also the evolutionary moment in which the conscious self-reflexivity of a single species could transform the biosphere through ‘thought and action’ (Samson & Pitt 2). For le Roy this moment in evolutionary history marked the ‘hominization’ of planetary life, in which ‘mankind becomes the key itself of transformational explanations’ (‘Origins of

⁷⁸ The concept of the biosphere was established by the nineteenth-century Austrian geologist Eduard Suess as a theory of ‘global synthesis based on the concept of a gradually cooling earth subject to a steady diminution in the rate of geological change’ (Bowler 234).

Humanity' 70). For Samson and Pitt, although the concept of the noosphere faded away during the course of the twentieth century it nonetheless lay the theoretical foundations for later developments, with its attention to systems of interdependence 'foreshadowing geophysiology and [...] the "Gaia Hypothesis"' (51).⁷⁹ In a somewhat striking historical parallel, then, at the same time and in the same city that Joyce was reimagining Molly as a posthuman Gea, Vernadsky, Le Roy and Teilhard de Chardin were establishing the precedents for Lovelock's Gaia theory through their own attempt to reimagine the Earth.

Historicising the noosphere is made difficult by a variety of facts. These include the subsequent obscurity of the work of le Roy, who was the first to formally use the term 'noosphere' in print in *The Idealist Argument and the Facts of Evolution* (1928), a work which still has not been translated into English⁸⁰; the Catholic censorship of Teilhard de Chardin's writing; and the limitations placed upon Vernadsky as a self-described 'cosmic realist' working in the USSR (*Biosphere and Noosphere Reader* 54). Moreover, although Vernadsky, Le Roy and Teilhard de Chardin all began from the same very broad premise, they would go on to emphasise quite different implications of the concept. While Vernadsky's writing emphasised the role of man as a geological agent, Le Roy's writing bears the influence of Bergson's vitalism and theories of evolution, demonstrating an inclination to see the Earth itself as an organism. For Teilhard de Chardin, who is credited as being the first to conceive of the concept while working as a non-combatant stretcher bearer in the battlefields of

⁷⁹ Crutzen and Stoermer also flagged up the importance of the noosphere in the very first publication on the Anthropocene, see Crutzen & Stoermer, 17.

⁸⁰ Le Roy's work on the noosphere remains nearly completely untranslated. A short section from *The Origins of Humanity and the Evolution of Mind* (1928) was translated into English in 1998.

the First World War, the noosphere was both a scientific and spiritual idea, revealing how through collective ‘noogenesis [mankind was] ascending towards Omega’, understood as a final point of unity with the cosmos (‘Phenomenon’ 73). In many respects, the noosphere concept parallels the development of modernism. As Samson and Pitt put it, the noosphere emerged from a ‘loose circle’ of intellectuals in Paris in the early 1920s, revulsed by the ‘horrors of war’ but with a ‘strong faith in human potential and in science’ and was characterised by a sense of a shared project but also clear vicissitudes (3-5).

Despite the (relatively) close physical proximity, I am yet to find evidence that Joyce’s social circles overlapped with these three men, although some of his friends did know the work of Teilhard de Chardin and a common associate seems entirely plausible. William G. Fallon, Joyce’s fellow student at Belvedere and University College who appears as a character in *A Portrait*, speculates that ‘Joyce would have been attracted to Teilhard de Chardin’s interpretation of Catholicism [...] [and his] notion that man is progressing, that science and astronomy all converge on the infinite’ (O’Connor, *Joyce We Knew* 49). There are also suggestive points of connection not only with Joyce, but the other modernists examined in this study. Barnes, who was also in Paris in the 1920s, would later own a copy of Teilhard de Chardin’s *The Phenomenon of Man* (not published in English until 1959), while Virginia and Leonard Woolf’s library included a 1940 edition of Teilhard de Chardin’s *Sauvons l’humanité*. To return to ‘Proteus’, which Joyce first wrote in 1917 in Zurich while the war continued, we find a strikingly similar interest in examining the relationship between the physical world and what Le Roy describes as ‘the sphere of reflection, of conscious and free invention of thought in its pure sense’ (65). Indeed, Le Roy’s description that life is an ‘uninterrupted and trans-individual becoming’, the ‘concrete

unity' of which we glimpse only when it 'catches the eyes' and is most observable when we encounter 'concentric zone[s]' of 'water, oxygen and carbon dioxide' (63), presents itself as comparable not only with Joyce's own protean explanation of 'Proteus' but its littoral setting also.

As has long been acknowledged in criticism on the episode, the protean struggle that takes place as Stephen walks along Sandymount Strand is premised on a question that, it can now be seen, also led to the development of the noosphere: how to account for thought or consciousness as it relates to the development of matter.⁸¹ As Stephen reflects, what is 'ineluctable' is not the visible world itself, a fact he proves to himself by walking a short distance with his eyes closed, but rather the 'modality' through which the visible gives itself to sight and thereby thought. The question as to whether that modality resides in the perceiving subject or the perceived object appears to be at stake in Stephen's thoughts, as the entities in his line of vision, 'seaspawn and seawrack; the nearing tide, that rusty boot', present themselves as '[s]ignatures' that can be 'read' (*U* 3.3-4). Although Joyce is invoking the early modern Doctrine of Signatures established by Jakob Böhme, in which organic entities present outward signs that reveal their metaphysical essence, Stephen's thoughts register much more ambivalence around the location of signification itself.⁸² Indeed, the distinction here presents itself in terms comparable to what Le Roy describes as the observable tension

⁸¹ Richard Ellmann's 1972 reading of 'Proteus' sees it in terms of a movement towards a synthesis between the human mind and matter that gives Stephen his identity (*Ulysses* 23-6). Subsequent poststructuralist readings emphasised the degree to which the episode foregrounds the mediating agency of signs rather than material reality itself and, as Castle describes such approaches, 'the materiality of language reigns where the materiality of nature was once thought to be' ('Almosting' 282).

⁸² Hunter Dukes argues that Böhme's theory enables Joyce to unsettle 'the boundaries between a body of text and (non)human bodies' (1). In contrast, Garry Leonard has argued that Stephen is reductively 'translat[ing]' 'nature' into knowledge (262).

between 'the vitalisation of matter and the hominisation of life' ('Origins of Humanity' 65). On the one hand, the legibility of the 'signature' is ensured by physical marks that prefigure and are thereby not reliant upon the interpretative gaze of human eyes (this is the 'vitalisation of matter'). On the other hand, the 'signature' of the material objects requires Stephen's active gaze to be read, and even the term itself insinuates the necessity of an anthropomorphic intervention in the transformation of matter into meaning (hence, the 'hominisation of life').

The unclear question of agency that underpins this distinction around the inherent location of meaning is further developed in Stephen's observation later in the episode:

These heavy sands are language tide and wind have silted here. And these, the stoneheaps of dead builders, a warren of weasel rats. (*U* 3.288-9).

Here, we have a clearer sense of a nonhuman agency actively at work producing signification that extends beyond the human. While Hunter Dukes points out that Stephen observes 'lithic striation as a form of language' (1), it is noticeable that while the geological strata is the linguistic medium, it is water and air that Stephen credits with the agency of inscription. Moreover, the 'stoneheaps of deadbuilders' (breakwaters constructed by now forgotten humans) and the maze of 'warren[s]' constructed by uncertain animals, adds to the scene's material presentation of indeterminate signs, writers and readers. These are signs whose meanings do not wholly coincide with the human. When Bloom is later also on Sandymount Strand, seeing 'rocks with lines and scars and letters' and thinking about the pertinence to Martha Clifford's mistakenly writing 'world' instead of 'word', Joyce again appears to be insisting on the alterity of language; not only its materiality but also its status as something profoundly other than human (*U* 9.1261-3).

The 'signatures' that Stephen (and later Bloom) observes present themselves as both human and nonhuman, living and dead, organic and inorganic, with the distinction as to whether meaning is found in their other-than-human production or their human reception remaining in suspension. John Brannigan has argued that Stephen's recognition of the shore as a 'material space' of signs shows him to be attuned to the 'geological processes which have shaped the earth' (91) and, if as Tobias Menely and Jesse Oak Taylor have recently argued, the Anthropocene insists on extending our 'definition of texts, signs and traces' to 'nonhuman forms' (12), then Stephen's attentiveness to the modalities of reading itself suggest an aesthetic mode already thinking about such concerns. Furthermore, the episode's formal innovations insist on the degree to which Stephen is not *in* an environment shaped by geological processes, but rather, as in the concept of the noosphere, is coterminous with it. The narrative movement between Stephen's interior monologue and free indirect discourse foregrounds a slippage between exteriority and interiority, making porous the division between inner and outer. At times, this slippage appears to take place at the level of the sentence:

His boots trod again a damp crackling mast, razors hells, squeaking pebbles, that on the unnumbered pebbles beats, wood sieved by the shipworm, lost Armada. Unwholesome sandflats waited to suck his treading soles, breathing upward sewage breath, a pocket of seaweed smouldered in seafire under a midden of man's ashes. (*U* 3.147-153)

While in both above sentences we begin in the third person, the subsequent poetic diction and lyricism, all of which earlier characterised Stephen's interior monologue, suggests we are now reading Stephen's thoughts, as he aestheticises the signs around him and composes poetry. Here, his attentiveness to the 'ineluctable modality' that mediates how we read more-than-human 'signatures' enables a defamiliarising mode

of seeing. He reads into the landscape Dublin's prehistory as a midden for prehistoric hunter-gatherers, while the 'wood' of the 'lost Armada' transposes a distant naval battle onto the shoreline and the anthropomorphised sewage vapours presents a more recent and still unfolding environmental process. In Stephen's aestheticising, he draws out multiple, inhuman scales, transposes each upon the other and casts the Dublin shoreline as a palimpsest without a definitive boundary between the present and the past, the personal and the impersonal, the local and the planetary. While Stephen defines this modality as 'thought through my eyes', his interior monologue also insists that, as Claire Colebrook argues, the eye does not have a 'proper mode' but can open up new modes of perception (*Death* 25). That the reader learns much later in the novel that Stephen broke his glasses the previous day and is suffering from a literal myopia in which the 'eye sees all flat' (*U* 15.3629) is further suggestive of the embodied relationship between sight and thought, as Stephen sees not depth or distance but a simultaneity of positions on Sandymount. This, then, is a presentation of thought and matter co-producing one another, in which the human is both continuous with the nonhuman but, paradoxically, distinguished from it on the basis of its own self-reflection upon this continuity. In form and content 'Proteus' stages the uncertain relationship between the vitalisation of matter and the hominisation of life.

Within what I showed in Chapter 2 to be Joyce's concern with an essentialised idea of nature at the centre of claims of Irish national identity, Stephen's mode of perception holds clear political implications. As Brannigan points out, Stephen's exposure to 'the *longue durée* of geological time' stands in contrast to the parochial geography offered by nationalists such as the citizen (Brannigan 89-93).⁸³ Stephen's

⁸³ Marjorie Howes offers a similar conclusion in her analysis of the politics of scale in *A Portrait* ('Narrating' 64).

attention to nonhuman signatures becomes a mode of reading that qualifies a culturally prevalent idea of Irish essentialism. Yet, while Stephen's alertness to the modalities of the visible allows him to critique nationalism, it does not follow that his planetary outlook enables an alternative political position. When Bloom later speaks to Stephen of putting his mind to the use of decolonising Ireland, Stephen glibly dismisses the idea that he belongs to Ireland and instead insists that Ireland is only important insofar as 'it belongs to me' (*U* 16.1165). Any triumphalism detected in Stephen's idealism is, however, qualified by the fact that he has just been the victim of colonial violence, having 'collapse[d]' after being struck by Private Carr who vows he will 'wring the neck of any fucking bastard [who] says a word against my bleeding fucking king' (*U* 15.4748; 15.4644-5). In an echo of 'Proteus', Stephen's sponce receives a knock as a reminder of the reality of objects irrespective to the hominised modality through which he perceives them.

Stephen's narcissistic response to Bloom is also important since it foregrounds a problematic irresolution between perceiving subject and perceived object that is established in 'Proteus'. Although, as Stephen might reflect elsewhere, 'Space' is 'what you damn well have to see' (*U* 9.86), 'Proteus' makes clear that perception is a site of contestation. While Dukes reads a 'flattened ontology' into Joyce's 'expanded sense of signature' in *Ulysses* (1), in 'Proteus' it is precisely Stephen's ability to self-reflexively aestheticise the 'modality' through which he can read the material signs around him that informs a narcissistic exceptionalism. Indeed, we find this articulated not only at a geological, but at a cosmological level:

His shadow layover the rocks as he bent, ending. Why not endless till the farthest star? Darkly they are there behind this light, darkness shining in the brightness, delta of Cassiopeia, worlds. Me sits there with his augur's rod of

ash, in borrowed sandals, by day beside a livid sea, unbeheld, violet night walking beneath a reign of uncouth stars. I throw this ended shadow from me, manshape ineluctable, call it back. Endless, would it be mine, form of my form? Who watches me here? Who ever anywhere will read these written words? Signs on a white field. (*U* 3.408-415)

Here, the finitude of Stephen's shadow, which he identifies with an Aristotelian inflection as the 'form of my form', is held in contrast to the inhuman, and seemingly infinite, scale of the universe. Yet, the 'darkly' perceived presence of the universe that cannot be seen 'behind this light', precisely that which tests the limits of perception itself, gives rise not to a sense of the nonhuman world's agency over and above the human, but Stephen's own ability as an artist to make sense of and master the materiality around him. While the 'written words' that Stephen composes will exist irrespective of whether anyone reads them, with the 'white field' of his torn piece of paper suggesting further parallels between human and nonhuman signs, it is his agency as an artificer of raw matter that is ultimately emphasised, as he casts himself in an active role, 'walking', 'throw[ing]', 'sit[ting]' and writing to the background of an 'uncouth' material universe. It is a moment for which we find a precedent in *A Portrait*, where Stephen recounts Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'To the Moon'. Reflecting on the poem's evocation of 'vast inhuman cycles of activity', Stephen paradoxically diminishes and elevates his own sense of 'human and ineffectual grieving' as he displaces himself from the centre of the universe and thereby experiences an epiphanic movement in which his own sense of aesthetic mastery over the world comes into focus (*P* 80).⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Here the autobiographical Stephen parallels the young Woolf who in 1907 wrote of sensing the 'earth shrink to the size of a button' when gazing through a telescope at the stars and feeling 'not quite alive [...] in this pale light' of the moon, a sentiment which Hermione Lee describes as suggesting the influence of Shelley (Woolf,

In all of these respects, Stephen's self-fashioned relationship with the material world reiterates the assertion of anthropocentrism that we find in the early proponents of the noosphere. Le Roy looked to resolve what he calls the 'problem of mankind', or how to define human exceptionalism when biologically speaking the human is very close to other species, by foregrounding the 'invention of artificial tools' and the acceleration of technologies: 'we should not separate mankind from his tools, his real organs or his technology: his *real functions*' (60-1, emphasis added). Stephen, whose name recounts Daedalus the great craftsman and artificer of Greek mythology, similarly resituates the human as a locus of exceptionalism through his ability to both ask questions of the universe and to subject it to the craft, or *techne*, of his poetry. This is, in the words of Teilhard de Chardin, not 'undue anthropocentrism' but recognition of the 'revolutionary effects of hominization' in which 'reflexive awareness must be held [...] as a super-stage of consciousness' ('Phenomenon' 77). Yet, there is an ambivalence in 'Proteus' that contrasts with Teilhard de Chardin's anthropocentrism or Le Roy's assertion that 'hominisation' is 'the passage from the biosphere to the noosphere' (70). While Stephen might wish to consider himself only in terms of his mind, divorced from the biological limitations of his body, Joyce presents how this rejection of his own materiality is bound up with a misogyny which equates materialism with femininity.

Passionate 368-74; Lee 225). As I discuss in Chapter 6, Woolf, like Joyce, would later ironize this romanticism.

3.2 Sexualised Figures of the Earth

Stephen's meditations in 'Proteus' ultimately produce a planetary imaginary at whose centre is a 'manshape ineluctable' (*U* 3.413). Although the gendered language that Stephen uses here is representative of linguistic conventions in the early twentieth century, it nonetheless gestures to a broader question of sex and gender at work in the question of the mind and matter. This is also where Stephen's Aristotelian readings helps to make sense of 'Proteus'. In *Generation of Animals*, Aristotle makes the distinction between male rationality and female matter, setting out a model of reproduction in which the 'soul is from the male, for the soul is the substance of a particular body' while the 'body is from the female' and can be aligned with the organic materiality of 'the soil' (Aristotle 2500). The dualism between body and mind, thought and matter, active and passive that we find in Aristotle helps to understand the gender dynamic at work within Stephen's planetary imaginary. Watching two midwives approach the beach, Stephen thinks:

Like me, like Algy, coming down to our mighty mother. [...] One of her sisterhood lugged me squealing into life. Creation from nothing. What has she in her bag? A misbirth with a trailing navelcord, hushed in ruddy wool. The cords of all link back, strandentwining cable of all flesh. (*U* 3.31-7)

Returning to the matriarchal figuring of the sea as an Earth Mother that, as I discussed in Chapter 2, is introduced in the opening passage of the novel, Stephen aligns childbirth with a mythic idea of female fertility in the form of the ocean. Stephen's unease with this fertile matter becomes clearer as he considers the possibility of '[c]reation from nothing', a fantasy of his own divine, as opposed to biological, creation that is played out in his mind several times over the course of the novel and which further emphasises his desire for mastery over, rather than continuity with,

materiality. For Ruben Borg, this is why the umbilical cord, figured as the ‘strandentwining cable of all flesh’, comes to symbolise a horrifying physical tie to a ‘sexualized earth-mother engendering the sensory world’ (1). As such when Stephen’s subsequent thoughts lead him to reflect on Eve’s lack of a ‘navel’, he figures her as a kind of Christian Earth Mother, her ‘[b]elly without blemish, bulging big, a buckler of taut vellum’ with a ‘[w]omb of sin’ (*U* 3.41-44). A short while later, Stephen looks out to a woman collecting cockles and sees her as a ‘handmaid of the moon’, his thoughts on the ‘tide westering, moondrawn, in her wake’ conflating her menstrual cycle with the movements of the tide (*U* 3.93-5) and foreshadowing Molly who, as the daughter of ‘Lunita Laredo’, figures as another kind of maiden of the moon (*U* 18.848).⁸⁵ As Borg argues in his phenomenological analysis of sex, gender and materiality in Joyce, ‘Proteus’ stages the way in which matter becomes sexualised as it passes through the ‘genesis of sense perception’ (1). For Borg, who reads the earth as a ‘generative matrix’ that gives itself to human perception, as soon as materiality is perceived it undergoes an ‘anthropomorphic rendering’ in which the ‘sensible world’ is assimilated within sexualised figurations (1). Here, then, we find a further, and integral, component to Stephen’s conception of the relationship between the mind and materiality. While Le Roy and Teilhard de Chardin speak in universalised terms about what the latter terms ‘collective man’ (76), Joyce self-reflexively foregrounds cultural associations which already presuppose the gender of the mind that has the ‘power of reflexive invention’ through ‘self-evolution’ (76). As Joyce shows in Stephen, materiality is always bound up with constructions of gender, sex and sexuality.

⁸⁵ Molly also reiterates Stephen’s metaphor when she describes her menstrual blood as ‘pouring out of me like the sea’ (*U* 18.1123).

'Proteus' is important to the planetary imaginary that follows in the rest of the novel, not least in assessing the degree to which Molly, as Gea-Tellus, can be seen as speaking back to Stephen's gendered figuring of the Earth. While Maud Ellmann is right to point out that Joyce's writing is part of a long tradition that looks to 'Greek philosophical thought [in which] femaleness has been conflated with everything that Reason has transcended, dominated or simply left behind' ('Epic' 67), it is nonetheless also the case that *Ulysses* emphasises the degree to which the feminisation of materiality is overdetermined. We see this overdetermination perhaps most clearly in the competing Mother Earth myths present in the novel. As I touched upon in Chapter 2, the Celtic Earth goddess Dana was an important figure in Revivalist culture, becoming a popular poetic subject as well as the title for a short-lived Dublin literary magazine.⁸⁶ Writing in 1984 in one of the first feminist analyses of Joyce's mythic frameworks, Bonnie Kime Scott lists the worship of Dana among 'Ireland's basic Celtic groups, the Milesians' as one of several examples of a 'strong female prehistory and myth' in Ireland that Joyce would have been aware of, and also points to Robert Graves's suggestion that Celtic myths can be traced back to ancient Aegean cultures, suggesting a continuity between Gaia and Dana (*Joyce and Feminism* 10). Joyce's interest in the specifically maternal dimension to this Irish myth finds evidence in his decision to add 'mother' to Stephen's invocation of 'mother Dana' in his revision of the library episode, itself establishing a textual parallel or link with the appearance of Molly as Gaia-Tellus at the novel's end (*UCS* 414). Scott also highlights the figure of Medb from the Ulster Cycle of myths, a 'strong-willed' queen who is equated with both 'Ireland' and 'the earth itself' and whom, in having greater power than the king,

⁸⁶ See, for instance, Russell's 'tender voic[ed]' goddess in a 1913 poem entitled 'Dana' (A. E., *Collected Poems* 37-8).

Scott suggests is comparable to the demanding Molly in 'Calypso' (*Joyce and Feminism* 10; 280).⁸⁷ This is also, perhaps, the Irish Earth Mother whom George Russell invokes in his description of the hillside peasant for whom 'the earth is not the exploitable ground but the living mother' (*U* 9.106-7).

It is not only prehistoric and classical myths that are shown to perpetuate the association of women, especially mothers, with the land. As I highlighted in Chapter 2, the Revival relied on archetypal mothers within Irish folklore, such as Kathleen Ni Houlihan who symbolises the 'four beautiful fields' of Ireland in Yeats's play (*U* 9.37). The milkwoman who visits Stephen and the others at the Martello Tower in 'Telemachus' presents a corrective to this myth: Stephen watches her 'pour into the measure and thence into the jug rich white milk, not hers' since, as he observes, she has '[o]ld shrunken paps' (*U* 1.397-8). He then goes on to sardonically entertain the idea of her '[c]rouching by a patient cow at daybreak in the lush field' with the 'silk of the kine'; she is to Stephen not a goddess but a 'wandering crone' and 'common cuckquean' disposed by the English (*U* 1.400-405). Inverting rather than rejecting the Revivalist mythology, Stephen merely substitutes female infertility for fertility, paralleling Bloom's near simultaneous reflection on how the 'barren' Levant, once the home of the 'first race', is now 'the grey sunken cunt of the world' (*U* 4.220-228). In both instances, the novel foregrounds the degree to which not only prehistorical and classical myths, but contemporary discourse around nationalism and empire continues

⁸⁷ Also see Scott's 2014 ecofeminist essay on Joyce's 'female gendering of nature' in *A Portrait* ('Ecofeminism' 61). This short and largely descriptive essay is limited in its binary opposition of nature and culture which, in turn, upholds a gender binary in Scott's reading of Joyce's texts.

to conceptualise materiality through figures of femininity which are themselves equated with fertility and (re)birth.⁸⁸

Moreover, Bloom's own predisposition towards science over myth does not inure him from the gendering of matter. Bloom, unlike Stephen, is more willing to recognise the autonomy and agency of matter itself, perhaps most evidently in his musings on the material continuity of life with death in 'Hades' where, as mentioned in Chapter 1, he observes how 'blood sinking in the earth gives new life' (*U* 6.771). Later, he will situate the mind itself in similarly material terms, explaining to Stephen how 'brainpower' is an effect of 'grey matter' (*U* 16.749-752). Yet, while Bloom does not believe in the Catholic dualism of 'body and soul', he nonetheless *does* believe that science shows us how human 'intelligence' is 'distinct from any outside object, the table, let us say, that cup' (*U* 16.748-50). In this respect, Bloom, like Stephen, can be seen as articulating an account of the relationship between mind and matter in terms that parallel similar preoccupations being explored under the banner of the noosphere. While Bloom might here hold on to a model of intelligence as a site of human exceptionalism, elsewhere he acknowledges non-cognitive forms of intelligence, recognising a self-organising vitalism that runs through all materiality. This is again most clearly expressed in 'Hades' where the 'damp earth' is situated as a generative medium underpinning all biological life, in which 'cells or whatever they are go on living' and 'changing about' (*U* 9.779-81). This chaotic vitalism, is further expanded upon when in 'Ithaca' Bloom turns his mind to the 'perfectibility' of 'human life' and broods on 'the fact of vital growth, through convulsions of metamorphosis' that means progress is also always a form of 'decay' (*U* 16.993-1006). Here, human intelligence

⁸⁸ See Emer Nolan for how *Ulysses* writes back to an historical tendency to deploy symbols of femininity and maternity onto 'national territory' (167).

lacks the kind of autonomy that he has a short while earlier propounded to Stephen as scientific fact. Instead, in the same way that Le Roy's proto-Gaian observation that the 'immanent growth of the process of vitalisation' produces not only the phenomenon of individuated human consciousness but the possibility of seeing 'the Earth itself' as a 'distinct organism' with an 'evolving and definite structure' (65; 64), Bloom is obliged to leave open the space for a material or biological vitalism in which mankind can 'be linked to the *general* development of life' (64, emphasis added).

Yet, if Bloom's vitalism is the link between Stephen's noosphere and Molly's Gea-Tellus, he is also just as invested not only in anthropocentric but, ultimately, androcentric structures of meaning. In 'Nausicaa', for instance, as Bloom notices that his wristwatch appears to have stopped at the exact time of Molly and Boylan's planned rendezvous, he is led to consider the following:

Back of everything magnetism. Earth for instance pulling this and being pulled. That causes movement. And time, well that's the time the movement takes. Then if one thing stopped the whole ghesabo would stop bit by bit. Because it's all arranged. (*U* 13.987-990)

As Borg has suggested in his reading of this moment, the novel, through Bloom, draws a connection between 'the motions of the earth and the theme of female sexuality' in terms of how the 'sensible world' presents itself (1). Bloom's thoughts on the relationship between his wristwatch and planetary movement are understood not in terms of contingency but arrangement in which the apparent inevitability of Molly's sexual liaison is likened to the subterranean movements of the earth. This is a point that Joyce further emphasised in one of the earliest drafts for the chapter where the sentence continues: 'Because it is arranged that way down to the smallest: no mistakes' (*UCS* 810). It is not only in the aforementioned likening of the Levant to a 'grey

sunken cunt’ that we find further evidence of the way in which Bloom draws on gendered geological tropes. In the section of ‘Ithaca’ that focuses on the vitalism underpinning both human and nonhuman matter, Bloom includes the ‘generic conditions’ of ‘human females extending from the age of puberty to the menopause’ in a list of phenomena determined by ‘natural, as distinct from human, law’ (*U* 17.995-1006). This list, which includes geological seismic activity, the menstruation cycles of simians, the inevitability of mining accidents, innate lunacy and epidemic diseases, actively situates fertile female bodies within a flattened natural order and, like Stephen, further essentialises a link between femininity and materiality. While Bloom’s attentiveness to the chaotic vitalism underpinning life destabilises his own professed belief in human exceptionalism and seems to imply a broadly distributive model of consciousness, his vitalism simultaneously also works to naturalise sexual difference. Order is associated with masculinity; raw matter with femininity. That Bloom concludes his musings on vitalism in ‘Ithaca’ by seeing Molly as ‘Gea-Tellus’ is therefore continuous, rather than at odds, with much of the scientism that has preceded it.

3.3 Molly as Gea-Tellus

Certainly, Bloom’s scientism is not Joyce’s. Yet, Bloom’s thoughts on it all being ‘arranged’ in ‘Nausicaa’ are also surely a meta-textual joke about Joyce’s careful arrangement and construction of the novel and raise questions of how easily one can distinguish the various characters’ sexualising of matter with Joyce’s own intentions. The letters which Joyce wrote to Budgen, for instance, situating ‘Penelope’ as ‘perfectly sane full amoral fertilisable untrustworthy engaging shrewd limited prudent

indifferent' (*JLLI* 170), suggest a creative reinheritance rather than rejection of a tradition that associates women with a fertile materiality that stands in opposition to masculine reason. Moreover, it is not only Joyce's letters to Budgen that suggest he was drawn to Mother Earth myths. In 1912, when visiting Shelley's grave in Rome, Joyce made notes for *Exiles* in which he wrote of a feminised 'earth', figured as a 'dark, formless, mother, made beautiful by the moonlit night' and 'darkly conscious of her instincts' (quoted in Ellmann, *James Joyce* 324).⁸⁹ By the time he was writing *Ulysses*, his view of the relationship between femininity and materiality had further shifted towards an emphasis on female sexuality. Near the top of his notes for 'Penelope' we find written 'her cunt, darkest Africa', likely an allusion to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (*Notesheets* 494), adding a further essentialised, not to mention colonialist, connotation to his later equating of Molly's 'yes' with 'cunt' in his correspondence with Budgen (*JLLI* 170).⁹⁰

Joyce was not alone in his interest in fertility, materiality and nature. Eliot's insistence on the centrality of Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920) to the 'plan and [...] symbolism' of *The Waste Land* (*Collected Poems* 80) foregrounds a continuity between human and nonhuman (in)fertility, and, as I show in Chapter 5, in Barnes's novel *Ryder* springtime is presented in disturbing and satirical terms as a period of 'Rape and Repining!' where young women are forcibly brought down to the

⁸⁹ In *Exiles*, Robert Hand, in anticipation of his liaison with Bertha Rowan, exclaims that '[t]onight the earth is loved—loved and possessed' (*PE* 228). Joyce would also return to mother earth myths in *Finnegans Wake*, where questions of nature and femininity are foregrounded in the association between ALP and the river. Although beyond the limits of this chapter, a comparative study of Molly as Gaia and ALP as the 'eternal geomater' (*FW* 296-7) would shed light on how the Gea-Tellus myth developed in Joyce's later writing.

⁹⁰ As Christine Van Boheemen-Saaf points out, this equation is further highlighted in the 'notorious capital letter "O" which denotes Molly's sexual organ' in the final moments of her monologue (36).

earth (*R* 21). What sets Joyce apart, however, is his specific use of Gaia mythology and the way in which by figuring Molly as Gea-Tellus he could draw upon a form that, paradoxically, stood in for the formlessness of fertile, primordial matter. Indeed, Molly's physical characteristics and Mediterranean background suggest that Joyce's intention to figure her as Gaia were not mere afterthoughts. Her appearance and temperament parallel what Latour, in a description that ostensibly replicates the problematic gender dynamics of the myth, characterises as the 'chthonic power, dark skinned, dark-haired and sombre [nature]' of the goddess (*Facing Gaia* 83). Although Molly's skin might be, according to Bloom, 'white like wax' (*U* 5.492), she is associated with a Mediterranean darkness throughout the novel. Bloom broods on the 'darkness of her eyes' which he associates with her being 'Spanish' (*U* 5.492-5), an idea amplified in the parodic description of her in 'Cyclops' as the '[p]ride of Calpe's rocky mount, the ravenhaired daughter of Tweedy' (*U* 12.1003).⁹¹ This is not necessarily a racialised darkness so much as the darkness that Joyce associates with the primordial Earth in his notes. Again, it is difficult to delineate as to whether we should see this association as Joyce's own characterisation of Molly or whether, since her association with a fertile materiality is largely presented through the thoughts of male characters, Joyce intends the reader to be critical of this figuration of Molly as an earthy goddess. Notably, if until 'Penelope' we have only encountered unreliable male perceptions of Molly, then it is significant that when she is able to speak she challenges the Spanish exoticism through which she has been figured, both in her identification with the occupying military force rather than what she calls 'the Spanish

⁹¹ The Rock of Gibraltar was called Mons Calpe by the Romans.

girls' (*U* 18.777) and in her own reading of Bloom as a 'dark man' in 'the cards this morning' (*U* 18.1428-9).

Where Molly perhaps most clearly seems to fit the Gaia myth, especially as it has been rearticulated in recent times, is in her characterisation as simultaneously caring and callous, or what Lovelock describes as Gaia's status as a 'mother who is nurturing but ruthlessly cruel towards transgressors, even when they are her progeny' (*Revenge* 188). Such changeability is integral to Joyce's characterisation of Molly, where a sympathetic view of Bloom as someone who 'understood or felt what a woman is' gives way to musings on his disposability (*U* 18.1579-1604) and where thoughts on Boylan and Milly are also subject to sudden shifts from affection to disdain. Such vicissitudes are further amplified where her thoughts tend towards violence, with her reflection that if women governed the world there would be less 'slaughtering' following her belief that older women should be thrown on the 'ashpit' (*U* 18.1436; 18.747). Molly's inconsistency of temperament is not coincidental to her monologue. Rather, as in Lovelock's description of a vengeful Gaia who stands outside of reason and disrupts human order, Molly's ability to switch between the poles of care and vindictiveness is constitutive of a consciousness that has none of the supposed self-reflexivity or coherency that comes with male rationality.

Joyce's formal innovations in 'Penelope' also emphatically figure her as Gaia. The episode's division into eight sections brings to the fore a number which when turned sideways (and thereby resting like Molly) resembles the infinity symbol, which Joyce also gave as the time of the episode in his Linati schema. Here, Molly as Gea-Tellus stands outside of the historical time of the novel, emphasised through the unpunctuated flow of her monologue which further gives rise to a sense of timelessness. All of these aspects of the episode's form are central to Stuart Gilbert's

reading of Molly as ‘a trinity of personages: Penelope, Calypso, and the Earth herself: Gaea-Tellus’ (336). Gilbert offers a complex ‘geotropic’ reading of the episode’s thematic content and formal characteristics which is worth engaging with for a number of reasons. Firstly, despite it being published in 1930, it still stands as the most sustained analysis of Molly and Gea-Tellus. Secondly, Gilbert ‘read [his book] out to Joyce, chapter by chapter’ (10) and benefitted from Joyce’s corrections and additions, suggesting that we might cautiously read his analysis as in some respects an extension of Joyce’s dialogue with Budgen on Molly as Gea-Tellus. Finally, because to a large extent it set the tone both for the way in which Molly would be understood by male Joyceans in the post-war period *and* more recent responses that have disparaged approaches that read Molly as an Earth Mother figure.

For Gilbert, Molly *speaks* as ‘Gaea-Tellus’, a ‘divinity of the earth’, since her monologue is ‘unmistakably earthy’ in the literal sense that it ‘sink[s] down towards the earth’, as ‘except for occasional moments when she bethinks herself of her Catholic upbringing, she applies to her conduct but one test, simplicity itself – Is it natural?’ (339-40). This association with naturalness both justifies and elevates Molly’s adultery for Gilbert, since the Earth Mother’s ‘function is fertility’ and her ‘pleasure is creation’ (340), a description which chimes with Bloom’s own view of Molly as ‘big with seed’ as he climbs into bed (*U* 9.2314), even if over the course of the episode it becomes clear that Molly has not been impregnated.⁹² Even Molly’s uncertain age is cited as evidence of her earthiness, paralleling the failure of geologists to reach a ‘positive conclusion’ regarding the age of the Earth (341). Having

⁹² Gilbert noticeably occludes all references to Molly’s menstruation. As Van Boheemen-Saaf has argued, Molly’s blood arguably stages not a celebration of fertility but a modern anxiety around its disappearance (46).

established that Molly has ‘the voice of Genetrix, the Earth’, Gilbert then turns to the episode’s form. Focusing on what he describes as the ‘movements’ of Molly’s monologue, Gilbert explains that although the episode appears ‘subject to no law’, under ‘close examination’ the repetition of certain words (‘woman’, ‘bottom’, ‘he’, and ‘man’) resemble a planetary force (339-41). Each moment in the monologue where we find a repetition of words represents what he terms a ‘wobbling point’, in which Molly’s thoughts, ‘which, as a general rule revolve around her’, are temporarily directed towards someone else. These ‘wobbling points’, in Gilbert’s reading, resemble ‘the movements of the earth’ in which the ‘continuous movement of rotation about her axis’ is in tension with the gravitational attraction of other planets (341). Paralleling Bloom in the suggestion of the uniformity of a natural law guiding both women and cosmology, Gilbert continues his analysis by situating Molly as ‘egocentric’ yet aware of a succession of ‘outside force[s]’ around whom ‘her thoughts, half reluctantly, turn’. These outside forces are Bloom, Hester, Mrs Rubio, and Boylan, with Hester and Mrs Rubio representing ‘lunar influence’, Boylan figuring as ‘the ruling planet of the moment’ and Bloom representing ‘Apollo’: the central, recurrent body in the constellation (342).

Gilbert’s reading of Molly as the Earth does not suffer from the overt misogyny that we find in Pound’s early assessment of her as a ‘bitch’ and ‘adulteress’ (*Pound/Joyce* 198), but it is clearly informed by both an essentialised understanding of the Earth, continuously conflated with a ‘Nature’ characterised by femininity and fertility, as well as an ahistorical understanding of the planet informed by the entry on ‘The Earth’ in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from which Gilbert took his information (340-1). Akin to Le Roy’s proto-Gaian idea of the Earth as a ‘distinct organism’ with an ‘evolving and definite structure’ (64), Molly is presented to the reader in terms of

a planetary unity and fertile potentiality that has ‘developed by gradual differentiation from the formless plasma of her beginning’ (343). Gilbert’s reading of Molly as ‘Gaea, the Earth [who] according to the Greeks [was] the first being that sprang from Chaos’ and whom ‘[t]he Romans worshipped under the name of Tellus’ (339) might follow Joyce’s intention that Molly should not be read as a ‘human apparition’ (*JLLI* 180), but he achieves this by projecting an essentialised figuration of ‘Woman’ back onto the planet. Indeed, in this respect, Gilbert anticipates the literary strategies through which James Lovelock developed his Gaia hypothesis. As Lovelock explains, in an updated preface to his first book on Gaia, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979), while the scientific community was uneasy with the metaphor, he had hoped that the figure of Gaia would ‘enliven and entertain’ an audience of general readers, conveying how Gaia was ‘an entity that kept herself and all who lived with her comfortable throughout time and season’ (*Gaia* xiv). Like Gilbert’s reading, which concludes by emphasising ‘Penelope’ as ‘timeless’ and ‘artless’ (342), Lovelock presents Gaia as both the bedrock of all human life and a feminised matter that stands outside of history, culture and science.

In their 1982 feminist account of the reception of ‘Penelope’, Henke and Unkeless suggest that Gilbert’s study was decisive in establishing a critical approach which saw post-war Joyceans such as Hugh Kenner, William York Tindall and S. L. Goldberg read Molly in symbolic or archetypal terms as representing ‘Woman’, ‘Earth’, ‘Nature’ and, ultimately functioning less as character than a ‘sexual abstraction’ (xii).⁹³ Yet, it is important to note that it was not only male critics who

⁹³ Kathleen McCormick also offers a revisionist history of the reception of ‘Penelope’, arguing that situating Molly as an Earth Mother ‘worked to aestheticize [and thereby sanitise] much of what might have been regarded as immoral’ in the episode (20). Concurrent with these symbolic readings was, as Vike Martina Plock has shown, a

drew upon essentialised ideas of femininity when reading Molly in the 1960s and 1970s. Hélène Cixous's concept of *écriture féminine* turns to Molly's monologue as evidence of the possibility of feminine writing, with her description of female writing having a force comparable to the natural power of the 'sea, earth [and] sky' (889) invoking a surprisingly similar planetary rhetoric to Gilbert, albeit arriving at a starkly contrasting conclusion. Certainly, *écriture féminine* is far from the gender essentialism we find in Gilbert's reading. Rather, Cixous's argument is that nearly the 'entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is at once the effect, the support and one of the privileged alibis' (879) and in the same way that Molly's monologue follows on from the logocentric reductionism of 'Ithaca', *écriture féminine* looks to explode the very concept of writing, reading and materiality itself. This form of female writing is at once essential *and* marked by difference: it is the expression of 'a universal woman subject' of which there is 'no general woman, no one typical woman' (875-6). While Gilbert situates Molly as a planet slowly and passively turning on an axis, Cixous situates female writing in terms of 'an earthquake' that 'sweeps order away' (879), an idea which we might identify in the tremulous intensity to the final moments of Molly's monologue (*U* 18.1592-1609).

The points of comparison between Gilbert's influential Gaian reading of Molly and Cixous's theory of female difference are useful to bring to light, since they also point to a confluence with the emergence of ecofeminism during the 1970s. First developed by the French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne, who coined the term *écoféminisme* in 1974, ecofeminism looked to reclaim Mother Earth myths as a means of 'revaluing' the 'woman/nature' connection, aiming to retrieve a maternal

tendency for 'medical readings' which focused on Molly's 'pathological' traits (*Joyce, Medicine and Modernity* 130).

connection with the Earth that had been ‘degraded and distorted through centuries of patriarchal cultural and economic domination’ (Sandilands 6-7). Rising to prominence in France and the USA in particular, such ecofeminist accounts highlighted the structural inequalities that linked environmental damage and violence against women, arguing that you could not address one without addressing the other. Moreover, along with the contemporaneous deep ecology movement, ecofeminists were invested in resurrecting the myth of Gaia.⁹⁴ Inspired by Lovelock’s theory, they looked to refashion ‘age-old images of Mother Earth’, with Gaia becoming a ‘shorthand for holistic approaches’ that saw the planet as an organism (Heise 24). Although Cixous is not generally seen as an ecofeminist, and her grounding in a poststructuralist understanding of gender, subjectivity and textuality all point to important philosophical differences with early ecofeminism, she nonetheless can be seen to privilege similar terms and ideals. Her attention to natural symbols, her insistence on femininity as a force of nature, and her deconstruction of a gendered humanism all run parallel to those ecofeminists who were looking to reclaim Mother Earth as a way of redefining both women and the planet. That Cixous finds an example of *écriture féminine* in Joyce’s refiguring of Gea-Tellus in the same cultural moment in which ecofeminists were rediscovering the power of the Gaia myth suggests that, although not framed as such, her reading of Molly is a radical reinterpretation rather than rejection of the mythic Earth Goddess approach which had dominated many masculinist analyses of ‘Penelope’ up to that point.

⁹⁴ Deep ecology was an environmentalist movement that grew to prominence in the 1970s insisting on a biocentric view of the planet. See Naess, ‘The Shallow and the Deep’ for an overview.

A further parallel between *écriture féminine* and ecofeminism can be seen in the way both were subsequently critiqued by later feminists for their reliance on gender essentialism. Henke, for instance, queries a straightforwardly emancipatory view of Molly's language, arguing for attention to how the episode draws upon nineteenth-century tropes of female 'erotic desire' and speaks the 'language of [male] pornographic fantasy' (*James Joyce* 127). Similarly, Maud Ellmann warns that *écriture féminine*'s 'oceanic' readings fail to take into account the carefully controlled structure of the episode ('Penelope' 102-3).⁹⁵ Both Henke's and Ellmann's critiques parallel what Danielle Sands describes as the way in which the woman/nature connection, celebrated by ecofeminists, has been seen by other feminists as a discursive construction that is deeply rooted in patriarchal constructions of gender. As Sands has shown, Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis plays a decisive role in the history of ecofeminism's reception, with some ecofeminists embracing his revival of a powerful Mother Earth figure while others feminists (including some ecofeminists) seeing it as reintroducing a patriarchal myth that 'reinforce[s] androcentrism' (288-293). Such division explains why ecofeminism has occupied an uncertain and at times maligned relation to wider feminist discourse, particularly third-wave feminism that has looked to epistemological, psychological and historical structures rather than natural foundations in relation to questions of sex and gender, with some feminists rejecting ecofeminism outrightly.⁹⁶ A similar trend is visible in Joyce studies, where feminist readings of 'Penelope' from the 1980s onwards have drawn on third-wave feminist criticism as a means to situate Molly's monologue as a singular rather than universal

⁹⁵ Ellmann and Henke have not only Cixous in mind here, but also Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray.

⁹⁶ Sandilands offers a survey of some critical responses to ecofeminism (xvi-ii).

expression of womanhood.⁹⁷ Although varying greatly in methodologies and findings, what these approaches tend to have in common is a downplaying of Joyce's original Mother Earth symbolism and a turn towards Molly's experience of her own body and bodily processes as situated in a specific place and within historical time.

The point here is not to rehearse the history of critical approaches to Molly so much as foreground the degree to which Molly's reception as Gea-Tellus both predates and parallels the initial development and critical reception of the Gaia hypothesis. Yet, although offering a necessary critique of explicit and implicit gender essentialisms present in masculinist *and* feminist readings of Molly as Mother Earth, the critical severing of Molly from Gea-Tellus in Joyce studies has meant that critics have not fully engaged with the possibility of reading Molly alongside more recent theoretically sophisticated and ecologically alert configurations of Gaia. As Sands outlines in her survey of ecofeminist approaches to Gaia, from the 1990s onward certain ecofeminists have forged a third way between either accepting or rejecting the woman/nature connection by refusing to recognise the nature-culture binary inherent within such a choice and instead looking to create 'ironic, critical or strategic recuperations of the alliance' (290-1). We can see this clearly in the attempt to recuperate Gaia for the Anthropocene in the work of Latour and Haraway. For Latour, Gaia stands as a mode of recognising the alterity of planetary systems without teleological or transcendent structures of meaning. This understanding of Gaia displaces the idea of a maternal

⁹⁷ This covers a number of feminist critical paradigms such as poststructuralist understandings of desire (Henke, *James Joyce* 126-163), deconstructivist notions of textuality (Ellmann, 'Penelope without the Body' 106-8), material and cultural historicism (Plock, *Joyce, Medicine and Modernity* 130-52) and narratology (Norris, *Virgin and Veteran* 237-63). For an overview of the heterogeneity of approaches this encompasses see Richard Brown, ed., *Joyce, "Penelope" and the Body* (2006) and Richard Pearce, ed., *Molly Blooms: A Polylogue on "Penelope" and Cultural Studies* (1994).

nature understood as either an ‘inert’ ‘nursemaid’ to humans or as a fiery ‘final arbiter’ passing ‘last judgment’ on her neglectful children, myths which, Latour acknowledges, ‘feminists have constantly challenged’ (*Facing Gaia* 280). Insisting that there is ‘nothing maternal about [Gaia]—or else we have to revise completely what we mean by “Mother”’ (188), Latour parallels Haraway’s explicitly feminist attempt to redefine kin and kin making in the Anthropocene, in which Gaia is a fitting name for ‘complex nonlinear couplings between processes that compose [...] a partially cohering systemic whole’ (*Staying* 43). For Haraway, Gaia speaks to the way in which the Earth is inherently *sympoietic*, that is to say, composed of systems and organisms that emerge through complex interactions with one another (*Staying* 33).⁹⁸ It is for this reason that Gaia theory exceeds the ‘Greek [myths]’ from which it takes its name; rather than rooted in a maternal mythology, Gaia names a view of material complexity from which radically new figurations of the human and the planet come into view (*Staying* 186).

For both Latour and Haraway, the Gaia hypothesis has the potential to offer an understanding of processes and systems that, rather than presenting organisms against the backdrop of a passive environment, captures ‘the distributed intentionality’ of systems ‘each of which modifies its surrounding for its own purposes’ (Latour, *Facing Gaia* 98). Much like Guattari’s transversal notion of ecology discussed in Chapter 2, this is an ecology that looks to ‘follow connections [...] without being holistic’ and to undo constructions of autonomy and sovereignty at individual, collective and

⁹⁸ Sympoiesis is, in this sense, a corrective to autopoiesis, which Haraway sees as having too great a focus on individual systems. In contrast, sympoiesis focuses on the way in which systems produce each other, or as Haraway puts it, the way in which ‘poiesis is [...] always partnered all the way down, with no starting and subsequently interacting “units”’ (*Facing* 33).

planetary levels (*Facing Gaia* 97). For Haraway, who places sexual politics in a more prominent position in her work than Latour, this is a model that queers Gaia. In recognising the way in which science shows us that material systems are co-productive, Haraway's sympoiesis insists on thinking about the contingency and potentiality of assemblages and modes of relation, and the potential for new ways of understanding kin and kin making, in which humans are 'critters in a queer litter' within an 'ongoing multispecies worlding on a wounded terra' (105). Both Latour and Haraway, however, also keep certain ideas around Gaia intact. Haraway's description of a 'wounded terra' evokes the notion of planetary vulnerability that implicitly parallels Lovelock's personification of Gaia in terms of bodily 'health' (*Revenge* 195), while Latour's gendering of Gaia as female and the references to the Greek myth throughout his work suggests that, like Lovelock, he is comfortable drawing upon a highly gendered metaphor to advance his argument. Yet, Latour and Haraway both articulate the ways in which we might see Gaia in new terms in the Anthropocene. Bringing contingency, disunity and non-sovereignty to the fore, their accounts suggest a way of understanding of Gaia that does not rely on essentialised, anthropocentric or androcentric configurations of the planet. Moreover, their methodologies also suggest the possibility of recuperating Joyce's figuring of Gea-Tellus in such a way that his posthumanist vision might coincide with theirs.

3.4 An Earth which is Posthuman

In contrast to the episodes that precede it, which in various ways all present human characters against the narrative background of a material world, the most arresting and immediately differentiating quality of 'Penelope' is that Molly's voice is presented on

the page without the stabilising frame of an external environment. The reader is confronted with having to make sense of the episode purely from Molly's voice. It is this lack of recourse to a conventional narrative frame, premised on Joyce's intention that Molly's monologue should be characterised by the primitive and timeless materiality of Gea-Tellus, that might be seen as most clearly exhibiting an identifiably posthumanist aesthetic akin to the model of Gaia advanced by Latour and Haraway. If the free indirect discourse of 'Proteus' frames Stephen's sense of the 'ineluctable' modalities through which the world makes itself perceivable and thereby foregrounds a gap between the human and the nonhuman, the unframed presentation of Molly's monologue appears to do away with any such distance or dualities. Although, on one level, this unframed quality might initially appear to insist that the episode is wholly located within Molly's interiority, as suggested by Valery Larbaud's still influential description of it as an interior monologue,⁹⁹ the lack of a narrative frame to divide and safely designate the interior from exterior instead suggests that we cannot so readily make this distinction in advance. Presented on the page as a large block of writing, unbroken by the conventions of punctuation or paragraphing, 'Penelope' departs from what has been established in the preceding episodes: the use of language to distinguish, or at least attempt to distinguish, interiority from exteriority.

This frameless quality employs an aesthetic mode that according to Timothy Morton is deeply ecological. For Morton, the conventional juxtaposition of 'content and frame' always 'preserve[s] the gap between them'. In contrast, avant-garde aesthetics which leave undecidable what "counts" as either frame or contents'

⁹⁹ It is worth noting that Joyce describes it simply as a 'monologue' in his schemas, while Stuart Gilbert suggests that 'silent monologue' is a more accurate description than Larbaud's 'interior monologue' (Gilbert 22-3). For Larbaud on the interior monologue in Joyce see '*Ulysses*' (105).

produces what he later describes as a ‘frameless formless thing’ that is the basis for truly ‘environmental art’ since it brings into question the aesthetic distance between subject and object (*Ecology without Nature* 144; 197). While Joyce’s disruption of narrative framing operates in a slightly different way to what Morton is describing (Morton is talking about art which literally worries the boundaries of its own condition) the episode nonetheless similarly insists on a formal undoing of conventional narrative frames which would otherwise safely contextualise and demarcate Molly as clearly defined and bounded character in an environment. If Stephen is able to be safely distinguished from his environment in ‘Proteus’, both in terms of his own self-reflexivity and the presentation of his thoughts on the page, ‘Penelope’ does not make such a distinction.

The framelessness of Molly’s episode also coincides with Latour’s insistence that there is ‘nothing external in Gaia’, since ‘[i]f climate and life have evolved together, space is not a frame, not even a context: *space is the offspring of time*’ (*Facing* 106, emphasis in original). Although Latour might appear to privilege time over space here, his broader argument insists on an understanding of contingency in which the two co-produce each other and where neither time nor space develop along a determined, linear trajectory. A similar disruption to chronological time is produced through the spatiality of ‘Penelope’. Joyce famously described ‘Ithaca’ as ‘in the reality the end as “Penelope” has no beginning, middle or end’ (*JLLI* 172), an idea which finds its formal expression in the aforementioned design of the episode’s eight sentences that invoke infinity, as well as the circularity established through repeated return to certain words and topics of concern. For Robert Spoo, who resists the idea of Molly as a ‘monocausal deity, a Gea-Tellus’ and instead reads Molly’s monologue ‘as perpetually imminent, *about* to coalesce into style and discourse but remaining on the

edge of formulation’, the episode stands not as the novel’s ‘telos’ but as ‘a ground from which forms emerge as meaning is discovered and isolated’ (78). While Spoo’s reading risks essentialising materiality as history’s other, his description of the monologue as the ‘ground’ from which meaning emerges foregrounds not only imminence but also the sense of *immanence* that arises from the episode’s departure from chronological time. For instance, the clap of ‘thunder’ that earlier awoke Molly brings to mind the ‘awful thunderbolts in Gibraltar’ (*U* 18.134-5), drawing together the present, near past and Molly’s youth in a single instance, as well as folding the geographies of Dublin and Gibraltar onto one another. This effect is repeated and amplified over the course of the episode, not least through the lack of punctuation that usually works to delineate and separate clauses that occupy different spatial or temporal locations. This culminates in the final section in which the use of repetition transposes different moments in time and space, imbricating one within another rather than safely spacing them apart, both on the page and in the narrative:

the sun shines for you today *yes* that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is *and* I knew I could always get round him *and* I gave him all the pleasure I could leading him on till he asked me to say *yes* [...] *and* the sailors playing all birds fly *and* I say stoop *and* washing up dishes they called it on the pier *and* the sentry in front of the governors house with the thing round his white helmet poor devil half roasted *and* the Spanish girls laughing in their shawls *and* their tall combs *and* the auctions in the morning the Greeks *and* the jews *and* the Arabs *and* the devil knows who else from all the ends of Europe [...] *and* O that awful deepdown torrent O *and* the sea the sea crimson sometimes like fire *and* the glorious sunsets *and* the figtrees in the Alameda gardens *yes* [...] *and* then he asked me would I *yes* to say *yes* my mountain flower *and* first I put my arms around him *yes* and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume *yes* *and* his heart was going like mad *and* *yes* I said *yes* I will *Yes*. (*U* 18.1578-1609, emphasis added)

While this technique of temporal and spatial juxtaposition occurs in earlier episodes within the minds of Stephen or Bloom, in contrast to the rest of the novel the absence of an objectively described external environment means that in ‘Penelope’ no single points of reference or scale can present itself as primary or foundational.¹⁰⁰ Instead, in the imminence and immanence of Molly’s monologue we can read an ‘unfurling Gaia’, Haraway’s term for ‘an ongoing temporality that resists figuration’ and which is constantly creating new configurations of material potentiality (*Staying* 55).

In contrast to the free indirect discourse of ‘Proteus’, where Joyce presents the reader with the self-regard of a mind actively differentiating itself from its environment through a gendered abjection of materiality, Molly’s monologue utilises a free *direct* discourse that projects a kaleidoscopic imaginary in which images and propositions incessantly emerge and dissolve. Even the repeated ‘I’ that grows and swells in the final moments of the episode serves not to mark out a position of transcendent space from which to observe the world but constitutes itself within an incessantly accretive bricolage of places and events remembered and imagined, far and near. In these qualities and in its affirmatory register, the episode might be read as an example of what Haraway describes as ‘Gaia stories or geostories’,¹⁰¹ narratives which affirm that there ‘are no guarantees, no arrow of time, no Law of History or Science or Nature’ which can offer permanent or transcendent structures of meaning (*Staying* 40-41). For Haraway, one needs to engage in ‘compositionist practices’ that attend to co-evolving material relations within and between entities and systems (40)

¹⁰⁰ An argument might be made that the exception here is ‘Circe’ in which the inner psychic spaces of the characters is externalised. Yet, the stage directions, such as at the episode’s conclusion where Bloom and Stephen meet the soldiers on ‘Beaver street beneath the scaffolding’, still authoritatively locate the narrative events in specific external environments (*U* 15.4365).

¹⁰¹ Haraway takes these terms from Latour.

and in Joyce's designation of Molly as the prehuman and posthuman voice of the earth we might detect a similar foregrounding of process, change and transformation that is actualised in the unpunctuated forward movement of Molly's prose, and its excessive, associative and affirmatory thrust. If we think of the episodes centred on Stephen as resembling autopoietic structures in the sense that, as Joyce himself saw it, Stephen does not 'yet bear a body' but is in the embryonic stages of becoming a subject (quoted in Ellmann, *Ulysses* 31),¹⁰² then in the diffusion of subjectivity that we find in 'Penelope', in which the 'I' signifies not self-mastery but an entangling of self and other, there is undoing of the human as singular, bounded system. Indeed, Haraway's description of sympoiesis as 'complex nonlinear couplings' resonates with Molly on more than one level (43).

For Joyce, Molly's monologue necessitated a wholly different mode of writing that could countersign the rest of the novel not as its coda but as its 'clou' or central idea (*JLLI* 170). For Haraway too Gaia-stories require us to return to the question of '[how] to narrate—to think—outside the prick tales of Humans in History' (40). Yet, we might also read Molly's monologue as challenging that which has gone before her. Molly is, after all, alert to the dynamics of revenges in 'Penelope', whether in considering Bloom as a victim of it or disgruntled servants as perpetrators of it (*U* 18.365; 1081), and her corrective, both in form and content, to all that has preceded might be read as contributing to her own form of Gaian revenge. Indeed, this act of speaking back is not only present in what Norris has argued is the episode's riposte to the 'almost exclusively male construction' of her that the reader has encountered until

¹⁰² Both Ellmann and Budgen, among other influential critics, have drawn on the metaphor of an embryo to describe Stephen's development (Ellmann, *Ulysses* 31; Budgen 221).

this point (*Virgin* 229), but also in the episode's position as directly following 'Ithaca', the apotheosis of Bloom's sense of the universe as arranged and rational, in which the 'necessity of order' is reflected in there being 'a place for everything and everything in its place' (*U* 17.1410). This trust in an underlying order means that even when Bloom seemingly acknowledges non-anthropocentric propositions, calculating the possible 'annihilation of the planet' via collision with other planets or stars (*U* 17.2181) and the 'inevitable' extinction 'of the human species' (*U* 17.464-5), he is able to reduce the materiality of the cosmology to human knowledge. Embodying an example of what Claire Colebrook—in a critique of Lovelock—describes as a scientific approach which, in disavowing human centrality 'discern[s] [the planet's] proper order' and can thereby assert 'a proper mode of self-regulation' (*Death* 57), Bloom's non-anthropocentrism informs a sense of mastery that finds its purest expression in the episode's conclusion. The oversized full stop that in certain editions of *Ulysses* draws the scientific reductionism of 'Ithaca' to a close, operates, as Eliot's Prufrock phrases it, to 'have squeezed the universe into a ball' (*Collected Poems* 6). Providing the answer to the episode's final posed question of 'Where?' (*U* 17.2331-2), it is one last example of the hyperbolic scientific rationalism and reductionism that has characterised the episode, not only operating as a final act of containment and certainty but offering a visual representation of all planetary space squeezed into a singular, neat, circular mark.

On one level, it is this scientific and ordered view of the planet that Molly takes her revenge on, not least since, although Joyce wrote in his notes that she should have 'no science words' (*Notesheets* 491), she has an interest in the same planetary questions discussed in 'Ithaca'. While Bloom looks out into the stars and tries to explain to Stephen the 'parallactic drift of socalled fixed stars' before turning to the

subject of 'the eons of geological periods recorded in the stratifications of the earth' (*U* 17.1052-58), Molly questions what she calls the 'bad conscience' of 'atheists' who despite insisting on an objective basis for their claims, cannot say:

who was the first person in the universe before there was anybody that made it all who ah that they dont know neither do I so there you are they might as well try to stop the sun from rising the sun shines for you he said (*U* 18.1569-72)

Here, the designation 'no science words' presents itself not so much as a lack (although it is true that Molly has been denied a formal education) as a suspicion towards the authority imbued in a word that has been deemed scientific. Molly's description of the universe, like Bloom's, asserts its prior existence to and diminishing effect on the figure of the human, but unlike Bloom she affirms its ability to endlessly escape any empirical definition that might assimilate it within an epistemological structure. While Molly affirms a deistic view of the universe, she, in a manner far less self-aware than Stephen in 'Proteus', also envisions an image of the human stitched into the fabric of the universe and wholly without the possibility of recourse to a Godlike view of it. Even her misunderstanding of the sun rising over the planet, in contrast to the actuality of the earth's orbit of it, paradoxically, contributes to a reluctance towards the ordering and arranging that is the basis of a residual anthropocentrism in 'Ithaca'.¹⁰³ In contrast to the philosophical allusions of 'Proteus' that invoke a long history of feminising matter or the over-straining scientific diction of 'Ithaca' which looks to erase its own linguistic condition but ends up proliferating it, 'Penelope' portrays material subjectivity as inseparable from the language through which we articulate the idea of the human and its environment. Where both Stephen and Bloom offer a cosmological

¹⁰³ Bloom in 'Ithaca' is also prone to getting his planetary facts wrong. He describes the 'perpetual motion of the earth' being in 'westward' motion rather than eastward (*U* 17.2306-10).

vision of the universe in which the human, always implicitly male, retains its status as a transcendent category, Molly as Gea-Tellus offers a planetary vision in which structures of meaning are passed over in favour of a view of life as emergent (both *pre-* and *post-*human), in which definitions are suspended in favour of attention to transformations and, perhaps most importantly, in which a female voice can take revenge on those who have spoken for it. Richard Ellmann describes how Joyce almost concluded Molly's monologue with the words 'I will' but decided them to be 'too Luciferian', while the word 'yes' invoked a 'submission to a world beyond him' as an 'acknowledgement of the universe' (*James Joyce* 522). This affirmation of contingency, but also the limits of representation, is mirrored most clearly in the novel by Molly herself, for whom 'life' is 'always something to think about every moment and see it all around you like a new world' (U 18.738-9). As *Ulysses* repeatedly insinuates the gap between new words and new worlds is slight.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that while Molly's final sentence famously ends with an affirmation, it begins with a negation, a reminder that her monologue is, despite Joyce's schemas and letters, not reducible to any one singular position. Indeed, even in the recuperative posthumanist reading of Molly as Gea-Tellus that I have outlined above, the problem of where to locate her monologue remains unresolved and, in an important sense, problematic. While Bloom and Stephen enjoy the relative benefits of (falsely) identifying as self-defined and self-defining subjects in a society that rewards and recognises such identities, Molly as a Gaian figure of unboundedness remains, paradoxically, confined to her room. The question becomes how to reconcile Molly, the prehuman and posthuman earth, a locus of affirmation and transformation, with Molly, the marginalised and often misrepresented human character.

Margulis describes how once Lovelock gave up his holistic and teleological view of Gaia (one imagines through her influence), Gaia could be understood not as a ‘single living system’ that looks to ‘optimise conditions for all its members’ but simply a way of describing ‘selection pressures’ at various scales (*Symbiotic Planet* 156). Indeed, Margulis goes even further, unweaving the goddess at the centre of Lovelock’s theory: ‘Gaia is neither vicious nor nurturing in its relation to humanity; it is a *convenient name* for an Earthwide phenomenon’ (150, emphasis added). Like Haraway’s ‘unfurling Gaia [...] [who] resists figuration’ (*Staying* 51), Margulis’s description is a reminder to ask whose interests (or conveniences) are being served in the metaphors and figures through which we imagine the planet, as well as the possibility of always imagining it differently. Although Joyce’s reluctance to abandon his association of women with the fertile matter of the Earth highlights the way in which apparently transgressive aesthetic modes can mask reactionary ideas, we might also consider how Molly’s monologue invites itself to be read *despite* Joyce’s intentions. ‘Penelope’, if nothing else, highlights the risks of what happens when the relationship between femininity and materiality is returned to afresh but not wholly disavowed. In its point of confluence with posthumanist articulations of Gaia theory which foreground non-sovereignty, disunity and the liveliness of materiality in shaping meaning, what Latour describes as ‘an injunction to rematerialize our belonging to the world’ (*Facing* 219), *Ulysses* foreshadows the possibilities, but also the dangers, in the re-emergence of Gaia in Anthropocene studies.

4. The Beastly Writing of Djuna Barnes

Djuna Barnes lived to see both the accelerated environmental degradation of the USA after the Second World War and the mainstream American environmentalism that rose in response to it. Writing to Natalie Clifford Barney in the summer of 1963, Barnes complained of the ‘death-dealing smog’ that had led to an air-conditioning unit being fitted in her small apartment in Greenwich Village. In the face of ‘auto gasses, D.D.T. spraying, refuse burning, manufacturing, fumes’, Barnes’s only respite, she explained, was in ‘reading my stout Montaigne’ (16 May 1963).¹⁰⁴ Barnes’s reference not only to air pollution in general, but the mass spraying of the pesticide D.D.T. speaks to the cultural moment she was writing in. The serialisation of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* in the *New Yorker* in 1962 had drawn the public’s attention to the highly detrimental ecological consequences of pesticides such as D.D.T. to both plants and animals (including humans) and insisted on the urgency in recognising the deleterious ecological consequences of newly intensive forms of agriculture and land management. Barnes, whose work was also published in the *New Yorker* during the 1960s, was not immune to such concerns and, as her letter to Barney shows, Carson’s book was enabling new ways of articulating (and complaining about) the disregard to human health in pesticide use. Moreover, if Barnes’s letter only suggests a potential reference to Carson, her unpublished poetry offers a much more direct connection. On one of the many undated sheets of paper on which she drafted poems and made compositional jottings Barnes makes a note of Carson’s book (see figure 4.1). Above

¹⁰⁴ As I discuss in Chapter 7, Woolf was also a devotee of Montaigne.

these notes, on the same sheet of paper, is a typescript of a poem entitled ‘The Girls of [Unclear]’¹⁰⁵ which includes the following lines:

“A lazy, costly helpless man, and still
A most humanly man”
 :~~the green-fly’s got him;~~
There’s no swarming in him, his heart’s an hive,
That’s banished all its bees; the green-fly’s [above: gnat’s] got him,
Disintegration’s all his progress (‘Girls’)

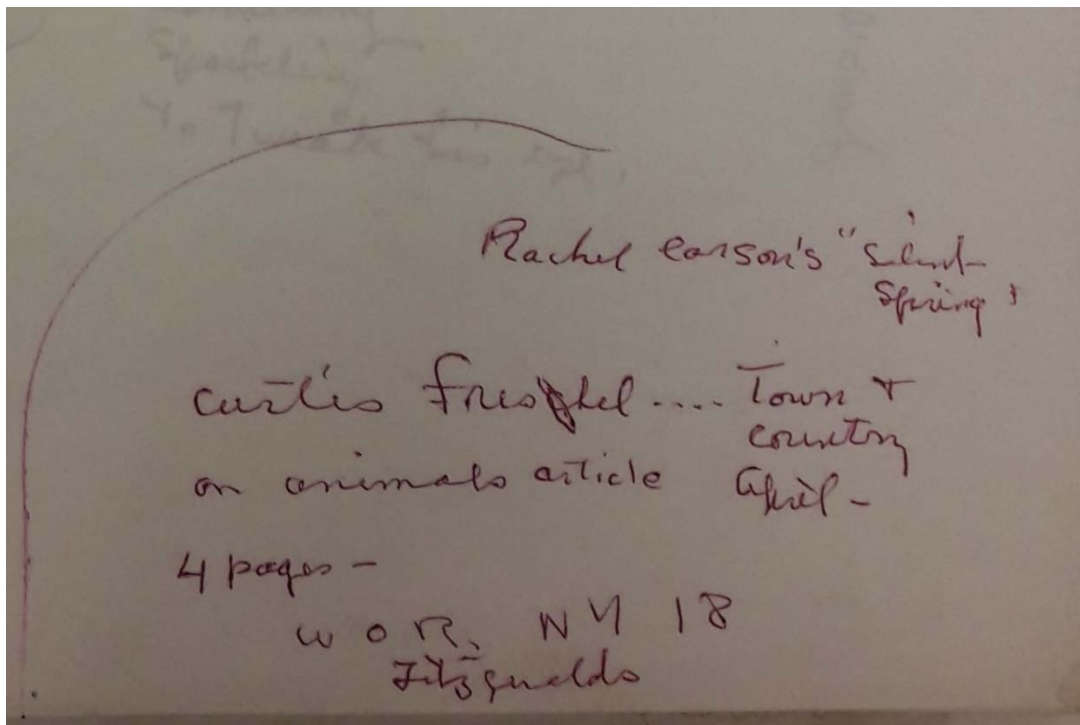


Figure 4.1. ‘The Girls of [Unclear]’. Typescript. c.a. 1962-3. Djuna Barnes Papers, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries. Series 3, Box 8, Folder 5.

¹⁰⁵ The last word of the title has been typed over and is not legible. Above the typed title, Barnes has written ‘A Life of “Lewd Plenty”’, a possible replacement or alternative title for the poem. Like many of Barnes’s poems, certain lines from this draft were recycled and reused in later poems. See the unpublished but allegedly finished poem from the early 1970s, ‘There Should Be Gardens’, which refigures the man whose ‘heart’s an hive [sic]’ (CP 187).

Perhaps inspired by Carson's writing on the effects of pesticides on bees and other insects, the draft poem enacts species revenge on a Prufrock-like figure of passivity and reveals the humanist idea of autoimmunity and organic unity to be a façade. Instead, Barnes presents a human body that must endure disintegration from the inside out. The 'most humanly man', a turn of phrase that satirically captures the idea of the human as a transcendent subject understood in terms of autonomy from and sovereignty over the nonhuman world, becomes a site of contamination and dissolution.

In its challenge to human exceptionalism through entomological revenge, possibly inspired by Carson's exposé in *Silent Spring* of the devastation being wreaked on bees and other insects, Barnes's poem invites itself to be read as a late-modernist Anthropocene lyric. Indeed, in its unweaving of the human, the poem intuits what has been described as one of the central implications of the Anthropocene: that in an era in which species relations are rapidly being redrawn, the figure of the human needs to be fundamentally revised and rethought. As Timothy Clark plainly puts it, '[a]t issue in the Anthropocene, by definition, is the relation of the human to other species and to the finite physical environments of the Earth' (*Ecocriticism* 59). Such a revision of how we imagine the human necessarily has ontological implications, necessitating what Dipesh Chakrabarty has described as a need to return to the question of species being ('Postcolonial' 14).¹⁰⁶ For both Clark and Chakrabarty, in different ways, what it means to be the type of animal that calls itself human is fundamentally at stake in the Anthropocene. Yet, as Claire Colebrook and Tom Cohen point out, there is a

¹⁰⁶ Importantly for Chakrabarty this entails not only an ontological account of individual human life, but the ontology of the human species over-all as a 'geophysical force' (14).

danger that such crises of species identity might intensify what Barnes described as the illusion of being the ‘most humanly man’. As they argue, within discourse around extinction and disappearance, the ‘Anthropos’ of the Anthropocene can become too easily an ‘idealised subject who only exists within structures of mourning’ (‘Preface’ 11-12). ‘Humanity’, Colebrook and Cohen argue, ‘comes into being, late in the day, when [...] it looks wistfully, in an all too human way, at a world without humans’ (12). This idealised figure, which, slightly modifying Barnes’s description, might be termed the *fully-human human*, risks reinstating the sovereignty and exceptionalism which the Anthropocene calls into question.

The bees, gnats and greenflies that pose a threat of disintegration to the unity of the human in Barnes’s poem present themselves as a continuation of a lifelong interest in the relation between humans and animals. Discourses of species, grounded in gender and sex and characterised by fears of bodily contamination and regression, run through Barnes’s writing, from the journalism, poetry, drama, and short fiction of the 1910s and 1920s, her major fiction of the 1920s and 1930s, and the late drama and poetry that she produced from the 1940s until her death in 1982. In this chapter, I look at a range of Barnes’s writing, including her two novels *Ryder* (1928) and *Nightwood* (1936), to explore how she bestialises the figure of the fully-human human. If Barnes’s late poetry reveals an explicit interest in the way in which an emergent environmentalism might threaten humanist autonomy, her earlier modernist writing works towards a beastly aesthetic that prefigures contemporary concerns around the question of human identity. To call Barnes’s oeuvre beastly, this chapter contends, is to draw attention to her specific interest in figurations of beasts, bestiaries and beastliness. As Derrida insists in his late seminars ‘the beast is not exactly the animal’ (*Beast I 1*); it invokes linguistic implications, cultural connotations, etymological roots

and aesthetic traditions that are related to, but distinct from the broader category of ‘the animal’. For Barnes, as I will show, writing that is beastly always carries the threat of contamination, queerness and the undoing of identity.

Attention to the animals and species discourse which populates Barnes’s writing has been a central part of her recuperation as a modernist of note, especially the feminist scholarship that, emerging in the 1980s, looked to complicate any notion of a straightforward alliance between Barnes and her male contemporaries. In such accounts, *Nightwood*’s atavistic portrayal of its lesbian protagonist Robin Vote as an ‘infected carrier of the past’ (*N* 36) and its infamously ambiguous ending in which Robin goes ‘down’ with a dog in ‘a fit of laughter, obscene and touching’ (*N* 139) were seen as integral to a textual aesthetic premised on transgressive sexual politics.¹⁰⁷ Jane Marcus’s widely-cited essay ‘Laughing at Leviticus’, for instance, asserts that *Nightwood* ‘makes a modernism of marginality’ in its presentation of the abject, the lowly and the animal (223). Arguing that Barnes’s novel launches a ‘critique’ of both Freudian psychoanalysis and the rise of fascism, and more specifically their respective attempts to pathologise and exterminate the ‘sexually aberrant misfit’, Marcus argues that *Nightwood* shows how in ‘human misery we can find the animal and the divine in ourselves’ (233).¹⁰⁸ Bonnie Kime Scott’s multi-volume *Refiguring Modernism* (1995)

¹⁰⁷ Earlier studies that looked to revive interest in Barnes as a modernist, such as Louis Kannenstine’s *The Art of Djuna Barnes* (1977) and Cheryl Plumb’s *Fancy’s Craft* (1986), also drew attention to what Kannenstine describes as the dichotomy between ‘animals and angels’ in her work (xv).

¹⁰⁸ Marcus’s account, however, has been criticised for too forcibly mapping a political position on Barnes’s novel (most recently in Shin 183-4). Her essay, written in 1983-4, was first published in Mary Lynn Broe’s collection of feminist essays on Barnes, *Silence and Power* (1991), where animals and animality reoccur as repeated points of discussion. Also see Karen Kaivola’s account of Barnes’s transgression of binaries in which ‘human and beast’ is listed alongside ‘good and evil [...] masculine and feminine’ (69). Many of these early approaches tend to operate within symbolist or psychoanalytic paradigms that readily reduce animals to metaphors.

marks the culmination of these early feminist assessments of Barnes's animals. Taking a poststructuralist approach, Scott argues that Barnes's aestheticism reveals 'nature' to be 'fabricated and deployed by culture' and thereby makes space for the presence of an 'animal gaze' which bypasses 'otherness and essentialism' and produces a trans-species kinship (*Refiguring II* 71-3). Scott's phrasing here foreshadows Derrida's now ubiquitous description of experiencing the absolute alterity of the animal in the 'gaze of [his] cat' and exhibits the degree to which Barnes's aesthetic (and her readers) anticipated the animal turn in philosophy and critical theory (*Animal* 11).¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the ascendancy of animal studies from the late 1990s onwards saw renewed interest in Barnes's modernism. Carrie Rohman's groundbreaking study of modernism and animals, *Stalking the Subject* (2009), situates Barnes's *Nightwood* as troubling 'the very terms of human subjectivity by thinking about identity outside the conditions set by its symbolic economies' (134), and, more recently, Robert Azzarello has reframed the long-observed connection between animality and sexuality in *Nightwood* in terms of a 'biotic' ontology in which 'strange' and 'excessive' forms of life disrupt heteronormative social structures (113-7).¹¹⁰ As the four decades of scholarship on Barnes attests, not only does her writing prefigure the recent explosion of attention to animal life within the humanities but, as Azzarello neatly summarises, critics would

¹⁰⁹ Another important early study alert to the importance of animals in modernism is Margot Norris's *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* (1985), which identifies the emergence of a 'biocentric tradition' at the end of the nineteenth century. Norris's survey of writers, however, does not include Barnes.

¹¹⁰ Other notable recent work on Barnes and animals include Judith Paltin's account of the 'social and emotional consequences of gender and species boundary erasures in *Nightwood*' (785), Andrew Kalaidjian's analysis of Barnes's interest in what he calls 'biological perception' (66) and Erin Edwards's posthumanist reading of Barnes's 'decompositional' approach to species (160). As I edit this chapter in early 2019, a new volume of essays *Shattered Objects: Djuna Barnes's Modernism* is about to be published (the first edited collection on Barnes for 28 years) which promises to further develop the critical conversation around Barnes and animals.

‘would be hard-pressed to understand her poetic-philosophical vision’ without attending to the animals that abound in her work (101).

Yet, while animal orientated approaches might now be considered an established way of reading *Nightwood* far less work has examined how species discourse is present in Barnes’s broader oeuvre, and even less attention has been paid to the way in which the material collected in her archive complicates, substantiates or sheds new light on her animal figures.¹¹¹ The research in this chapter draws on the large quantity of manuscripts, notebooks, letters, textual annotations and newspaper clippings in the Djuna Barnes Papers at the University of Maryland that give shape to Barnes’s identity as a writer interested in ecology and animals, and which enable new ways of reading her broader body of work in relation to the emergent historical and theoretical concerns of the Anthropocene. Reading Barnes back through her archive not only confirms a lifelong interest in animal life, but reveals how configurations of the nonhuman are central to the composition of her work. Barnes’s correspondence with fellow novelist Emily Coleman in the period just after *Nightwood* was published is particularly rich in this regard. As I discussed in the Introduction, Barnes’s assertion to Coleman that literature should register how ‘trees, animals’ and ‘human beings’ are ‘connected’ insists not so much on holism, as a question of intimacy and proximity that foreshadows her later interest in Carson and a poetics of dissolution (Barnes to Coleman, 13 October 1938). Barnes was also aware of the gendered conventions surrounding nature. As I explore in more detail in Chapter 5, she rejected the ‘hearty,

¹¹¹ Daniela Caselli’s *Improper Modernism* (2009) remains the most substantial work of archival research and, in a brief discussion of Barnes’s collection of bestiaries, points out that her interest in the beast can ‘guide us to a better understanding of [*Nightwood*’s] affective theory’. Yet, like previous approaches that see animals only in symbolic terms, Caselli’s reading is limited by a view of Barnes’s animals in relation to human affect, defined by what she terms a ‘pathetic excess’ (179-80).

slouching, natural sort of man' who took pleasure in 'the great stretches of nature' (Barnes to Coleman, 13 August 1939), as well as what she saw as the temptation for 'nature writers' such as Wordsworth to 'clean nature up too much' (Barnes to Coleman, 30 October 1938). The notion of cleaning up nature, both in the sense of simplifying complexities and morally improving it, provides the antithesis to Barnes's own treatment of the nonhuman in her writing where messiness, excess and degeneracy can be seen as guiding principles.

Letters such as the above are important in establishing *how* Barnes viewed animals and nonhuman life more broadly, as well as the literary conventions surrounding them. The implicitly ecological view that she offers to Coleman complicates critical approaches that either all too readily position Barnes's animals as seemingly autonomous subjects (Warren 71; Scott, *Refiguring II* 73) or else which assert a dichotomous or dialectical relation between the human and its nonhuman others (Kannenstine xv; Schiesari 36-7). Instead, across Barnes's writing, we find an idea of animal life that is resistant to neat schematisation or containment. As such, rather than focusing on a single text, this chapter traces the beasts and beastliness we find across her writing, bringing the well-studied *Nightwood* into a fresh dialogue with her broader body of published writing—including her first novel, *Ryder*, and early journalism—as well as turning to the materials in her archive to substantiate and further develop how we understand Barnes's animals. The chapter begins by establishing the variety of beastly figures that can be found in Barnes's writing. Suggesting that for Barnes beastliness offers a distinct aesthetical mode of writing that is variegated and singular rather than fixed and delineated, I examine how her beastly figures might be productively contrasted with the turn to ideas of the 'creaturely' within animal studies. Understanding Barnes's aesthetic to be defined by a beastly

negativity, I show, presents a way of reading *Nightwood*'s vexing presentation of queer desire and, in particular, its much-contested ending, in which questions of interspecies relations and anthropomorphism are brought to the fore.

4.1 Following Beastly Trails

Say I am a beast

Following in the isle of my dimension

- Undated Draft of Untitled Poem ('Untitled')

Beasts are of clear centrality to Barnes's oeuvre. They could, perhaps, even be called a writerly obsession. They are present in her early journalism, for example in her 1913 article on Coney Island, where the resort attendants are likened to zoo animals, as they pace 'back and forth behind the grating [of the resort] like some dim beasts restless with the crowd's unrest' (*New York* 33). They are the subject of several of her early poems, such as the unpublished 1921 lyric 'Love and the Beast', where a spurned lover is figured as a beast 'pacing down mortality | With a lost, immortal cry' (*CP* 101). In *Ladies Almanack* (1928), while the word beast is itself noticeably absent, the description of Dame Musset as having 'mooed with the Herd, her Heels with their Hoofs, and in the wet Dingle hooted' (15) draws out a queerly uncertain contiguity between sexuality and animality which, as I will argue below, is central to Barnes's beastly aesthetic. Beasts, too, are of central thematic importance at the other end of her career. In her late major work, *The Antiphon* (1958) the word is repeatedly deployed as both noun and verb: woman 'is most beast familiar' the female protagonist Miranda tells her mother (176), while her father's 'monstrous act of polygamy' is described as a means by which he can 'beast' those around him (110). Similarly, beastly figures can be frequently found in the drafts of unpublished poems from the

late 1950s onwards, such as the example used in the epigraph above. It is also a word that often appears in her correspondence: New York is ‘beastly dank, hot, breathless’, she writes to her brother in 1967 (Barnes to Saxon Barnes, 10 May 1967). Her library also bears the mark of a beastly obsession, including T. H. White’s translation of a Latin Bestiary, *The Book of Beasts* (1954), sent to her by Eliot from his offices at Faber & Faber in February 1955, and a copy of Edwin Muir’s *The Present Age* (1939) in which she has annotated the lines in Yeats’s ‘The Second Coming’ (1919) that describe the ‘rough beast’ that ‘[s]louches towards Bethlehem’ (see figure 4.2).¹¹² Like Yeats’s image of a rough, slouching beast, Barnes’s beastly figures unsettle humanistic sureties. It is not only animals, but humans who are often the ‘beasts’ in Barnes’s short fiction, the equal applicability of the term to both insisting on a beastly resemblance between humans and others animals.¹¹³ While in her 1920 story ‘Oscar’, the figure of *the* beast has occult associations, with the ‘speeches in the town hall’ warning of ‘the mark of the beast’ exploiting, like Yeats’s poem, a biblical apocalyptic imaginary (CS 279).

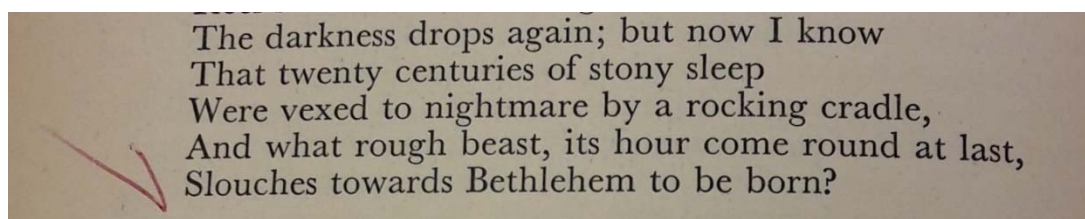


Figure 4.2 Annotation by Djuna Barnes in Edwin Muir’s *The Present Age*. Holding at University of Maryland.

¹¹² Caselli also draws attention to the bestial sources found in Barnes’s copy of Yeats and White, and identifies further bestial figures in the works by Robert Burton, John Donne and William Blake that Barnes owned (179). Interestingly, Caselli notes that *Nightwood*’s ‘beast turning human’ is a reversal of the humans who ‘turne beasts’ in Donne’s *Satyre IV*.

¹¹³ See, for example, ‘The Coward’ (CP 167) and ‘Dusie’ (406).

One primary mode through which beastliness is characterised in Barnes's writing is the grotesque. Barnes's carnivalesque narrative of social outsiders and bohemian excess in *Nightwood* presents its central figure, Robin, in terms that insist on a proximity to a beastly animality. To her pseudo-aristocratic husband Felix, who both wishes to have and suppress Robin, her 'shocking blue' eyes present the 'iris[es] of wild beasts who have not tamed the focus down to meet the human eye' (N 36). Moreover, Felix's own beastliness is also brought to the fore, as his aristocratic pretences conceal (or fail to conceal) an unbeknownst Jewish ethnicity; his father, Guido, is described as having 'racial memories' of 'run[ning] in the Corso for the amusement of the Christian populace' as the Pope looks on and laughs like 'a man who forgoes his angels that he may recapture the beast' (N 3-4).¹¹⁴ Elsewhere, Robin is figured as 'outside the "human type" [...] a wild thing caught in a woman's skin' (N 121). In all of these aspects the bestial is figured in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's sense of the grotesque as a 'combination of human and animal traits', in which the human is not a stable entity but a 'phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis of death and birth, growth and becoming' (316). Indeed, Graham Greene in his admiring 1936 review of *Nightwood* brings to the fore this beastly grotesqueness, identifying a kinship between Joyce's transgressive depiction of the body in *Ulysses* and Barnes's 'gaudy, cheap cuts from the beast life', a phrase Greene lifts from the novel ('Fiction Chronicle' 678-9). Barnes's grotesque beasts, Greene rightly observes, are premised on transgressing bodily limits and norms; Robin as the 'beast turning human' who makes 'the structure of our head and jaws ache' (N 36)

¹¹⁴ Guido's response to antisemitism is to deny his Jewishness, marry a 'Viennese woman of great strength and military beauty' (N 3) and to hide his Jewish identity from his son, Felix. Rohman has discussed the ways in which racial and evolutionary theories intersect in *Nightwood* (134-7), while Meryl Altman has examined the degree to which Barnes's novel is complicit with anti-Semitic rhetoric (161-3).

embodies the fear that we might not be as fully human as we think we are. It is in this respect that, as Scott points out, *Nightwood* might be seen as a book that is ‘premised on the construction of the bestial’, a word which, as Scott argues, carries a ‘heavier emotional charge’ than ‘the animal’, not least in the horrifying ‘sense of origin’ it instils in the human (*Refiguring II* 112; 102). In Robin, who ‘carrie[s] the quality of “way back” as animals do’ (*N* 39), beastliness is wholly bound up with the threat of degeneracy and atavism. For Scott, Barnes reveals how the beast is always ‘the other of the human’, always threatening to undermine the dichotomies that uphold the tenets of humanism (102). As Caselli similarly argues, it is in this sense that beast comes to stand for the ‘mutual interdependence of night and day, of corruption and innocence, which is, in the text, the founding structure of a language that necessarily needs to occupy a “position”’ (181).

Yet, while Scott and Caselli are both correct in differentiating the beast from the animal and identifying it as one of the central aesthetic components of Barnes’s modernism of equivocation, there is a danger of too schematically positioning the bestial with a set of oppositions between the human and the nonhuman. Evidence that Barnes’s resisted ‘the beast’ being a fixed schematic trope extends beyond the variability of the figure that I have highlighted in the above survey of beasts across her corpus. In the two pages of corrections she sent to the prospective Italian translator of *Nightwood*, Bruno Maffi, in 1948 Barnes explicitly dispels the notion of ‘the beast’ as a self-identical or coherent figure. Responding to Maffi’s query regarding a metaphor offered by the loquacious café philosopher and unlicensed medical practitioner Dr Matthew O’Connor, in which he likens the loss of innocence to a ‘child going small in the claws of a beast’ (*N* 72), Barnes corrects Maffi’s use of the definite article. It is ‘a (not *the*) beast’ she instructs him (‘Attention Signor Maffi’, emphasis in original).

The definite article is replaced by the indefinite, both in the implication that this is one of perhaps many beasts but also in the sense of semantic indefinability. 'I can't give an exact account of phrase', Barnes explains, '[it] has to be understood as it stands' ('Attention Signor Maffi'). The difference between *the* beast and *a* beast is considerable. The former is open to the criticism that Derrida makes of the term 'the animal' as a false (and even asinine) philosophical category through which humans negatively construct themselves (*Animal* 31), while the latter implies a multiplicity and heterogeneity that escape binary oppositions. Indeed, the heterogeneity of the term is precisely what Barnes's instructions to Maffi insist upon: since the phrase is in an important sense untranslatable, in that it can only be understood 'as it stands', the translation must necessarily bestialise the original English and become something beastly itself.

As captured in Barnes's ironic statement in a letter to Natalie Clifford Barney that, for the modernist writers who lived to see the 1960s, it is a 'beastly time for beasts', Barnes's beasts are never wholly identical with themselves or inherently unequivocal constructions (Barnes to Natalie Barney, 12 April 1968). They are themselves beastly, roaming about and transgressing semantic boundaries. Indeed, Barnes had been conscious of the mutability of beastly figures during the composition of *Nightwood* and it is the polymorphous potential of the beast that emerges as central to Barnes's endeavours as a modernist writer. Writing to Coleman in 1935, Barnes suggested that *Night Beast* (noticeably without either the definite or indefinite article) would be a fitting title for the novel if it was not for 'the debased meaning now put on that nice word beast' (5 May 1935). Bearing in mind the circumstances of her first novel, *Ryder*, in which passages had been expurgated by the publisher due to anxieties around censorship which I discuss more fully in Chapter 5, the degree to which Barnes

is being ironic here vis-à-vis debasement has been overlooked by previous critics.¹¹⁵ Debasement, which shares an etymological commonality with ‘beast’ in that both once pertained to lowness, finds direct expression in *Nightwood*, not only explicitly invoked in chapter titles such as ‘Bow Down’ and ‘Go Down, Matthew’ and in Robin’s act of going down alongside the dog in the novel’s final moments, but also in what Kenneth Burke identified to be the novel’s structural ‘transcendence downwards’ (244).¹¹⁶ Here, the description of a beast *lowing* in its beastly dimension takes on a further meaning. To be beastly is to be low, not only in the sense of being close to the earth like all other animals, but in the euphemistic associations encoded within such beastly acts of going down. If Wordsworth’s poetics cleaned up nature, Barnes insists on a lowliness that makes her beastly aesthetic decidedly debased.

The centrality of lowness and debasement to Barnes’s beastly aesthetic gives it a discernible inter-species charge. Robin’s beastly descent sees her repeatedly likened to animals by other characters; she is, as O’Connor puts it, like ‘an animal, born at the opening of the eye, going only forward, and at the end of the day, shutting out memory with the dropping of the lid’ (*N* 113). Yet, as with Felix’s identification of Robin’s wild and beastly irises, O’Connor’s description of Robin largely works towards a sentimental and romanticised notion of her perceived beastly animality, a perception that implicitly shores up his own status as human. In this sense, *Nightwood*

¹¹⁵ See Plumb’s introduction to the restored *Nightwood* (ix) and Dana Seitler’s reading of Barnes’s letter as a ‘disavowal’ of the ‘cultural valences’ attached to the beast (114).

¹¹⁶ These chapter titles also have religious connotations that, in later years, Barnes wished to emphasise at the expense of their clearly euphemistic associations. Writing to the literary critic James Scott, Barnes intoned that he should ‘stop this tiresome phallic symbolism, and sex business in everything. Very tiresome, and usually incorrect: such as the comment on “go down” it means exactly what is [*sic*] says, from “Go down Moses, let my people go.” ... and in any other “Go down” - - really Mr. Scott! [*sic*]’ (Barnes to Scott, c.a. October 1971).

foregrounds the historical tensions between ‘beastly’ as a word that denotes the human’s carnal proximity to other animals and as a pejorative term that works to displace animality, situating the human outside of the animal world. The OED’s two foremost definitions of ‘beastly’ go some way toward capturing the contradictions at play here. The first definition states that the word beastly can be used to describe ‘the nature of living creatures (*including man*); animal, natural, “carnal” or what might be called the condition of animal life in general. The second definition, in direct contradiction, defines beastly as ‘pertaining to the lower animals (*as opposed to man*); merely animal, bestial’ (*OED* 2016, emphasis added).¹¹⁷ Beastliness, then, as those around Robin implicitly understand, simultaneously acknowledges and displaces human animality.

Barnes’s ability to exploit beastliness as a term that foregrounds an anxious undecidability around the status of the human body as both separate from and continuous with other species structures not only *Nightwood*, but also her first novel *Ryder*. An intergenerational family saga predominantly set on a claustrophobic farmstead in rural New York, the novel centres on the tragi-comic exploits of the eponymous polygamist-farmer Wendell Ryder, his socially-progressive mother, Sophia, his two wives, Amelia and Kate, and their multiple children, who all live together under the same roof. Told through a highly stylised, episodic narrative of nonsequential chapters, with each chapter written in a different literary style and accompanied by Barnes’s own illustrations, *Ryder*, like *Nightwood*, foregrounds an aesthetics of obscene beastliness. As Alex Goody notes, the novel’s portrayal of cramped interspecies relations insists on the close ‘proximities of grotesque bodies’

¹¹⁷ Both usages are traced back to the fourteenth century and, as such, neither can be considered the definitive origin.

and unsettles ‘the boundaries of the subject and the proper body’ (169).¹¹⁸ Moreover, in bestialising her human characters, Barnes draws out the internal contradictions inherent to constructions of beastliness. For instance, Sophia excuses her son’s polygamy and adultery since he ‘lust[s] openly and sweetly like [...] the beast of the field’, implicitly insisting on the human’s place within a natural, animal state (*R* 238). A page later, having advised him that he should, however, leave one of his wives since he risks being prosecuted for bigamy, she warns that if he ignores her advice he will ‘fall alone’ and ‘be as the beast’, a description that positions beastliness in terms of a fallenness seemingly applicable only to humans (*R* 239). Here, being ‘like [...] the beast’ and ‘as the beast’ take on oppositional meanings in the space of a few paragraphs. The former is a description of beastliness whose proper applicability is to nonhuman animals and in which to act beastly is to be animalised. The latter essentially reverses this, in which beastly behaviour, since it implies a moral transgression, is that which is only proper to the human. We see this contradiction elsewhere in the novel. For instance, the livestock are figured as ‘beasts’ luxuriating in a brute innocence that affords them a ‘holy look’ in their eyes, insisting on beastliness as a space of animality outside of, or prior to, the human, yet a short while later when Wendell is accused of being a ‘beast’ by his legal wife, Amelia, it is precisely because of the lack of morals that, as a human, he should have (*R* 187; 224). Beastliness, as such, is not simply a description of animal characteristics in either a general or specific sense. Instead, it functions to signify a mode of properness or improperness as it relates to perceived ideas around the body and moral behaviour that include but extend beyond human life.

¹¹⁸ For Goody, the carnivalesque assemblage of more-than-human bodies in *Ryder* creates an aesthetic of ‘becoming-animal’ (169).

What might be described as Barnes's beastly deployment of beasts in her writing foregrounds what Derrida would later describe as the inherent instability of the word 'the beast' and the way in which its overdetermination always complicates the question of 'what is proper to the beast' (*Beast I* 138). Identifying how in French *la bête* is a term which can be used to imply stupidity, Derrida identifies the irony that the attribute of being *bête*, being beastly stupid, is 'appropriate only to a person' not an animal since to be *bête* is to lack the sense or intellect, which, according to dominant humanist and theological paradigms, are the exclusive domains of the human (138).¹¹⁹ In both Derrida's and Barnes's foregrounding of this beastly internal contradiction what emerges is that the beast, unlike the animal, does not work towards a categorising function. Rather, it points to slippages between categorical definitions and their inability to contain what they purport to define. In the same speech wherein Sophia likens Wendell to the beast of the fields, she asserts that a 'woman can be civilized beyond civilization and she can be beast beyond beast' (*R* 238), a description that emphasises the potentially infinitely circular logic of beastliness and the ungroundedness of the appellation. It is a moment in which, as with Robin's grotesqueness and apparent primordially, Barnes conveys the way in which the bestial figures as a site of anxiety around the human, its relation to and exceptionalism from other animals, and the way in which, as Derrida asserts, beastliness never arrives alone but always implies a trans-species contagion (158). In *Nightwood* and *Ryder*, to be a beast is not to inhabit a certain position, instead beastliness correlates to the processes of affiliation and displacement through which subjects are formed. Beastliness, in this sense, present itself in similar terms to Lee Edelman's description of queerness as an

¹¹⁹ A correlation can be found with the English here, where the OED gives the third definition of 'beastly' to mean 'resembling a beast in unintelligence; brutish, irrational, without thought' (*OED* 2016).

inherently oppositional category. In the same sense that for Edelman queerness ‘can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one’, Barnes’s beastliness operates as a mode of disturbance (17).¹²⁰ Indeed, as the next section will show, beastliness and queerness in Barnes’s writing cannot be safely separated. In destabilising the *proper* relation between the human and the animal, beastly figurations become a mode of undermining the strategies through which the fully-human human is established as a stable ontological category.

4.2 Creaturely Time and Beastly Negativity

Thus far I have examined how Barnes’s writing exhibits a beastliness that worries the category of the fully-human human. I want now to consider how this beastliness speaks to, and, indeed, problematises, discourse around the creaturely in the Anthropocene. Tobias Menely, offering an overview of the way in which the creaturely has gained purchase in critical theory and literary studies in recent years, explains the figure’s origin in Walter Benjamin’s notion of creaturely life in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928), published in the same year as Barnes’s *Ryder* and Woolf’s *Orlando*. The Benjaminian creature, Menely explains, approaches biological human life through terms of relationality and vulnerability, characterised ‘above all by the supplanting of eschatological time with natural-historical time’ (14). In place of grand historical human narratives, creaturely time asserts a ‘natural world bereft of transcendental signature or promise’ (14). In recent work within animal studies, this Benjaminian creatureliness has provided the basis for a trans-species

¹²⁰ As Ery Shin notes, Edelman’s notion of queerness as a negative agency that undoes structures of identity offers a queer theory that is more sympathetic to Barnes’s texts than theories which are premised on more straightforwardly emancipatory models of queer identity or performance (183-5).

ethics. David Harman's definition of the creaturely as emphasising the 'fundamental continuity' between humans and nonhumans, and Anat Pick's influential notion of creaturely vulnerability as a 'universal mode of exposure' across species lines (5), for instance, present two clear examples of the ways in which the creaturely has come to have a privileged position within ethical accounts of animal life.¹²¹

Arguably, the most prominent and widely-influential example of the ascendancy of the creature within animal studies is to be found in Haraway's notion of 'critters', the American vernacular she borrows to name the planet's 'motley crowd of living beings' (*When Species Meet* 330n33). Although Haraway explicitly states that they are *not* creatures, her critters present themselves as a development of her earlier configuration of species relations where, in a manner similar to Menely's definition of the creaturely, terms of attachment, particularly companionship and love, are privileged (*Companion* 3). For Haraway, the imperative of a critterly perspective has become even more pronounced in the Anthropocene, as the 'destruction of places and times of refuge for people and other critters' becomes an increasingly pressing issue (*Staying* 100).¹²² In contrast to those mourning the potential extinction of the humanist idea of the human, Haraway argues that the Anthropocene calls for a critterly human to emerge through affiliative acts of 'making kin' with nonhumans, a symbiosis that will provide the foundation for a future planetary ethics (*Staying* 40; 89). In the Anthropocene, then, the critter becomes a figure that affirms relationality and intimacy over difference or distance. Indeed, in this respect, and despite Haraway's

¹²¹ In contrast, Eric Santner's work on the creaturely argues that the creaturely reveals 'a specifically human way of finding oneself in the midst of antagonism in and of the political field' (xix).

¹²² See the Introduction for Haraway's disinclination towards the Anthropocene as a term and her preferences for the Chthulucene, Plantationocene and Capitalocene.

protestations that critters are not creatures, her notion of critterly symbiosis can be seen to broadly parallel the Benjaminian supplanting of apocalyptic time with a temporality organised through natural, or rather geological, history.

There is a danger in insisting on too schematic or definitive a difference between the ‘beast’ and the ‘creature’, especially since they are often used in a seemingly synonymous fashion. For instance, David Wills offers a Haraway-inflected translation in his translating of Derrida’s *bêtes* as ‘critters’ rather than ‘beasts’ in the English edition of *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (35). Yet, if the beast is not exactly the animal neither is it the creature, and in Barnes’s writing the creaturely has a satirical register which clearly differentiates it from the bestial.¹²³ In *Nightwood*, for instance, the only references to creatures are nearly all within O’Connor’s monologues and, more often than not, in contexts that imply satirical condescension, such as his descriptions of himself as ‘the funniest looking creature on the face of the earth’ and the destitute aristocrats who keep up appearances as ‘poor creatures’ (N 79; 80). The same is also true of *Ryder*, where references to creatures are most frequently found in the epistolary chapters written by Wendell’s religious moralist sister-in-law, Ann. In her letters a similarly implicit condescension within the creature is drawn out, such as in her description of the prospect of having to work as a live-in maid for ‘some creature who cannot hold his, or her, wind like [a] gentleman or lady’ (R 181). Ann’s earlier religious use of creaturely language also foregrounds the term’s deep etymological roots in divine discourses of creation and destruction. If, as I have outlined above, the creaturely has become a critical idiom through which eschatological time is

¹²³ Barnes’s *Creatures in an Alphabet* (1982), which she was preparing for publication shortly before her death, represents a different approach to writing the creaturely. See Caselli on how this late work disrupts the notion of a divine cosmos of creation and uses simplistic creaturely idioms to estrange language (109-20).

repudiated, then, in contrast, Ann's hopeful lament that surely 'the creatures [...] do so disgrace [the world], root and branch, that the Lord will have none of it whatever in another generation' (*R* 152), suggests that the creaturely rhetoric is, in fact, irreparably grounded within the eschatological. In invoking the divine creation inherent to the figure of the creature, Ann implicitly presents the way in which creaturely life and apocalyptic narratives are constitutive of one another. While for Haraway, the 'taint of [...] "creation" does not stick to "critters"' and she instructs her readers that if they 'see such a semiotic barnacle, scrape it off' (*Staying* 169 n1), Barnes's novel suggests the intransigence of such religious attachments. Indeed, Haraway's Chthulucene, in which critterly life emerges as an alternative to humanist narratives of planetary apocalypse, finds its inverse in *Ryder* where for Ann, creatures and creation are central to a condescending and anthropocentric orderliness that privileges recognisability and categorisation. While Barnes would later reject an eschatological translation of *a* beast as *the* beast in her translation notes to Maffi, here the creaturely is positioned as inseparable from all-too-human narratives of apocalypse.

In contrast to the condescension of the creaturely, the negativity inherent to Barnes's beastly aesthetic trouble anthropocentric and religious temporalities. The aforementioned copy of White's *The Book of Beasts* in Barnes's personal library opens with the argument that the word 'beast' should be 'properly used about lions, leopards, tigers, wolves, foxes, dogs, monkeys and others which rage about with tooth and claw [...] They are called beasts because of the violence with which they rage' (7). While Barnes procured this book from Eliot in the 1950s, decades after writing *Ryder* and *Nightwood*, there is a sense in which it nonetheless codified for her the way in which, in contrast to the implicitly divine harmony of creaturely life, beastliness embodies

violence and discontinuity. In *Ryder*, this dichotomy between beastly violence and creaturely harmony is presented in explicitly gendered terms. In a chapter entitled ‘The Beast Thingumbob’, Wendell Ryder tells his children, Julie and Timothy, a story of the Beast Thingumbob, ‘a great beast’ who is described as horned, winged and clawed, and having ‘boiling thoughts’ and ‘eyes like flakes of fire’ (R 119). This beast, Wendell explains, finds himself ‘stricken for the love of a strange creature’ named Cheerful (R 119). A creaturely counterpart to the beastly Thingumbob, Cheerful has hoofed feet, coiled hair, ten breasts and a face which ‘was not yet’ (R 119). This creature, ‘fettered to the earth’, is characterised in terms of virginal equanimity: she ‘was a virgin, but not as other women, for [...] she had a greater share than any mortal woman could bear [...] but to her the putting up was no great business’ (R 119-20). Inculcated with a sense of responsibility to male desire and dutiful reproduction, she agrees to ‘die beneath’ Thingumbob in the process of giving him ‘ten sons’ who will ‘burst [her] asunder’ (R 121). As Sheryl Stevenson notes, the image of this creaturely woman ‘rooted to the earth [...] merges the female, animal and vegetable realms’ (90). It presents a suffocating ecological image in which female bodies are construed as homogenous, inert matter to be worked upon by the active male body. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5, where I examine how nature and sexual difference are entangled in *Ryder*, the creaturely and the beastly are figured in terms of power differentials that can be mapped onto a discourse of gender expectations. The story concludes with Thingumbob ‘pluck[ing] his sons from her belly’ and carrying them back ‘to his nest’ where he sits amidst the ‘smoke of his sorrow’ for her death (R 121). After Wendell explains to his children that the creature sacrificed herself for ‘the useless gift of love’ Julie asks in horror ‘is that all?’ (R 121), as Barnes invites the

reader to read Wendell's story against itself, as a narrative in which creaturely passivity is constitutive of a patriarchal ideal of femininity.

In *Nightwood*, Barnes offers a more complex portrayal of beastly violence and its relation to sex, gender and sexuality. Here, beastliness, understood to be a wilful and violent transgression of a creaturely aesthetics crosses demarcations of sex and gender, as well as species, and resists being neatly mapped onto gender relations. Instead, beastliness is figured as a contagion that produces difference, distance and nonidentification. This is particularly clear in the various scenes of interspecies encounters. When Robin and Nora meet in the circus, it is a shared experience with a lioness that galvanizes their desires and instigates their relationship:

Then as one powerful lioness came to the turn of the bars, exactly opposite the girl, she turned her furious great head with its yellow eyes afire and went down, her paws thrusting through the bars and, as she regarded the girl, as if a river were falling behind impassable heat, her eyes flowed in tears that never reached the surface. At that the girl rose straight up. Nora took her hand. "Let's get out of here!" the girl said, and still holding her hand Nora took her out. (*N* 49)

The passage initially appears to invite itself to be read as a moment that erodes beastly differences for a moment of creaturely transcendence. The long sentences and the shifting subject of the third person pronoun engender an ambiguity that implies interchangeability. It is not immediately clear, for instance, whether the weeping subject 'regard[ing] the girl' is the lioness or Nora, through whom the chapter is largely focalised. Moreover, both sorrow and desire appear to traverse species boundaries in a manner not dissimilar to the affective terms of kinship often foregrounded in accounts of the creaturely. In such a reading, the lioness, as desiring and subjugated subject, becomes a relatively straightforward emblem of female

subjectivity trapped within what Derrida describes as a hierarchal configuration in which ‘the rights of man over the beast’ places the ‘master, king, husband, father’ above ‘the beast, the woman, the child’ (*Beast I* 29-30). For Rohman, who offers a psychoanalytic reading of the scene that reaches this conclusion, an affinity between the lioness and the girl emerges in their being conterminously stultified by ‘humanist power structures’ (145).¹²⁴

Yet, to read the circus scene in this way involves overlooking how, although a certain trans-species empathy is established, the novel’s language emphasises distance and asymmetry rather than intimacy and unity. Literalised in the ‘bars’ of the cage, the passage insists rather more on separation than straightforward affiliation. The awkward, paradoxical syntax of eyes flowing with tears which never reach ‘the surface’ intimates an image before undoing it; the tears of the lioness/Nora, at first apparently perceptible, retreat from the surface. Having teased at a moment of *recognisable* interspecies empathy, Barnes instead insists on an unrecognisability that takes form at the level of the sentence itself. In the syntactical contradiction, the reader experiences the same movement from recognition to unrecognition and from surety to uncertainty. Rather than producing a stable representation, the passage’s meaning and affect emerges not from nouns but adjectives (‘furious’, ‘afire’, ‘impassable’, ‘powerful’) and verbs (‘thrusting’, ‘falling’, ‘flowed’), abstractions which insist on vicissitudes, differences and violence. While James B. Scott is certainly correct in suggesting that the scene establishes symbolic parallels between Robin and the lioness, illustrated in her mane-like hair and the later description of her Paris apartment as a

¹²⁴ Other recent readings similarly position it as a moment of creaturely affiliation. Monica Faltejskova, for instance, simplifies the animal to a position of prelinguistic innocence paralleling Robin (156-7), while Edwards argues that a ‘mutual recognition of the currents that run between human and animal’ emerges from the text (170).

'lair' (111), what emerges is not a creaturely similarity, but rather a beastliness premised on undoing identity. The lioness, foremost in White's definition of the beast as that which rages and roams, becomes emblematic of Robin's own bestial nature. This is an understanding of the animal premised not on identification and recognition. Rather, the scene suggests the kind of beastly contagion which Derrida identifies as traversing human and animal relations (*Beast I* 158) and which we see passing between the human and nonhuman characters in the circus scene, not establishing forms of identity but undoing them.

Elsewhere in the novel, Barnes makes clear how this beastly contagion is bound up with an animal sexuality that poses a threat to stable, heterosexual categories of sexual identity. Moreover, this beastly sexuality embodies an offensiveness (in both senses of the word) that links it to the violence that White's bestiary insists upon as *the* defining characteristic of beastliness. The female circus performers whom Felix befriends in the first chapter are 'stronger than their beasts' and driven by 'desires utterly divergent' from the genteel Felix, their queer agency all the more powerful for it being 'inappropriate' (*N* 10-11). Similarly, Robin's beastliness is figured as an 'infected carrier of the past' (*N* 36), a phrase that implies genetic infection and which, as Dana Seitler argues, invokes the prevalent pseudo-evolutionary discourse of the early twentieth century in which homosexuality was seen in terms of 'bestial devolution' (121). Robin, described in one scene as literally exuding an atavistic queerness through her body's organic 'perfume' of 'that earth-flesh, fungi' (*N* 34), presents a dangerous and ultimately deadly threat of contagion to those around her. This is beastliness figured as non-identity or what Rohman describes as Robin's animal-like 'compulsion to move, change and resist symbolic forces' that dash Nora's hope for a stable lesbian relationship that might mimic a heteronormative coupling

(147-8). Indeed, the description of Nora and Robin ‘looking into each other’s face, their two heads in their four hands, so strained together that the space that divided them seemed to be thrusting them apart’ (*N* 52) replicates the earlier syntax of attraction and repulsion that characterised the previous scene at the circus, leading Nora to realise that the only way ‘Robin would belong to her’ would be in ‘death’ (*N* 52). Robin’s queer beastliness operates through a violent, undirected agency in which ‘[d]eath went with them, together and alone’ (*N* 52) and in which Nora’s proximity to Robin’s sexuality induces ‘torment and catastrophe, thoughts of resurrection, the second duel’ (*N* 52). It is not homosexual or extra-marital sex in and of itself that is the site of Robin’s radical queerness, but a beastliness likeable to what Edelman describes as a ‘queer negativity’ that opposes ‘every substantiation of identity’ (4-6). This queer beastliness threatens to violently transpose humanist notions of identity and continuity, exposing the hollowness of the humanist ideal of the human as master of himself and those around him, and destabilising *all* sites of value and meaning.

This queer negativity finds its clearest expression in the much-disputed ending to *Nightwood*, which presents the ties between Robin’s beastliness and animal sexuality most directly. Although critics have read the final scene in widely contrasting terms nearly all see the novel’s final moment as central to Barnes’s understanding of animal life, with early critics reading Robin’s going down with the dog as a bestial withdrawal from civilised humanity (Joseph Frank 49; Burke 246-7) and later critics reading the scene as an ambivalent affirmation of becoming animal (Kalaidjian 81; Rohman 156-8; Goody, 169-73).¹²⁵ Much like the scene in the circus, Barnes’s language resists straightforward exegesis:

¹²⁵ Other recent readings of the ending continue to reduce the dog to wholly a metaphoric function; see, for instance, Tyrus Miller’s Irigarayan reading of the scene’s

The dog, quivering in every muscle, sprang back, his tongue a stiff curving terror in his mouth; moved backward, back, as she came on, whimpering too, coming forward, her head turned completely sideways, grinning and whimpering. Back in the farthest corner, the dog reared as if to avoid something that troubled him to such agony that he seemed to be rising from the floor; then he stopped, clawing sideways at the wall, his forepaws lifted and sliding. The head down, dragging her forelocks in the dust, she struck against his side. He let loose one howl of misery and bit at her, dashing about her, barking and as he sprang on either side of her he always kept his head towards her, dashing his rump now this side, now that, of the wall. (*N* 139)

As with Robin's encounter with the lioness, the passage engenders ambiguity in its accumulation of clauses, as new, mostly intransitive verbs incessantly transform and disorient the syntax, making it initially difficult to be certain if it is the dog or Robin who is the grammatical subject of any given verb, as the structure of the sentence reflects the morphological transformations taking place in the scene itself. The scene's queer invocation of beastly sex is conveyed through grotesquely suggestive images of 'quivering', 'stiff curving', 'whimpering', 'grinning' bodies, as they undergo violent mutations that see dog and human coalesce into unfamiliar and strange assemblages. In the final typescript drafts the insinuation of sexual transgression is even stronger. The dog is described as looking at Robin as 'a mistress', with the final sentence ending in a description of 'his eyes bloodshot and waiting' (*Nightwood* TSC1).

When Coleman wrote to Barnes in September 1935 after having read a draft of the novel to say that she and Peggy Guggenheim recoiled at what they assumed to be the unintended insinuation of a 'sexual' act with a dog, Barnes's response was the

'mystical ecstasy' (159-60) or Seitler's reading of the scene in terms of culturally prevalent notions of homosexual degeneracy (126). More recently, Bonnie Roos, who narrowly 'deciphers' *Nightwood* as an allegory of world historical events of the 1920s, sees the dog as 'an embodiment' of the 'working classes' (30; 197-8).

cautious, but defensive ‘if it sounds sexual, then sexual it sounds’ (Coleman to Barnes, 27 August 1935; Barnes to Coleman, 20 September 1935).¹²⁶ Barnes’s tautological emphasis on the passage’s phonic attributes, the way in which the grotesque images *sound* like (rather than describe) sex, suggest a broader understanding of sexuality than allowed for in narrow definitions of sex and sexuality. As Barnes insinuates, the queerness of the scene resides not in ascertaining whether what is taking place is an act of sexual intercourse, or what Barnes later described in a 1979 letter to her (unwelcome) biographer Andrew Field as her exasperation with readers who read the scene as Robin ‘trying to make love to the dog’ (15 May 1979), but rather a more broadly dehumanised or, more aptly, *beastly* understanding of sex itself that emerges from the scene’s negativity and undecidability. Robin’s beastliness in this final passage emerges not as a mode of identity or becoming, but resides in the queer vicissitudes of sexual figuration through which her identity is incessantly constructed and deconstructed.

Shin suggests that Barnes does not go so far as Edelman does in his avowal of the death drive, since in her ultimately unflattering depiction of Robin she reveals the ‘dangers of entering that chasm where even the terror of being elsewhere terminates’ (192). Yet such a reading that would look to distance Barnes from Robin works to actively restore a humanity and a humanism that by the end of the novel is left undone.

¹²⁶ Eliot, in a letter to Emily Coleman at the time of the novel’s preparation for publication by Faber & Faber in early 1936 and which Coleman cited in full in a letter to Barnes, also voiced concerns: ‘I should certainly advise strongly the omission of the last chapter, which is not only superfluous, but really an anti-climax’. Eventually acquiescing to the inclusion of the final chapter, Eliot then wanted her to substitute “unclean” for “obscene” in the final paragraph, an editorial decision which Barnes also successfully resisted (Coleman to Barnes, 26 January 1936). Faltejskova’s archive-led analysis of Eliot’s editorial influence on *Nightwood* argues that his suggestions were informed by his own sexual anxiety (82-102).

In the final chapter, prior to reaching the chapel with Nora and the dog, Robin walks the ‘open country’ speaking in a ‘low voice to the animals’ and grasping ‘those that came near [...] straining their fur back until their eyes were narrowed and teeth bare’ (N 137-8), enacting a beastly alliance with the nonhuman world through terms that emphasise violence, difference and a dehumanised sexuality, and problematising the idea that beastliness might straightforwardly translate into a form of interspecies ethics. As in her encounter with the dog, it is contagion and transference through which Barnes bestialises identity and meaning. In contrast to either the figure of the fully-human or creaturely human, her beasts work to deconstruct modes of relationality and recognisability upon which the coherency of such figures rely. Indeed, in the recalcitrant quality of *Nightwood*, where stable semantic meaning often seems to be at risk of withdrawing back into highly stylised prose, problems of recognisability and readability are repeatedly foregrounded, as the reader becomes aware of the beastly otherness of the text.

4.3 Anthropomorphic Surfaces

Monica Faltejskova argues that the effect of textual alterity evoked in the final scene of *Nightwood* is produced by a ‘complete collapse of the literal and the figurative’ (147). Moreover, it is precisely in Barnes’s foregrounding of abstraction and uncertainty, in which the onus is on the reader to self-consciously interpret the scene, that the novel appears to theorise the transference of beastly materiality to human meaning. We see this in how, in addition to the accumulative clauses, intransitive verbs and complex syntax that engender the final scene with ambiguity, Barnes’s use of conditional language adds a further layer of abstraction. The dog rears ‘as if’ to have avoided Robin, shortly after he ‘seemed’ to be rising from the floor and later he

runs ‘as if’ to circumvent her (N 139). Elizabeth Blake draws attention to Barnes’s use of conditional language in this scene to offer a compelling counter-argument to those who would straightforwardly posit Robin as “becoming animal”. This conditional language, Blake argues, reveals a residual anthropomorphism in Robin’s behaviour, as she projects an idea of animality onto the dog (165). For Blake, this anthropomorphism means that the novel’s beastly ending is, paradoxically, Robin’s most human moment. While Blake is correct to identify the processes of anthropomorphism taking place both at a narrative and textual level, her conclusion both conflates the narrative perspective with Robin’s and overlooks the potential for anthropomorphism to operate in a self-reflexive way. Derek Ryan describes the potential for grammatical constructions like ‘as if’ to work towards nonanthropocentrism by introducing a linguistic hesitation ‘in the attempt to find a rhythm that expresses the relationship between human and nonhuman’ beyond that which can be straightforwardly presented (‘Following’ 295). Recalling Barnes’s emphasis in her letter to Coleman on how the ending *sounds*, the idea of meaning emerging rhythmically, rather than through direct description, foregrounds the beastly potential for language to transgress defined boundaries of animality and sexuality. Here, then, we can see how the stylistic presentation of *Nightwood*’s conclusion underscores the fact that Barnes’s writing is not interested in *representations* of humans and animals. Rather, its interests lie in drawing attention to the processes of figuration through which structures of meaning (including identity and sexuality) are produced, processes which are in themselves inherently anthropomorphic.

Anthropomorphism here should not be confused with a narrower understanding of personification, the literary device in which animals, things or ideas are made to resemble humans. Rather, it names what Rosi Braidotti describes as the

situated mode of encountering the world through ‘the anthropologically bound structure of the human’ in which our sensory and cognitive experiences, and, as such, our epistemological and aesthetic figurations, ‘will always be anthropomorphic, that is to say, embedded and embodied, enfolded, affective, and relational’ (‘Four Theses’ 32-34). For Braidotti, this fact of anthropomorphism is not inherently restrictive, but opens the possibility for a ‘self-aware anthropomorphism’ which, by creatively and critically embracing the limits and possibilities of our boundedness, has the potential to ‘overcome anthropocentrism’ (‘Four Theses’ 34-5). Literary manifestations of anthropomorphism, such as personification, arguably occupy a privileged place within such a configuration. As Paul De Man writes, anthropomorphism can be understood as ‘the *illusionary* resuscitation of the natural breath of language, frozen into stone by the semantic power of the trope’ (247, emphasis added). That is to say, it is an attempt to restore language to something natural and to break with deadened artifice; it is a ‘figural affirmation that claims to overcome the deadly negative power invested in the figure’ (247). Yet, De Man explains, it is also ‘an identification on the level of substance’ in so far as anthropomorphism ‘takes one entity for another and thus implies the constitution of specific entities prior to their confusion’ (241). Anthropomorphism, then, relies on a distinction between the human and the nonhuman made ahead of time. Indeed, Cohen, rereading De Man’s essay in the context of the Anthropocene, whose very name suggests that the human sees itself *everywhere*, argues that we should recognise anthropomorphism not as the means through which the human projects its own essential qualities onto an external world, but, inversely, as a process which ‘retro-projects that there was an entity or *Anthropos* to begin with’ (‘Trolling’ 52). Or, more plainly stated, for De Man and Cohen, anthropomorphism is not only the mode through which we tropologically assimilate

the nonhuman otherness of the world into recognisable human forms, but an ontological mode through which the human constructs itself. The human creates its own image through processes of anthropomorphism.

In Barnes's writing we can see how a self-reflexive anthropomorphism has the capacity to bestialise an anthropocentric or originary notion of the human. Indeed, in turning to Barnes's journalism, we can see how while *Nightwood* and *Ryder* eschew realist representation in favour of a textual indeterminacy that foregrounds anthropomorphic processes of figuration, Barnes's earliest writing operates through the inverse of this tactic by taking realism to its logical extremes. In her 1914 *New York World Magazine* 'interview' with Dinah, a three-year old gorilla captured in the French Congo and brought back to the Bronx Zoo, Barnes presents the way in which representational language actively misrepresents animal life. The short and witty article, typical of the sensationalist reporting that Barnes undertook in the 1910s, in which she 'freely interpret[s]' Dinah's answers according to the loose 'rules' of communication established by the primatologist Richard L. Garner treads a fine line between biting, deadpan humour and an attempt to creatively document a modern interspecies encounter ('Girl' 9). Putting human words into Dinah's mouth, Barnes offers a comic account of the gorilla's 'high intelligence' and 'queer [...] drawing-room caution' as she gives forth on New York's modern electric lighting, its taxis and chewing gum (9).¹²⁷ Barnes's anthropomorphism is knowingly and bluntly reductive:

“Let me see” – she [Dinah] cupped her hand about her ear and dusted a piece of lint from her shoulders. (I freely interpreted according to Professor Garner's rules.) “The first thing that really attracted my attention was the meter upon

¹²⁷ The two reprinted versions of Barnes's interview with Dinah, in the collections *New York* (1989) and *Vivid and Repulsive as the Truth* (2016), exclude the lead sentence of the article which not only describes the gorilla's 'high intelligence' but outline her infant vulnerability and the background to her capture.

the taxi that the professor hired to bring me here to the zoo. That thing climbed exactly three-and-a-half times faster than a chimpanzee [...]" (9)

As Nancy Levine notes, Barnes's decision to put her own words in the mouth of Dinah is not itself exceptional; it was a strategy she repeatedly employed in her interviews with humans too (30). Indeed, Caselli's description of Barnes's frequent journalistic ventriloquism as an ironic attack on 'the primacy of voice or the mark of a natural, or a primal state of language' (23) speaks to the way in which Barnes's literary strategies work towards the deconstruction of language that De Man outlines in his description of the *illusionary* effect of anthropomorphism. Yet, while ventriloquism might be a common feature of Barnes's interviews, her article on Dinah also draws attention to the intersections between language and species representation. The insufficiency of the 'rules' that Garner has devised to delineate and regulate Dinah's nonhuman modes of communication are satirised through what might be described as an *anthropomorphic realism*. That is to say, Barnes's satirical representation of Dinah works to blur the line between verisimilitude and artifice: it both claims to be authentic or truthful in the sense of being a work of journalism and is, at the same time, clearly a fiction.

The problem of representation is further gestured towards in the article's conclusion. The zookeeper, forcibly restraining the now agitated gorilla, is described as 'search[ing] in vain for something that would symbolise Dinah's soul and personality' (9). Failing to find an adequate symbol, the article ends with the zookeeper remarking that Rudyard Kipling's 'remark about the female of the species holds true' (9). A reference to Kipling's popular poem 'The Female of the Species' (1911), the interview invokes the poem's concluding assertion that:

And Man knows it! Knows, moreover, that the Woman that God gave him

Must command but may not govern – shall enthrall but not enslave him.
And *She* knows, because *She* warns him, and her instincts never fail,
That the Female of Her Species is more deadly than the Male. (Kipling 142,
emphasis in original)

Barnes's interview with Dinah, then, concludes with a citation of an anthropomorphic truism that, if not already a cliché, is reductively essentialist in its portrayal of race and gender, not to mention species. The ironic ambiguity as to whether Barnes is ventriloquising the zoo keeper in the same way that she earlier ventriloquised Dinah is surely intended. The reader, alert to the interview's status as a fiction purporting to be truth, is already primed to read this intertextual reference against the grain, suspicious of its veracity and sentiment. Creating a complex tissue of uncertainty around the origins and authenticity of the text, Barnes problematises the straightforward ability of language to directly represent its subject (whether human or nonhuman) in stable terms. In contrast to her later novels, where Barnes presents a queer negativity as undoing the figure of the fully-human human, her interview with Dinah concludes with a trans-species figure of female agency being identified, represented and confined with a suffocating anthropomorphic figuration that she has implicitly led the reader to be mistrustful of.

Bonnie Kime Scott argues that Barnes's portrayal of Dinah's gender and sexuality allows a certain alliance between herself and the gorilla to emerge (*Refiguring II* 102-3). Such an interpretation is further borne out by the fact that Barnes had also been uprooted and moved to the Bronx, only a few blocks south of the zoo, when in 1912 her mother and siblings were asked to leave the farm in Long Island where she grew up because of her father's polygamy (an event which provided the source material for the conclusion to *Ryder* in which Amelia and her children are asked to leave the farm). In a letter from her father, Wald, shortly after the move, he wrote

the he was glad that she was ‘next to the zoo’ since she ‘no doubt appreciates G. Bernard Shaw’s remark [...] “They put all their good citizens in jail! cages!”’ (Wald Barnes to Djuna Barnes, circa 1912). While Wald, who like Wendell in *Ryder* feared criminal prosecution for bigamy, is drawing parallels between the incarceration of zoo animals and himself, it also speaks to Barnes’s own sense of kinship with Dinah. Her description of the ‘faraway’ look in Dinah’s eyes as she gazes ‘upon a life called civilised’ and ironizes about the banality of her new metropolitan environment allows a beastly resemblance to emerge despite Barnes’s satirical anthropomorphic realism (9). If in *Nightwood* and *Ryder* beastliness is a force of negativity and difference, here beastliness speaks to a limited sense of trans-species kinship. Indeed, the fragility of such a kinship is emphasised in giving the last word to Kipling’s cliché, self-reflexively acknowledging not only the inadequacy of language, but its active distortions and unethical containment. Read back through the anti-representational strategies of Barnes’s later work, the interview with Dinah speaks to the same interest in more-than-human intersections between anthropomorphism, ontologies and bodies. Barnes might want the reader to feel mistrustful of her anthropomorphism, but the interview does not suggest that there is a different position from which she can describe this intimate more-than-human encounter.

The anthropomorphic sense of both intimacy and distance that is so clearly apparent in Barnes’s portrayal of Dinah presents an example of what can be seen as a certain modernist trope: the figure of the primate who speaks to us and whose very speaking signifies the human’s intimate proximity to nonhuman animals but also an uncanniness that foregrounds unassailable differences. It is this anthropomorphic sense of intimacy and distance that is also apparent in the figure of Red Peter, the ape who delivers a paper to a room of scientists in Franz Kafka’s ‘A Report to an

Academy' (1919) and which becomes inverted in David Garnett's narrative of a human voluntarily moving into a Large Ape-House in *A Man in The Zoo* (1924). Subjected not only to taxonomical categorisation and ethological observation, but also the demands of a modern entertainment culture, the modernist primate trope exposes the mutually constitutive identities of scientific subject and public spectacle, as well as the fragility of claims to human exceptionalism based on intelligence, language or psychology. In her interview with Dinah, Barnes foregrounds the 'rules' through which early twentieth-century ethnologists and zoologists sought to access, represent and thereby epistemologically determine the interiority of animal ontology. Derrida also draws attention to the constitutive relationship between representation, epistemology and sovereign mastery over the nonhuman world in his analysis of the private zoological gardens of the French Courts that prefigured civil zoos.¹²⁸ Discussing the autopsy of an elephant observed by King Louis XIV at the Menageries of Versailles in 1681, Derrida describes the relationship between the sovereign and the beast as being premised on a 'wanting-to-see' that drives a 'question of knowledge': a 'knowing-power' that is bound up with a 'knowing-how-to-see' in which epistemology enables 'possession and mastery of its object' (*Beast I* 280-2). This is an optics, Derrida continues, which cannot be dissociated 'from spectacle, theater, ceremony as representation, and representation as representation of the king [as sovereign]' (287). This optical relationship between sovereign subject and beastly object is not interrupted with the ascendancy of democracy. Instead, the 'sovereignty of the people or of the nation merely inaugurates a new form of the fundamental

¹²⁸ The first civil zoo, the Ménagerie du Jardin des Plantes, was established in 1793 during the French Revolution, and was populated with animals from private menageries (Ryan, *Animal* 1-2). See Ryan also for a comparative reading of how Kafka's and Garnett's narratives 'expos[e] species hierarchies' ('Literature' 322).

structure' (282), a fact reflected both in the claim to scientific objectivity in Garner's 'rules' for reading Dinah's gestures and 'the crowd roar[ing] in delight' as they look on (9). Like Barnes's satirical portrayal of Dinah, Derrida identifies the way in which representation is inseparable from epistemological modes of knowing and, thereby, mastering animals.

For Derrida, the 'optical, autoptical scene' of the elephant autopsy becomes a synecdoche for the use of 'absolute power over the beast with a view to seeing and knowledge, in the name [...] of Enlightenment'. In *Nightwood*, Barnes metonymically presents the European Enlightenment's optical mastery of the beast in opposition to her own aesthetic. Describing the grand nineteenth-century Viennese house of Felix's pseudo-aristocratic parents, Guido and Hedvig, itself symbolic of Europe's aesthetic history with its 'long rococo halls [...] peopled with Roman fragments, white and dissociated', the novel draws attention to the 'two rambling desks in rich and bloody wood' that form the centrepiece of the study: 'Into the middle arch of each desk silver-headed brads had been hammered to form a lion, a bear, a ram, a dove and in their midst a flaming torch' (N 6-7). The design, Guido claims, is the 'Volkbein field', or heraldry (N 7). In contrast to the fluidity and indeterminacy of Barnes's own animal figurations in her novels, these metal animals are brought into permanent, unquestionable and weighty definition, figuratively illuminated by the flaming torch of enlightenment and knowledge. It is an image that conveys how a naturalised optics of representation works towards a fixity of animal life and relationality. As the heraldic figures of Guido's pseudo-lineage, however, they also speak to an optics whose claims to be authentic and truthful contribute to the 'futile gesture' of false identities (N 4).

If in her interview with Dinah, Barnes stages an anthropomorphic realism that deconstructs a naturalised understanding of language, then *Ryder* is even more explicit

in its disruption of the representational strategies through which knowledge is produced and categories of species identity are constructed. In contrast to the self-reflexive realism of Barnes's journalism, the brazen artifice of *Ryder* foregrounds the way in which textuality is always itself the site of meaning, rather than a mediation of something external to it. Instead of realism's conceit of a direct relation between a signifier and a signified, the first chapter of *Ryder*, written in the idiom of the *King James Bible*, instructs the reader to '[r]each not beyond the image' (R 4). The archly authoritative voice goes on to outline a kingdom of '[b]easts with the eyes back and the eyes front' and 'fishes [that] have a hard smile within their mouths, and go forward always' or, otherwise put, a world in which anthropomorphic surface images are privileged over depth (R 4). In the various idioms of the chapters that follow, Barnes's highly stylised language presents animals in overtly figurative terms, in which verisimilitude and mimesis is eschewed for artifice and ornamentation. The messianic ox who tells Amelia in a dream that 'I am also' (R 99), the 'little calf of doubt' with 'newë waxen horns' that Wendell names 'Sweet Dolly Sodam' (R 56) and the peewit that calls 'alone from across the lands' waiting for someone to answer to his question of 'Watchman, what of the night?' (R 158)¹²⁹ offer but three examples of *Ryder*'s anti-mimetic animal figures. If in her journalism, Barnes appears troubled by claims of representation, in *Ryder*, Barnes suspends all claims to literary or epistemological realism and instead forcibly orients attention to the surface of language itself.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ The peewit's call is eventually answered by O'Connor in *Nightwood* (N 76).

¹³⁰ More recent criticism has also identified the importance of surfaces to Barnes's operations as a novelist. Julie Taylor identifies an aesthetic of 'besideness' in *Ryder*, in which the novel's affective agency resides in the 'feelings and sensations' at the surface of the text rather than waiting to be hermeneutically revealed in its depths (83). Similarly, Miller offers a 'Duchampian interpretation' of *Nightwood* in which the text's 'entanglement of language' mocks other modernist attempts to redeem 'incoherent surface appearances' (163-4).

Eugene Jolas, who published parts of *Ryder* in his journal *transition*, noted how the novel in attending to surface over depth succeeded in having ‘caught life prismatically’ (326). Much like Joyce’s similarly prismatic *Work in Progress* (later to become *Finnegans Wake*), also partially serialised in *transition*, Barnes’s figurative, metaphoric and fabular animals draw attention to their own anthropomorphic textual production.¹³¹ Indeed, there is evidence that the animals of Joyce’s *Work in Progress* may have influenced the prismatic beasts of *Ryder*. Barnes, who had interviewed and befriended Joyce when she lived in Paris in the 1920s, cut out and kept the first section of his *Work in Progress* to be published. Printed in the April 1924 issue of the *transatlantic review*, the extract opens with:

And there they were too listening in as hard as they could to the solans and the sycamores and the wild geese and gannets and migratories and mistlethrushes and the auspices and all the birds of the sea, all four of them, all sighing and sobbing, and listening. (Joyce, ‘Work in Progress’ 215)¹³²

Drawing the reader’s attention to the textual surface, Joyce’s prose emphasises its own figurative, anthropomorphic operations and diminishes stable, mimetic processes of representation, paralleling Barnes’s own later animal figurations. In their anti-representational disruption to established modes of reading animals, both Barnes and Joyce draw attention to the processes that do not so much mediate as *produce* the reader’s relation with the animal entities presented on the page. Barnes arguably goes further than Joyce in this respect insofar as her own accompanying illustrations, whose

¹³¹ For analysis of Joyce’s animal figurations in *Finnegans Wake* see Cliff Mak (191-2) and Norris (‘Animals’ 528-9).

¹³² Barnes’s clipping of Joyce’s work in *transatlantic review* is in her archive. Bonnie Kime Scott recounts that when Barnes met Joyce in Paris, he ‘regaled [her] with a story that mixed animal and procreative themes, Ovid’s *Fasti*’ (*Refiguring I* 160). For analysis of Barnes’s ambivalent relationship with Joyce and the idea of modernist genius that surrounded him see Goody (143-7).

simple yet highly stylised designs were influenced by a French book of early modern and highly figurative animal drawings *L'Imagerie Populaire* (1926), challenge the semantic predominance or transcendence of the word itself. If, as the narrator instructs in the first chapter, the reader should not reach beyond the image, then text and image can be seen to work beside one another (although not always harmoniously) to produce a novel of surfaces in more ways than one.

Indeed, there is something animalistic in producing a text that is all surface. As Ron Broglio writes, according to a 'long cultural and philosophical tradition, animals do not engage in the self-reflexive thought that provides humans with [...] depth [...] instead animals are said to live on the surface of things' (xvi). While conventional modes of writing and reading might be seen to reflect an idea of the human premised on interiority, inviting a hermeneutic practice that can penetrate the text and reveal its submerged meanings, *Nightwood* and *Ryder* deconstruct the opposition between surface and depth. The textual surface becomes a site of queer resistance to modes of reading that privilege mastery and knowledge of their objects. Instead, in drawing attention to its surface operations, there is a sense in which the beastly alterity of Barnes's textual surfaces takes on a lively animality, akin to Derrida's description of the way in which 'animal figures multiply, gain in insistence and visibility, become active, swarm, mobilize and get motivated, move and become moved all the more' (*Animal* 35) and drawing out an interspecies dimension to his earlier description of 'the animality of the letter' ('Edmond Jabés' 72). As Sarah Wood points out, recognising the animality of the letter reframes 'readerly intuition' as an 'animal ability to follow a scent' ('Swans' 25). Indeed, the stakes to animalised critical practices are even greater in the Anthropocene. As Wood writes elsewhere, recognising the way in which language operates through traces, insofar as meaning is

constructed from disappearances and absences, opens a mode of reading and writing that, rather than relying on mastering the present, ‘may take us some way towards the thought of [...] what it is necessary to experience [...] in order to imagine an extinction’ (*Mastery* 8). Anthropomorphic language here becomes less a mode of linguistically mastering the nonhuman, so much as an encounter with the operations through which Anthropos composes itself, its limits and its finitude. Language, literature and writing are revealed to be less than the fully-human extensions of the human that humanism insists they are. Instead, anthropomorphism is revealed to be a surface of beastly otherness, neither wholly nonhuman but not fully-human either. If, as Latour argues, Anthropos can be defined as the ‘weaver of morphisms’ (*Never* 137), in Barnes’s writing we see how this weaving is a co-constitutive undertaking, which, in morphically weaving her or his relationship with animal others, the human also weaves itself.

In *Nightwood* we find a metaphor for this morphic weaving in the figure of Frau Mann, the circus acrobat, who, as she flies through the air ‘seemed to have a skin that was the pattern of her costume: a bodice of lozenges, reds and yellow’ (*N* 12). Mann, whose tights are ‘no longer a cover’ but are ‘herself’ (*N* 12), embodies a beastly aesthetic of surface, speed and difference that offers an overt contrast to the heavy and fixed animal figures of Felix’s childhood home. In the assertion that ‘the span of the tightly stitched crotch was so much her own flesh that she was as unsexed as a doll [...] the property of no man’ (*N* 12) Barnes reinforces the queerness to such a beastly configuration. Her name, too, worries distinctions of male and female, as well of man and beast. In sum, Mann’s prismatic aesthetic presents itself to the reader as figurative of the novel’s own form; its emphasis on surface over depth, its ambiguities and morphic instability, its beastly speed and rapidity, and its inhuman trajectory all

mirror the novel's stylistic operations.¹³³ As in the formal self-reflexivity of Joyce's animals in *Work in Progress* where categories of taxonomy become subject to a dynamic and unstable aesthetics of textuality, Barnes's modernist aesthetic disrupts modes of reading that decide how to read a text in advance and modes of animal knowing that determine relations ahead of time. The beastly alterity of the text itself remains in tension with readerly attempts to assimilate that alterity by locating it within an anthropomorphic economy of human meaning.

While Kari Weil has argued that modernism's 'insistence that representation can refer only to itself or to its specific linguistic or ideological system' rules out 'ever getting to the animal as animal', it is such a synonymic equation that Barnes's beastly aesthetic looks to trouble (12). Rather than relying on 'a greater degree of conceptual coherence and distinction [...] of such categories "man," "woman," "dog," "cat," "life," "death"' that Weil suggest grounds modernism in the 'very humanism' it rejects (xvii), Barnes unsettles the transcendence of such meta-categories that enable the figure of a fully-human human to be realised. Braidotti's argument that in the Anthropocene we need a self-reflexive anthropomorphism that can, paradoxically, open up nonanthropocentric modes of figuring the human and its relation to the nonhuman world, finds a precursor in Barnes's writing in which the very acts of writing and reading involve encounters with 'beast[s] beyond beast' (R 238). While Cohen and Colebrook warn that rhetoric that purports of 'overcoming humanism, Cartesianism and anthropocentrism' can have the counter effect of '*producing* man as the being who can annihilate himself in order to become animal' (11, emphasis in

¹³³ Indeed, it is precisely the cascading surface of the text that Caselli identifies as producing the 'critical problem of selecting a quotation from *Nightwood*' since such an action introduces stasis and suspension within what I have identified as the text's lively beastliness (165).

original), Barnes's writing problematizes a generalised or uncritical notion of "becoming animal" by attending to the anthropomorphic operations through which something called the Anthropos identifies itself and its others.¹³⁴

4.4 The Impossibility of a Beastocene

In her copy of Marcel Proust's *The Past Recaptured* (1927) Barnes marked the following passage:

Only by art can we get outside ourselves, know what another sees of this universe, which is not the same as ours and the different views of which would otherwise have remained as unknown to us as those there may be on the moon. Thanks to art, instead of seeing only one world, our own, we see it under multiple forms, and as many as there are original artists, just so many worlds have we at our disposal, differing more widely from one another than those that roll through infinite space, and years after the glowing center from which they emanated have extinguished [...] The work of the artist, to seek to discern something different underneath material, experience, words, is exactly the reverse of the process which [...] under the mass of nomenclatures and practical aims [...] we erroneously call life. (225)

In Proust's modernist avowal of the heterogeneity of existence and the centrality of art in unveiling the varied experientialities and materialities of life, Barnes likely found an aesthetic vision in sympathy with her own. The encounter with literature produces an experience of otherness which, temporarily, appears to transport us beyond our usual experience of a bounded, stable self. As Proust asserts, aesthetics reveal the world 'under multiple forms' in a way that pragmatic or practical modes of discourse

¹³⁴ As Goody writes in her careful reading of *Nightwood* alongside Deleuze and Guattari, Robin's "becoming animal" is 'not an imitation of an animal' but rather a path of "absolute deterritorialization" (*Modernist* 173).

are unable to accommodate. Yet, while we might see Proust's description of art as humanising, in all senses of the word, a cold and indifferent universe, in Barnes's writing it remains a resolutely inhuman world. In contrast to Proust's implicitly harmonious image of human life and the universe, in *Nightwood* Barnes writes:

Life, the pastures in which the night feeds and prunes the cud that nourishes us to despair. Life, the permission to know death. We were created that the earth might be made sensible of her inhuman taste; and love that the body might be so dear that even the earth should roar with it. (*N* 72)

The anthropomorphised earth, '[in]sensible' of its inhuman taste, roars like the beasts who feed upon her. While such a description might appear to lend itself to the neologism of a 'beastocene', an understanding of the 'cene on which the human finds itself as defined by the beastly aesthetics outlined across Barnes's work, such a term would introduce the kind of anthropomorphism that, as De Man writes, 'freezes the infinite chain of tropological transformations into one single assertion or essence which, as such, excludes all others' (241). Instead, the difference and negativity inherent to Barnes's beastly anthropomorphism exposes the tropological processes through which such figures calcify, and, eventually, crack. As Barnes wrote to Coleman, 'there is always more surface to a shattered object than a whole object' (8 November 1935) and in the fragmented, yet prismatic aesthetic of Barnes's beastly writing, she exposes the processes through which Anthropos names its others and, thereby, casts its own identity.

In this respect, Barnes's writing can be seen to embody what Colebrook argues is the way in which the Anthropocene requires us 'to consider that the question of the human is not something that might be added' to the problem of planetary change but that 'what may need to be rethought is the very concept of the human' itself. Colebrook

goes on to suggest that the starting point for such a reimagining is the acknowledgement that there is ‘no longer [...] man (historically and socially determined and determining) but a species tied to rhythms [...] beyond the familial imagination’ (*Death* 56). In Barnes’s writing, the emphasis on surfaces and fluidity speaks to a similar displacement of species discourse in favour of an anthropomorphic ontology in which identity and relation are always in a state of transformation and subject to beastly contagions. Indeed, if Barnes insisted to Coleman that for her nature must be understood in terms of ‘motion’ and ‘wedded[ness]’, it is unsurprising that in *Nightwood* there is a similar emphasis on movement and equivocation. As O’Connor states, when describing sheltering in a cellar during a bombardment in World War One with a Breton woman and her cow, ‘there are directions and speeds that no one has yet calculated, for believe it or not that cow had gone somewhere very fast that we didn’t know of, and yet was still standing there’ (*N* 20). This is inter-species relations understood in terms of rhythm or intensity, rather than category or essence. Moreover, Barnes’s beastly aesthetic allows a negative relationality to emerge from this prismatic materiality of species co-existence. O’Connor’s tragi-comic description of the cow, recalling how in the momentary illumination of a ‘flash of lightning’ he ‘saw the cow turning her head straight back so her horns made two moons against her shoulders, the tears soused all over her great black eyes’ (*N* 19), anthropomorphically aestheticises animal fear and sadness that, like Barnes’s portrayal of Dinah, gestures towards an intimate interspecies proximity and a profoundly insurmountable alterity. O’Connor’s own fear and distress as he shelters with ‘the poor beast trembling on her four legs’ (*N* 19-20) presents itself as akin to what Derrida describes as the risk of madness that

comes from ‘cry[ing] in conjunction with [...] an animal’ (*Animal* 35).¹³⁵ An example of what Derrida would later describe as the beastly risk of trans-species contagion, the scene plays out as a metonymy for beastly dehumanisation in the Anthropocene.

As the scene in the cellar demonstrates, while violent, negative affects circulate in Barnes’s beastly writing, there is a sense in which this negativity traverses species boundaries. Beastliness here speaks to an embodied mode of being which although inherently anthropomorphic, operates through processes of negation and negativity that, paradoxically, produce new (but not always positive) modes of relation. Again, O’Connor’s philosophy in *Nightwood* provides a near direct articulation of this aspect of Barnes’s aesthetic in his description of how ‘in the end you’ll all be locked together, like the poor beasts that get their antlers mixed and are found dead that way, their heads fattened with a knowledge of each other they never wanted, having had to contemplate each other, head on and eye to eye until death’ (*N* 84-5). If the Anthropocene is that which locks us all together again, in which the binaries of nature and culture or the human and the nonhuman begin to dissolve, and in which a fattening accumulation of knowledge is hastening, rather than forestalling, extinction, then O’Connor’s pronouncement might offer a proleptic warning to twenty-first-century readers. As is articulated throughout Barnes’s oeuvre, beastliness arrives not as an aesthetic mode that might save us from our fate and enable the fully-human human to sustain itself indefinitely, rather it insists that the human was never fully human to

¹³⁵ Derrida is here invoking the story of Nietzsche’s mental breakdown after witnessing the flogging of a horse in Turin in 1889. Barnes’s lifelong love of horses offers an implicit parallel. Writing to Coleman on the death of her horse, Buck, in 1941, Barnes wrote ‘you know what I feel about death for animals in general, so what I must feel for you and Jake [Coleman’s partner] and Buck’ (6 April 1941). See the beginning of Chapter 5 for further discussion of Barnes’s interest in, and even desire for, horses.

begin with. Instead, as captured in the fragmentary image of a ‘beast lowing | in the isle of [its] dimension’, we might attend to the morphy processes through which we give shape to ourselves and the scenes upon which we speak.

5. Sex, Nature and Animal Life in *Ryder*

I always remember what you said, when I asked you if you considered yourself really Lesbian: “I might be anything. If a horse loved me, I might be that.”

Emily Coleman to Djuna Barnes, 27th October 1935

In Chapter 4, I presented the ways in which Djuna Barnes’s oeuvre interrogates the human, necessarily bestialising and queering the figure of Anthropos that has come to new prominence within the Anthropocene. In this chapter, I offer a sustained analysis of Barnes’s first, and often overlooked novel, *Ryder* (1928) and examine how it critically interrogates the relationship between discourses of sex, nature and animal life. As the epigraph shows, questions of sex, nature and animals were of interest in Barnes’s personal life as well as in her public writing. Emily Coleman’s description of Barnes’s rejection of Lesbianism, with its bold capital L, for a less categorical or identifiable form of desire hinges on an unsettling of sureties around sexual and animal identity. Desire might produce ‘anything’, even a more-than-human transformation. While Barnes’s reported sentiment that if one felt strongly enough for a horse one might, in some way, *become* a horse is clearly ironic, it also speaks to a playfulness around species boundaries and a comic interest in holding all distinctions in suspension. It speaks, too, to the slipperiness of what we mean when we invoke nature. Barnes’s reported formulation on the nature of desire is, according to heteronormative and biological accounts of sexual and animal life, distinctly *unnatural*. This slipperiness adds a queer dimension to what Raymond Williams has described as the

way in which ‘nature’ is ‘perhaps the most complex’ word in the English language since its meanings are ‘variable and at times even opposed’ (184). As Williams explains, ‘nature’ can mean, at any given point, the ‘essential character and quality’ of an object, the ‘inherent force’ within life itself, or the entirety of the ‘material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings’ (184). Rather than being natural, nature itself turns out to be open to contestation. Coleman’s letter, which nimbly covers the essential nature of lesbianism, the sexual force inherent to life itself, and the material world of species relations, arguably invokes all three meanings without using the word ‘nature’ at all. While Timothy Morton has argued that the Anthropocene should herald the end of nature, not in the sense of the human despoliation of the natural world but as an awareness that nature is a metaphysical ‘term in a material mask’ (*Ecology* 14),¹³⁶ we see in Coleman’s letter how nature instead might be subverted as a generative site for new ideas around sex, gender and sexuality.

In Coleman and Barnes’s correspondence, playfully alert to ideas of sex and nature, they foreshadow recent interest in the relationship between animal life and sexual difference. The feminist philosopher Kelly Oliver argues in *Animal Lessons* (2009) that dismantling the human-animal binary also has implications for how we think about sex. Following Derrida’s disavowal of ‘the animal’ as a construction that only serves to centre the idea of ‘the human’, Oliver argues that if we attend to the ‘nearly infinite variety of living beings’ that come under the category of the animal we might also start attending to the ‘various sexes, sexualities and reproductive practices of animals’, or the way in which sexual difference differs *within* animal life (131-2).

¹³⁶ Bruno Latour makes a similar argument, asserting that the concept of nature is only ‘one cosmological figure among many others’ (*Facing Gaia* 38).

In turn, Oliver argues, by situating the human within this context of animalised sexual difference, we might ‘reconsider the sexes, sexualities, and reproductive practices of humans beyond the tight-fitting binary of man / woman or homosexual / heterosexual’ (131-2). As in Coleman’s letter, sexual difference is no longer beholden to a binary construction along the lines of identity and desire, but by ‘opening animal differences to the vast varieties of animals, we might also open sexual differences to varieties of sexes, sexualities, and genders’ (145). Oliver’s animalising of sexual difference and sexualisation of animal life is representative of a broader turn to the intersection of discourse around nature with cultural configurations of sex and sexuality. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson outline in their essay collection *Queer Ecologies* (2010) how it is not only that ‘understandings of sex inform discourses of nature; they are linked, in fact, through a strongly evolutionary narrative’ in which Darwinian notions of fitness and degeneracy have been mapped onto constructions of sex and sexuality since the early twentieth century (2-3). For Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, who offer a critical genealogy of sex and nature, *queering* how we think about ecology involves attending to the various ‘co-productions’ and ‘locations’ within which ‘ideas and practices of nature, including both bodies and landscapes, are located in particular productions of sexuality and sex’ (4). As Noreen Giffney and Myra Hird argue in *Queering the Non/Human* (2009), an essay collection which similarly looks to take the concerns of queer theory beyond the confines of the human, in bringing discourses of sexuality and the nonhuman world to bear on one another it is possible to ‘challenge the anthropocentrism and humanism in much queer theorising’ (6). Sex, sexuality and nature are terms that not only need to be contested, but which need to be contested in relation to one another. Such an idea chimes with what Robert Azzarello describes as the ‘queer zoological imagination’ in Barnes’s

writing, in which animality and sexuality cannot be disentangled (101-2). While Barnes's idea that one might become a horse if one felt the right kind of desire works as a joke, it is a joke that nonetheless speaks to the queer intersections between sex and nature.

Barnes's first novel, *Ryder*, which I introduced in Chapter 4, is a sustained and innovative work of modernist fiction that explores precisely these interstices between sex, nature and animal life. Relatively little studied compared to the more cosmopolitan *Nightwood*, *Ryder* largely takes place in rural New York on a farmstead overseen by the eponymous patriarch Wendell Ryder. Based on Barnes's own childhood, *Ryder* offers an unconventional family saga. A self-defined 'outlaw' (*R* 131), Wendell Ryder is a polygamist philosopher and farmer, a comic figure of self-absorption in the tradition of the picaresque hero whose adventures and exploits are told through episodic chapters.¹³⁷ While Eugene Jolas, in his review of the novel for *transition*, described Wendell Ryder as a 'swashbuckling super-male' (326), Ryder's identity is rather less straightforward than this implies. A figure of 'changing countenance' who wishes to be 'all things to all men, and all women's woman', identifying one moment as a 'dowager' and the next as a 'man-with-a-trowel, digging [...] for the tangible substance of re-creation' (*R* 164), Wendell is a figure who is able to vacillate between positions and identities, but who nonetheless holds onto a position of familial authority. Complicating the idea that patriarchal power is synonymous with a stable heterosexual masculine identity, Wendell conceives of himself as a 'sensitive man [...] racked with women and with beasts' (*R* 220).

¹³⁷ Barnes's annotations in her 1920 copy of Thomas Nashes's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) suggest she was consciously drawing upon the picaresque tradition.

Most immediately striking about *Ryder*, however, is not its transgressive narrative content, but its bold modernist form. The novel's fifty episodic chapters each draw on a different stylistic mode, often recycling and ventriloquising earlier literary forms, including gothic, sentimental, fabular, lyric, and catechistic modes of literature, with a number of chapters accompanied by Barnes's own grotesque illustrations (the most shocking of which appeared for the first time in the restored 1990 edition published by Dalkey Archive). It was not only the illustrations that were considered too scandalous for publication. A number of passages were censored by Barnes's publisher, owing to what Barnes in her preface describes as the 'vogue' for 'censorship' in America at the time (*R* vii), with the offending sections marked out in the text by bold asterisks that, since manuscripts are yet to be found, are still present in current editions of the novel.¹³⁸ Further testament to its capacity to eschew expectations is an only partial adherence to a linear chronological structure. Barnes had initially intended the chapter written in Chaucerian verse, 'The Occupations of Wendell', to serve as the novel's prologue. This episode, mock-Chaucerian in its language as well as its bawdy tone, introduces the reader to 'man of spice' 'Dan Wendell' (*R* 53), a cattle breeder who performs 'the same office for his cow[s]' as he does his wives (*R* 56). Pressured in the very final stages of publication by Donald S. Friede, her editor at Boni & Liveright, to place this chapter later in the novel, since people may 'pick the book up casually in the bookstores and lay it down as a volume of verse in an idiom which they feel they cannot read' (Friede to Barnes, 9 February

¹³⁸ The front matter to the Dalkey Archive edition of *Ryder* states that manuscript was destroyed during air raids in World War Two, although I cannot find anything corroborating this in Barnes's archive, nor was Jake Snyder at Dalkey Press able to confirm the source for this information when I contacted them (personal communication, 16 May 2017). It is possible that a typescript or manuscript of the novel will emerge in the coming years.

1928), *Ryder* instead opens with an episode written in the style of the King James Bible. Here, Wendell is instead introduced as ‘Jesus Mundane’, a messiah not of the heavens but the earth. As Barnes’s acquiescence to re-shuffling the order of the novel at the last minute suggests, it does not proceed according to a strictly linear or sequential chronology. Instead, the chapters present themselves as linked thematically and sometimes only obliquely so. As Tyrus Miller states, while ‘at first glance [the novel] suggests the neat filial order of the family chronicle’ on closer inspection it presents ‘a heterogeneous set of short texts’ only ‘loosely organised around the irregular Ryder clan’, making it ‘formally distinct’ from other modernist family saga novels that take the structure of patrilineality for their form (129-30).

Although early critics interested in the novel’s treatment of genealogy, especially in relation to sex, gender and sexuality, looked to Barnes’s own life as a means of decoding both the book’s meaning and its author’s biography, Barnes herself was hostile to such approaches.¹³⁹ When James B. Scott wrote to Barnes when she was in her eighties, asking if the character of Julie represented her childhood self, Barnes responded by chiding him that it was a ‘barbaric act’ to ‘[try] to “reconstruct” the person who wrote the distillation’ (Barnes to Scott, 15 April 1971). Suspicious of readings of *Ryder* that would ‘drag the author back through his or her works to confront him or her at the porch of the mother’ (Barnes to Scott, 15 April 1971), Barnes’s resistance to psycho-biographical interpretations is shared by more recent theoretically alert accounts which attend to what Julie Taylor describes as the novel’s

¹³⁹ Both Anne Dalton and Marie Ponsot employ psychoanalytic readings of encoded silences within *Ryder* to substantiate suggestions of incest and rape in Barnes’s biography (see Dalton 164, Ponsot 97). In a different tack, Phillip Herring’s biography of Barnes argues, with questionable evidence, that ‘there are virtually no facts in the novel that do not correlate with details of her early life’ and that, as such, he ‘take[s] the liberty of drawing on *Ryder* for biographical information’ (313-4 n2).

‘non-dichotomous relationship’ between ‘auto/biography and fiction’ (74).¹⁴⁰ Such approaches instead have looked at how Barnes’s experimentations with form and content are refashioning, rather than representing, familial relations. These include Miller’s aforementioned assertion that the novel’s departure from linearity disrupts patrilineality and Daniella Caselli’s argument that *Ryder* ‘takes apart the family that—even in absentia—had allowed the novel to survive as a genre throughout the nineteenth century’ (199). Although alert to the ways in which Barnes’s novel disrupts familial structures and the generic and sexual categories attached to such structures, critics have paid less attention to the way in which genealogy intersects with ideas of nature and species in *Ryder*. Such a connection, however, is suggested before the narrative has even begun. The frontispiece illustration, depicting the Ryder family arranged on various branches of a tree, presents a literalised family tree (see figure 5.1). While Louis Kannenstine has argued that it gives the ‘impression of pastoral serenity with everything in its place’ (44), it is also an image that questions order, with family members poised precariously, as if about to slip on to a different branch or tumble to the ground at any moment, while the inclusion of animals crowding the base of the trunk questions the species barrier that is usually a defining feature of a family tree. A highly stylised image, it naturalises the genealogical tree while also drawing attention to its artificiality and instability. It both represents the family and questions that frame of representation, setting up a movement that will prevail throughout the novel.

This chapter, then, examines the way in which Barnes’s novel shows how the familial imagination that regulates sexual difference and the ecological imagination

¹⁴⁰ Diane Warren also argues that *Ryder* is predicated on troubling the distinction between fact and fiction (67).

that regulates the human's relation to the natural world and other species are inextricably tangled. It begins by examining Barnes's ideas of nature and naturalness that can be seen to inform *Ryder*. Tracing her polemical engagement with a masculinist aesthetics of nature within her journalism and letters, it suggests that Barnes perceived how discourse around nature often naturalised heterosexual ideas of sexual difference and that she was critical of a nature writing tradition that upheld such ideals. Looking in detail at how Wendell's seemingly transgressive interest in animal life is not at odds with patriarchal sovereignty, the chapter goes on to explore how his outwardly radical philosophy of nature is continuous with both anthropo- and androcentrism. Examining how a view of nature as organised through heterosexual principles of fecundity leads Wendell to associate women with livestock, I explore how Barnes both invokes and complicates the analogy between misogyny and meat-eating that has been suggested by Carol Adams, Derrida and others. Finally, I suggest that *Ryder* also contains a radically oppositional view to Wendell's heteronormative nature. In the alternative genealogies that we find expressed in thematic content and formal innovations, I argue that we find a queer ecology that opens up new ways of thinking about sexual difference, familial structures and species kinship.

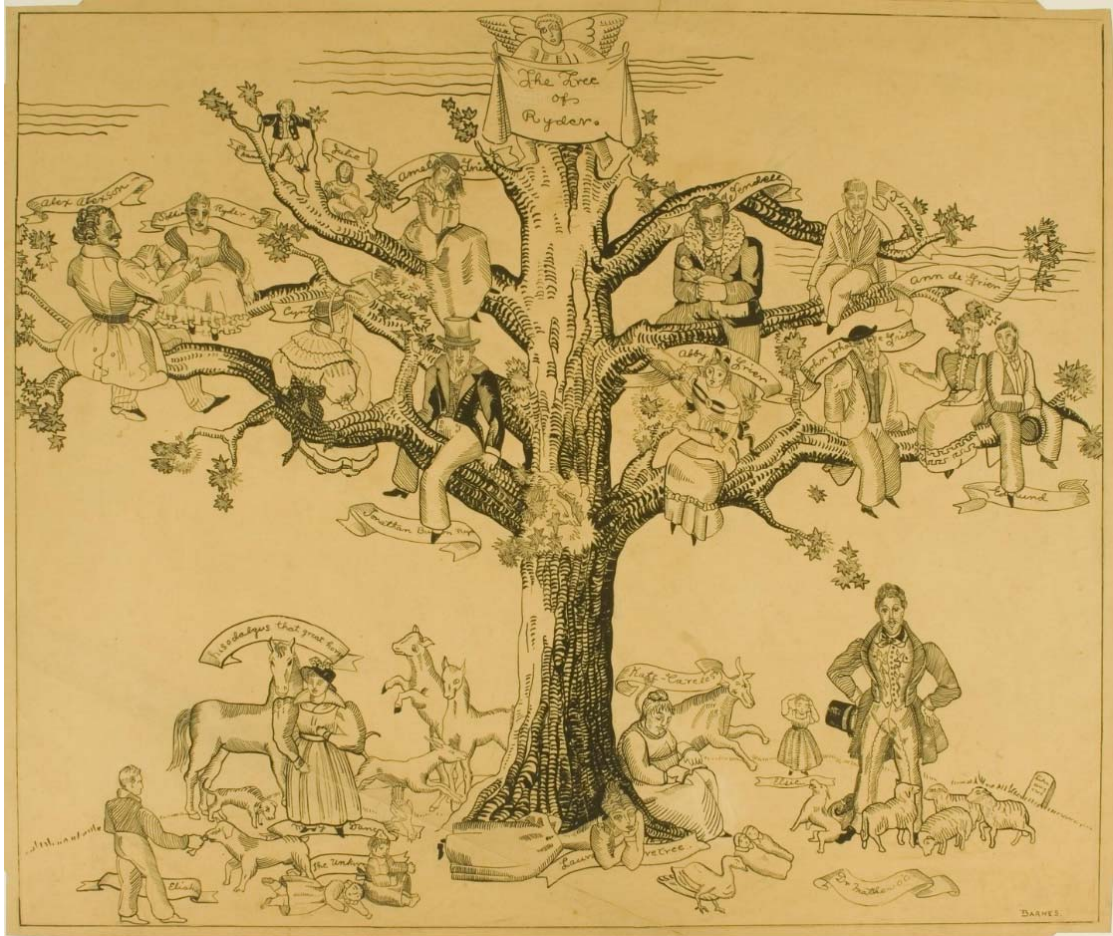


Figure 5.1 *The Tree of Ryder* (frontispiece), from *Ryder* (1928) by Djuna Barnes, ink, 16.5 x 19.75 inches. Series 8, Box 6, Folder 1, Item 3.34, Djuna Barnes papers, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.

5.1 Barnes Against Nature

From her early journalism onwards, Barnes was interested in the ways in which cultural configurations of nature often worked to undergird heteronormative constructs of sex and gender. ‘Against Nature’, her 1922 article for *Vanity Fair* written under the pseudonym Lydia Steptoe, articulates a number of ideas that would go on to be developed in *Ryder*. The article opens with the arch assertion that ‘I hate Nature. Nature and simplicity. I always have’ (‘Against Nature’ 60). Echoing the English translation of the title of Joris-Karl Huysmans’s *À rebours* (1884), the article, like much of Barnes’s early writing is indebted to the decadence movement’s aesthetic

celebration of artificiality and intricacy over naturalness and simplicity.¹⁴¹ Yet, for Barnes, the disavowal of nature is also a rejection of societal gender expectations. Challenging how anything that is ‘inadequate, young or tiresome is called natural’, the article identifies the sexual politics of nature in which ‘a cultivated woman’ interested in ‘advanced ideas’ is considered unnatural because of cultural expectations that naturalise certain qualities of feminine ‘simplicity’ (60). While, as Barnes outlines, cultural veneration for the natural and simple affects individuals of both sexes and of various ages, it has particular consequences for young women. Among what Barnes describes as the ‘great number of things that come under the damning head of Nature’ is the idea that ‘babies are [...] justifiers of a woman’s existence’. That women should have to ‘justify [themselves] more than five or six times in a life’, Barnes wryly notes, ‘is rather insisting on the point, it seems to me; a point that even Nature would drop – and Nature almost never drops a point’ (60).¹⁴² Indeed, Barnes’s ironic rejection of nature articulates what Latour describes as the ‘paradox of the invocation of “nature”’, insofar as a ‘formidable prescriptive charge [is] conveyed by what is not supposed to possess any prescriptive dimension’ at all (*Facing Gaia* 23). That which is natural, and therefore meant to be without any cultural proscription, is shown to be produced through social expectations around sex and nature.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ See, for instance, Barnes’s Beardsley-esque illustrations to her early poetry collection *The Book of Repulsive Women* (1915). Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnick have suggested that Barnes’s interest in circuses in *Nightwood* might also derive from her reading of Huysmans’s *Against Nature* (183).

¹⁴² Woolf makes a comparative point in her 1931 address to the National Society for Women’s Service, which was the starting point for her unfinished ‘Novel-Essay’ *The Pargiters*, stating that men believed ‘nature had meant women to be wives, mothers, housemaids, parlourmaids and cooks’ (*Pargiters* xliii). See chapters 6 and 7 for a discussion of Woolf’s queering nature in *Orlando* and *Between the Acts*.

¹⁴³ Barnes’s awareness of the politics of nature is present in her very earliest published writing. In a 1913 article for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, ‘Uplift of Woman, Man’s Work’, Barnes reports a speech by the eugenicist David Gorton, who avows that in

Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson have argued that it was during the early decades of the twentieth century that ‘sexuality became naturalized [as] an individual’s sexual desires were recoded as expressions of an inherent sexual condition, and that condition was understood in strongly biologized terms’ (8). Barnes’s article seems alert to this historical process. As Cheryl Plumb has argued the article rejects the notion of an essential female identity grounded in fertility and maternity (*Fancy’s Craft* 26) and, moreover, in what must have been a shocking conclusion for the readers of the 1920s, Barnes finishes the short piece by asserting the dual need for ‘women who will solve their destiny without children’ and a view of nature premised on ‘intricacy’ and ‘falsity’ rather than ‘eternal simplicity’ (88). Here, then, we find not only a rejection of heteronormative notions of reproduction derived from a highly cultural construction of nature, but, an assertion of aesthetic artifice over ideals of naturalness. Yet while critics have sometimes seen Barnes’s interest in aesthetic artifice as premised on a wholesale rejection of nature in of itself,¹⁴⁴ it might instead be understood to be a certain *natural* aesthetic of nature that is being rejected, as the article clears the ground for the highly stylised modernism that characterises the presentation of humans, animals and nature in *Ryder*.

There is a further important sense in which Barnes’s article can be seen as a precursor to *Ryder* and that is in the way in which it presents the reader with a certain American veneration for the wild, or what Barnes describes as the rise of ‘nature

correcting ‘Nature’s mistakes’ there was the potential for a nation ‘peopled with a clean race’ in which women will be allowed fuller social participation. The title to Barnes’s article suggests an ironic awareness of the limitation to female emancipation through largely masculinist ideas of nature (‘Uplift’ n.p.).

¹⁴⁴ Erin Carlston, for instance, in a reading of the *Ladies Almanack* argues that ‘Barnes opposes lesbianism to “Nature,” valorising artifice over realism as a way of transcending the limitations of human nature’ (55).

lovers' in America (60). Framing the popular uptake in naturalism as a masculine hobby, the article describes men who are:

always pulling your spirits down by lurid descriptions of home with roses clinging to the front porch and smoke issuing from the chimney and hens laying eggs in the backyard. [...] Through love of plants men have lost their ability to stand alone, and have become permanently hooked. Through preoccupation with crawling, bivalvular creatures, they have neglected to shave for such a lengthy period that they become too heavily bearded to be of any further use in the home. (88)

Here, Barnes's description of 'nature lovers' satirically sheds light on the gender expectations and domestic labour that support this purportedly natural 'preoccupation'. Again, we can see parallels with Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson's genealogy of sex and nature, who note that in the early twentieth century 'white men came to assert their increasingly heterosexual identities in the wilderness' in which self-reliance and rugged masculinity were cultivated in explicit contrast to the 'urban spectre of the queer, the immigrant and the communist' (3-4). A return to nature, understood in a certain aesthetic sense (wilderness, the open country and pastoralism) and usually presented through motifs of femininity (mother nature, the fertile soil and provident abundance) provided the grounds upon which performances of a naturalised male identity could be staged and enshrined. As in the gendered expectations around nature that I discussed in relation to *Ulysses* in Chapter 3, Barnes's article presents the reader with the way masculine identities were forged through a certain early twentieth-century veneration for nature.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Such masculinist identities, however, cannot *always* be aligned with heterosexuality. For instance, in Britain, A. E. Housman's popular *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), which I discuss in Chapter 6, might be read as encoding homosocial ideals within pastoral poetry.

For Barnes such a love for nature could not be extricated from an American literary tradition that she felt she was writing against. In a letter to Coleman in the late 1930s, Barnes describes ‘open shirt prophets [...] like my (upside-down) father, Thoreau, Whitman’ as being ‘full of theories and whiskers, but underneath, [having] a really passionate feeling for truth and right and “how to live?” [sic]’ (7 August 1938). These nineteenth-century romantics, among whom Barnes includes her father Wald, the biographical model for Wendell Ryder, are presented as faintly ridiculous, bearded figures of sincerity, but, as she explains in a further letter, they also established a masculine aesthetic of nature that stretches into the modernist present. Declining Coleman’s invitation to visit her in Arizona, Barnes exclaims that she dislikes the idea of ‘the West’ as its ‘personifies everything in my father that I hated—Mark Twain—Bret Harte—Walt Whitman sort of thing—Ezra Pound and his hick-prune-chewing prose’ (13 August 1939). Both ‘Against Nature’ and her correspondence present Barnes’s understanding of the gender politics that informed prevalent cultural and literary constructions of nature, and provide a lens to understand the degree to which *Ryder* presented Barnes with the opportunity to sardonically engage with a very specific American tradition of nature and patriarchy through the figure of Wendell Ryder. In a manner not dissimilar to Joyce writing back to the ‘back to nature’ aesthetics of the Revival that I discussed in Chapter 2 and Woolf’s satire of English pastoralism that I will discuss in Chapter 6, *Ryder* sets itself in dialogue with an American romanticism which valorised and aestheticised ideas of pastoral retreat and self-reliance. Wendell is, in an example of Barnes’s reusing of a term in *Ryder* from her earlier article, a ‘nature lover’ (R 7).

Moreover, *Ryder* reveals itself to be predicated on a more explicit refusal of American nature writing than has been previously acknowledged. While Caselli

wittily describes Wendell as a ‘Whitmanian hero who has misread Emerson’ (197), his philosophy that one should ‘ris[e] in the dawn and goest among the green things’ (R 4) and belief that ‘the great man lives and dies alone’ (R 223) are also close to the Transcendentalist ideals of Thoreau. Indeed, perhaps unsurprisingly given the way in which she would later equate her father with Thoreau in her letters to Coleman, Thoreau’s *Walden* emerges as an intertext that clearly shapes the way in which Wendell is figured.¹⁴⁶ The construction of the ‘Ryder cabin’ in the Hudson valley, ‘fifteen feet high and twenty-nine feet wide [...] and [with] steps three to its stoop’, made of ‘hewn cedar, by Wendell cut [...] when he had gone with his axe into the forest’ (R 86) offers one such clear parallel to Thoreau’s precise yet rustic register in *Walden* whose opening ‘Economy’ chapter goes into great detail on the dimensions, materials and location of his cabin in the woods. Yet, unlike in *Walden*, which infamously obscures the female labour that supported his project,¹⁴⁷ the romanticism of the scene in *Ryder* is undercut by the return of Wendell’s first wife ‘Amelia at eventide’ (R 86). Here, having ‘charred the day out below in Wendell’s brother’s mansion’ in the ‘task of providing for the family’, Amelia returns to Wendell and the rustic cabin, only to be greeted by the ‘smiling’ arrival of his new wife, Kate (R 86-7).

While Andrew Kalaidjian has argued that Barnes, and other modernists such as Eliot and Woolf, are indebted to the ‘dark pastoral’ that Thoreau develops in his presentation of the nonhuman world’s strangeness, its opacity and the ‘primacy of

¹⁴⁶ *Walden* was among Wald Barnes’s favourite books (Herring 34) and, although purely speculative, it is not inconceivable that Wald, born in 1865, was named after the book (published in the USA in 1847) by his mother Zadel Barnes, herself a poet and reviewer.

¹⁴⁷ As Dana Phillips argues, *Walden* occludes the fact that ‘[a]s many townsmen knew, Thoreau took a lot of his meals where he had always taken them: at his mother’s table’ (‘Thoreau’ 539).

inner life' over surface appearances (71-2), in *Ryder* Barnes also scrutinises the idea of self-reliance that Thoreau's aesthetic works to serve. Paralleling Woolf's critique in her review of Henry Salt's biography of Thoreau, where she complains that in *Walden* Thoreau is 'never speaking directly to us; he is speaking partly to himself and partly to something mystic beyond our sight' (E2 137-8), Barnes presents the way in which Transcendentalist modes of writing about immersion in nature enact an androcentric obfuscation of social relations and responsibilities. It is not so much, as Susan Edmunds argues, that Wendell is a 'grotesque parody of transcendentalism' that both 'degrades and revives its loftier sentiments' (51), so much as it reveals those "lofty" sentiments, so far as they are applicable to Thoreau, are grounded in a philosophy of self-reliance that not only naturalises nature, but social constructions of sex and gender.

Where Wendell Ryder differs from the account of masculinity in Barnes's newspaper article is, however, in his challenge to monogamous heterosexuality. Intensifying Thoreau's belief that 'we need to witness our own limits transgressed' (*Walden* 366), Wendell extends its sentiments to sexuality and reproduction.¹⁴⁸ For Wendell, the fallacy that 'animal and man be set apart' might be overcome by observing the 'turn and twist of joy' in animal procreation and following suit by behaving like 'cock-hens' indiscriminately mating with 'speckled wyandotts' and letting 'like a fountain [...] the eggës pour' (R 61-2). A return to nature for Wendell not only involves retreating to the country, but what Alex Goody describes as an

¹⁴⁸ Thoreau's own expression of sexuality is also far from straightforward, since, as Peter Coviello argues, he is writing 'from *inside* a long vexed moment, before the calcification of a modern postsexological regime of sexuality' and is 'imagining carnal life' in a way that does not align with 'modern (liberal, identitarian)' constructions of sexuality (510).

‘earthy spirituality of phallic fecundity’ (166). As Wendell explains to one of his lovers, his ‘children shall come forth, grow, rise, decline and fall in a manner hitherto unknown to man’ since they shall ‘follow the hounds, and herd with the beasts’ (R 210). Certainly, Wendell’s polygamy cannot be traced back solely to transcendentalism. The novel also insists on the importance of his childhood in London, where his mother Sophia is the matriarch of a fashionable salon and is described as ‘having the stuff of a great reformer’ (R 9) as she ‘move[s] among the Pre-Raphaelites’ (R 34). It is within this progressive, liberal environment that an adolescent Wendell first articulates his ‘rosy picture [...] of polygamy’ as ‘a perfect prostrate tapestry of fecundity’ (R 39-41). Yet, as the novel makes clear, at the root of Wendell’s ideals around sex, sexuality and reproduction is a radical understanding of nature in which self-reliance, providence and fecundity are foregrounded. Indeed, as this next section will discuss, Wendell’s configuration of polygamy relies upon a view of the nonhuman world that appears to question human exceptionalism while simultaneously strengthening the grounds upon which patriarchal sovereignty is seen as natural.

5.2 Animal Speech

As outlined above, *Ryder*’s prologue, written in the language of the *King James Bible*, introduces Wendell as Jesus Mundane: a messiah not of the heavens, but the earth and the earthly.¹⁴⁹ In contrast to the *King James Bible*, however, the authoritative narrative voice of Jesus Mundane insists on a humility that recognises that one is ‘part and parcel

¹⁴⁹ ‘Mundane’ is an adjective that has been defined through the opposition of the earthly to the heavenly since at least the fifteenth century (*OED* 2017).

of thy pasture' (R 5). Where in Genesis, God gives man dominion over the beasts, Jesus Mundane teaches that 'the beasts [are not] for thee' and further sets out that:

When thou goest into the field and markest thy goat's eye, think not that thou knowest why it lies like meek fluid in the head, or why thy kine have an unknown regard from under their eyelids, nor why the hawk flies among its feathers [...] These also are within the way, but all things are not equal about His feet. (R 4)

Instead of a narrowly human-centred view of creation the passage insists on the holism of 'the way', in which the instruction to meet the inscrutable gaze of the animal disrupts the promise of dominion over the beasts in the Bible. Yet, as the clause regarding 'equal[ity]' makes clear, this act of looking the animal in the eye does not necessitate a dismantling of species hierarchy. Rather, it engenders a position that, in emphasising the need to observe and recognise the interdependence of the parts within the whole, paradoxically maintains the centrality of the human as the subject who is aware of such relations. A short while later, Wendell as Jesus Mundane warns against thinking that 'thou couldst advise the fig, or question the wheat, or bargain with the tree' and instead advises to go 'as one a little gathered from the earth, and as one going little toward the earth, and of the earth judged' (R 4-5). Insisting again on an ecological humility in the face of a divine holism (overseen by a figure who will 'judg[e]' those who 'advise', 'question' or 'bargain' with creation), the chapter challenges a conventional anthropocentric way of seeing the world, but does so through a rhetoric that emulates the prescriptions and threats of patriarchal religious order.

Yet, as the ironic thrust of the chapter's form makes clear, these dictates are to be read against themselves. In the chapters that follow this apparently self-effacing view of nature is subverted and deconstructed as Wendell's messianic mundanity is revealed to not only be anthropocentric, but egocentric in its self-serving construction

of a position that can vacillate at will between base animality and sovereign transcendence. As an example of what Timothy Morton describes as a ‘beautiful soul’, a figure who yearns to close the gap between humanity and nature, and who yet maintains this very distinction in what they see as humanity’s fallenness from nature (*Ecology* 117-8), Wendell exemplifies a romanticism that maintains the structures of sovereignty which it professes to disavow. One clear example of this is evident in Wendell’s self-professed ethical concern towards animals, particularly the livestock on his farm. Wendell, who declares that he wishes to topple the ontological division between humans and animals, asking at one point ‘what [...] have we that all [the] beasts have not?’ (*R* 62), envisions such a transformation as taking place through a recognition of animals as speaking subjects. In the mock-Chaucerian ‘The Occupations of Wendell’, the chapter that as aforementioned Barnes initially wished to serve as the prologue, Wendell recounts a fantastical tale to his children in which his ‘wizardry’ enables his horse Hisodalgus to speak in elegant and mannered rhyming couplets (*R* 67).¹⁵⁰ The purpose of this trans-species communication, it is revealed, is to tell Hisodalgus to warn the animals on the farm of their imminent slaughter. This, in turn, is what Hisodalgus instructs his fellow animals:

Now I would have each one of you to mull,
This cud of thought, that right into each skull
A flowing brook of speech by haply hung
To rill in wordës all adown your tongue,
So that you take not only to the bit
But both to wisdom and alike to wit,

¹⁵⁰ Wendell’s tale is a refashioning of the kind of anthropomorphic stories about Dick the Horse that Wald Barnes included in his letters to Djuna Barnes during her childhood (see, for example, Wald Barnes to Djuna Barnes 14 Jan 1897; 16 June 1910).

That nevermore your throat y-corve¹⁵¹ is none
For man be fright to pick the rack of bone
That to him spoken has [...] (R 67)

The comic encouragement that the livestock should release a ‘flowing brook of speech’ derives from what Wendell identifies as the fact that animal slaughter can only occur because of the belief that ‘animals go silent before all’ (R 65). In response, Wendell’s speaking horse, absurdly anthropomorphised, encourages his fellow animals to literally disrupt human discourse and to reason through ‘wisdom’ and ‘wit’ that they deserve recognition as subjects worthy of ethical consideration. There is a parallel here with Garryowen, the ‘Irish red setter wolfdog’ in the ‘Cyclops’ episode of *Ulysses* who in a ‘really marvellous exhibition of cyanthropy’ recites nationalist poetry to rapt audiences (U9.712-6), and like Joyce, Barnes can be seen to be satirising an anthropocentric mode of anthropomorphism, which as I discussed in Chapter 4, she elsewhere deploys as a way of unsettling ideas of human identity.¹⁵²

There is, nonetheless, also a sense in which Wendell’s anxiety around animal speech and slaughter speaks to what Derrida describes as the ‘brutally false’ assertion of the silence of ‘brute beasts’ inherent to Western philosophy and theology (*Beast I* 55-6) and which, writing elsewhere, he describes as determining who can be safely sacrificed outside of the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ (‘Eating’ 279). Yet, while for Derrida, this metaphysics of speech and silence necessitates a deconstruction in which language is itself revealed to be inhuman and reconceived as ‘codes of traces [...] among all living beings’ (*Beast II* 8-9), Wendell’s desire that ‘every beaste in

¹⁵¹ In the pseudo footnotes that Barnes added to this episode to explain her idiomatic Middle English of the chapter, ‘y-corve’ is translated as ‘slashed, cut’ (R 67).

¹⁵² As Sam Slote has argued, this moment in *Ulysses* plays to fears within nationalist discourse of cultural ‘mongrelization’ (121-4).

kindë might speak' and thereby become an ethical subject is rooted in a proscriptive understanding of language (R 65). Rather than undoing a narrowly human concept of language and, thereby, ethics, Wendell's speaking livestock instead make a claim for their moral consideration through their *resemblance* to not just the human, but the humanist idea of the human as the rational animal, in which 'wisdom' and 'wit' are defining properties (R 67). Reiterated in his later description of a potential future language between humans and animals where the calls of a 'thousand several throats' will be '*common* to the human' (R 210 emphasis added), Wendell strains to collapse the distinction between the human and animal by configuring the latter within the dominant humanist measure of the speaking subject. It is precisely this resemblance between the human and the animal that Wendell is striving for that is confirmed and troubled in the face to face encounter towards the end of his story. Here, as Hisodalgus, places his feet on Wendell's shoulders and looks 'into his eyen deep and long', Wendell describes being overwhelmed by how little he can be sure as to 'what he [Hisodalgus] meant, or if he understood' (R 68). Wendell might acknowledge the animality of his own being, and in doing so, recognise the being of animals, but he does so through an anthropocentrism that implicitly reasserts his own sovereignty. Concluding the tale of Hisodalgus by directly addressing the children with the lines, 'So now I will make close | By saying, on mine honour he rose!' (R 68), it is no coincidence that Wendell ties up the story not by acknowledging the otherness of the animal, but, as the double entendre implies, asserting his sovereignty over his horse as a beast subject to his husbandry.

Moreover, 'The Occupations of Wendell' establishes how Wendell's sovereignty over animal sexuality is not confined to livestock. Setting out how 'child and cattle' will eat from the same 'bin' since 'kine [...] were kith and infants kin' (R

55), Wendell goes on to describe how his ‘dames’ must wear the same ‘hoopen’ rings as his cows, as both women and cattle are outfitted ‘[w]ith worldly ornamentē round and bright’ until ‘every wrist | And ear of slut [is] ajangle’ (*R* 56-7). The story of Pennyfinder the Bull, that Wendell recounts to his daughter Julie in the same chapter, further explicates the parallel between women and livestock, as Wendell describes Pennyfinder, ‘a Bull as great as any tree’, who ‘[w]hen he raised his lippen for to roar, | Many a dame came running to her door’ (*Ryder* 62-3). It is a description that suggests again the influence of *Ulysses* on Barnes, with the tale of Pennyfinder paralleling the moment in the ‘Oxen of the Sun’ (set in Holles Street Maternity Hospital) where the medical student Dixon retells the bawdy fertility fable of an ‘Irish bull’ seducing the ‘maid, wife, abbess and widow’ in the ‘dark of a cowhouse’ (*U* 14.581; 14.595-7). Unfortunately, the passage in *Ryder* describing what happens after the dames come running to Pennyfinder was expurgated by Barnes’s publisher and since manuscripts for the novel are yet to be found, the reader can only infer the censored narrative from the surviving illustration (not restored in the text until 1990) which show two women bathing in a pool of bodily fluids beneath the giant bull (see figures 5.2 & 5.3). As in the aforementioned section of *Ulysses*, where Dixon’s parable of bestiality serves as a misogynistic portrayal of female sexuality, Wendell’s Pennyfinder bestialises female sexuality in order to position his wives within the same sexual economy as his livestock.

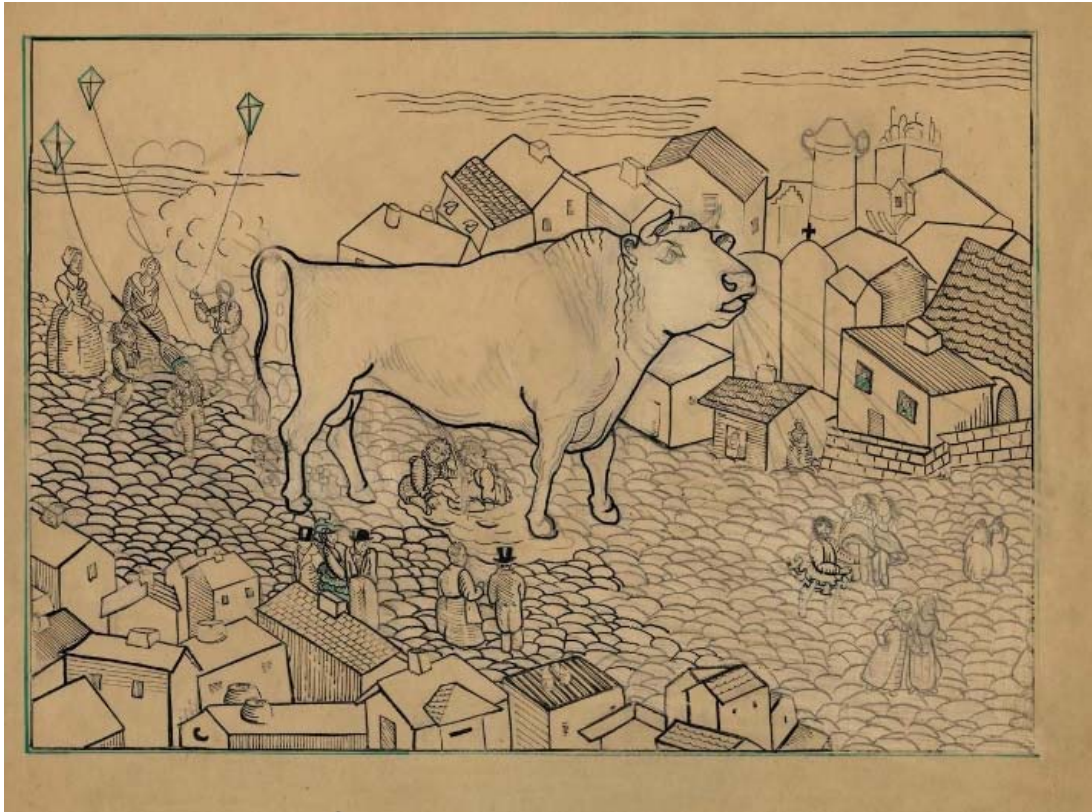


Figure 5.2 Pennyfinder the Bull from Ryder (1928) -- (Partially colored) - Series 8, Box 6, Folder 1, Item 3.35, Djuna Barnes papers, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.



Figure 5.3 Pennyfinder the Bull from Ryder (1928) -- (Partially colored) - Series 8, Box 6, Folder 1, Item 3.35, Djuna Barnes papers, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.

5.3 Women, Animals and Nature

The parallel between women and livestock is further established as the novel progresses. In Chapter 19, Wendell's wives, Amelia and Kate, simultaneously go into labour and discover that they were both impregnated by Wendell 'nine months back to a day' (R 95). Followed by a description of Wendell's 'cows' in the near-by pastures all with 'a little cow within' (R 95), the reader is explicitly presented with the fact that Wendell's control of gestation periods extends beyond the livestock on his farm. Later Wendell will himself explicitly articulate this idea, describing himself as 'ranchman' of, rather than 'father' to, his children (R 170). Yet, what James B. Scott describes as Wendell's refusal to see an 'essential difference between children and cattle, nor [...] women and cattle' (69) is justified by Wendell on the basis that he sees himself not as separate to, but situated within a continuum of animal sexuality. For Wendell nature is structured by a logic of fertility and fecundity which reveals monogamy to be a human artifice to be overcome. Remaining alert to his innate animal sexuality, Wendell believes, means 'bedding in all beds, and in bedding, sow[ing] no seed of doubt' (R 211). Structured by a Darwinian logic of survival, in which his motives are expressed in terms of reproductive success, Wendell might reject monogamy but he wholly embraces genealogy. Polygamy is attractive to Wendell precisely since it presents itself as a means of further securing his line. As he explains towards the end of the novel in a chapter revealingly titled 'Ryder—His Race', polygamy multiples the channels through which he can be 'Father of All Things' and, akin to a logic of species survival, enables him to extend his fatherly presence beyond his own mortality through 'the Race that shall be Ryder' (R 210). Wendell continues:

Now this is the Race that will be Ryder – those who can sing like the lark, coo like the dove, moo like the cow, buzz like the bee, cheep like the cricket, bark

like the dog, mew like the cat, neigh like the stallion, roar like the bull, crow like the cock [...] My children shall come forth, grow, rise, decline and fall in a manner hitherto unknown to man [...] They shall follow the hounds, and herd with the beasts and know the way of birds and fish. They shall be fleshed with all flesh now alien to man and unknown, and shall be by that flesh made so tender with wisdom that they shall know how the hoof strikes, the fin cleaves, the paw runs, the claw clings, and the web swims. No heart shall strike with a difference, for they shall have hearts within hearts; ox heart and robin heart. (R 210-11)

A description of species kinship premised upon his own procreative agency, Wendell's assertion that '[n]o heart shall strike with a difference' embeds him and his kin within the animal kingdom, but again marks out his own exceptionalism. Metonymically defining animals through conventional linguistic representations of their speech ('moo', 'crow', 'mew', 'bark' etc.) the accumulation of anthropomorphic designations has a nominative effect. In this respect, Wendell's speech operates according to what Derrida emphasises as the authority the human bestows upon itself through the act of naming which, he argues, runs all the way back to the story of Adam being given dominion over the beasts (*Animal* 16). It also presents what Oliver, following Derrida, describes as the way in which the 'sovereign operation of naming' not only creates the illusion of human dominion, but creates the condition for 'animal and sexual difference [to] arrive at the same time' (143). Wendell's assertion that '[i]n a thousand several shapes shall they be created and named all things' (R 211) is a recognition of animal life that entrenches his own identity as a male speaking subject and sovereign over his livestock, children and women.

For Wendell, recognising human animality is a means of arriving at newly essentialised ideas of sex and gender. His animalistic description of his daughter Julie as destined to 'eat, function and die looking neither backward nor forward' (R 202),

for instance, not only situates her in terms that resemble his livestock, but closely echoes O'Connor's description of Robin in *Nightwood* as an 'animal, born at the opening of the eye, going only forward, and, at the end of the day, shutting out memory with the dropping of the lid' (*N* 113). Indeed, O'Connor himself appears in a number of chapters of *Ryder* as a local doctor, where, as in *Nightwood*, he occupies a role somewhere between a physician, confidante and mad prophet (perhaps unsurprisingly, Wendell's above remarks about his daughter are addressed to him). The relationship between sex and nature, for Wendell, means returning to a question that has been asked 'a thousand times [and] in as many tongues':

What is woman? Wherein comes that of her which we are not? What destroys our reason in her, when we see it enter her as we would, and come forth as she will? What in her, like a shadow jackal, preys upon the mound of our accomplishment, dragging off that of it we thought most rotten with defeat to make of it an halter and a noose? For man rides the monster civilization, but to woman goes the shoe cast of it, in which is the exact record of that journey. (*R* 206)

An example of Wendell's inconsistency, or his ability to vacillate between positions, the description of 'woman' as a jackal shadowing man and feeding on the fringes of his accomplishments, defines both women and animals through what they lack in comparison with the reasoning figure of man. Women here are 'cast' in the same shoe as a nature that must necessarily be tamed in order to be transformed and civilised. Oliver observes that Western philosophy has historically associated women with an 'instinct to procreate' that has seen them 'place[d] in the vicinity of the animal realm' while man, figured as a rational subject, is placed outside of it (131). Although Wendell appears on the one hand to transgress this division, by rejecting sexual relations based on traditions of monogamy and resituating the human within a natural

economy of sexuality, this transgression is also what enables him to occupy a position from within which he can entrench his mundane messianism, in which the ‘lives that [he] begetteth, and the lives that shall spring from them’ will produce a ‘world without end’ in which he will remain at the centre (*R* 3).

In his ability to vacillate between a position of animality and patriarchal power, Wendell presents the reader with what Derrida describes as the troubling resemblance between the beast and the sovereign (*Beast I* 17).¹⁵³ For Derrida, both the beast and sovereign stand outside of the law; the law is applied neither to animals nor the sovereign upon whose authority the law relies. Indeed, Wendell explicitly identifies himself in such terms. When a concerned social worker arrives on the farm and instructs him to send his unschooled children to school, he warns her that ‘Ryder as an outlaw is less trouble than citizen Ryder’ (*R* 130). As Edmunds notes, Wendell not only occupies a position of both criminality and authority, but his portrayal worries the ‘stable opposition’ between the two (61). Able to vacillate between being above and before the law, in much the same way as he can vacillate between being human and animal, masculine and feminine, Wendell enjoys a sovereign subjectivity that can, as Derrida writes, ‘posit itself as [the] “I, me”’ of the autonomous subject (*Beast I* 178). In this respect Wendell occupies almost exactly the kingly position that Barnes will have O’Connor later set out in *Nightwood*:

A king is the peasant’s actor, who becomes so scandalous that he has to be bowed down to [...] And why must he be bowed down to? Because he has

¹⁵³ As I outlined in Chapter 4, the beast is not synonymous with the animal in Derrida’s late seminars. Nonetheless, the transgressive animal figures that Wendell frequently invokes in *Ryder* to outline his sexual identity occupy precisely the beastly qualities Derrida also discusses.

been set apart as the one dog who need not regard the rules of the house; they are so high that they can defame God and foul their rafters!’ (N 37-8)

O’Connor’s mixed metaphor situates the king *as* the dog who in being outside the law enjoys a sovereignty un beholden to any authority, to the extent that he (the kingly dog) has the right to defile his own environment. This metaphor finds a precursor in *Ryder* where Wendell’s two wives, Amelia and Kate, on ‘their four feet to [clean] up the dirty mess’ of the farm’s dovecote, are likened to the birds whose ‘metal rings on their twiggy ankles knoc[k] out a convict’s tune’ (R 114). As Amelia summarises with an aphorism that figures as the inversion of O’Connor’s speech: ‘To man is the vision, to his wife the droppings!’ (R 114).

As *Ryder* repeatedly presents to the reader in the form of Wendell’s interest in nature and animal life, it is not for lack of an ecological imagination that he is able to claim sovereignty over the animals and women around him. Rather, his authority derives precisely from his ability to reconfigure the relation between the human and the animal. Indeed, the manner in which Wendell’s ecological view legitimates his patriarchy serves to highlight the way in which, as Derrida has argued, ecological discourse is always bound up with familial structures. Drawing attention to the well-known etymological root of the modern prefix ‘eco’ in ‘oikos’, the ancient Greek word for both family and home, Derrida argues that epistemologies such as ecology or economics remain indebted to the notion of ‘furnishing a house’; that is to say, they establish and regulate laws of domesticity and relationality (*Beast I* 283). Moreover, just as the ancient Greek ‘oikos’ situated women, slaves and animals within ‘a habitat for beasts’, in which processes of ‘domestication, [...] taming, training, stock raising, so many modalities of master and sovereign power’ were enacted, Derrida suggests that later, modern epistemological or discursive modes of ‘oikos’ operate through a

similar means of entrenching phallogentrism through operations of sovereign knowledge and power. For Derrida, ecology, in establishing a *proper* set of relations between species and their environments, always has the potential to extend ‘the laws of the family home [...] the house of the master’ beyond the boundaries of what is usually considered the domestic sphere (*Beast I* 283). Wendell’s challenging of the rigid boundary between the human and the animal does not, as Bonnie Kime Scott claims, ‘partially disrupt patriarchy’ (*Refiguring II* 112). Rather, his ability to reconceptualise human-animal relations provides the grounds for patriarchal authority itself.

5.4 Sovereignty and Slaughter

As I have shown above, Wendell’s philosophy of nature establishes a sexual economy in which both women and animals are recast as material resources to be exploited in the service of a genealogical line, the race of Ryder. Throughout *Ryder* this exploitation is thematised through images of violence that bring to the foreground a correlation between sexual sacrifice and structures of sovereignty. In ‘Chapter 5: Rape and Repining’, which does not directly feature any of the Ryder family, reproduction is disturbingly and satirically presented in terms of seasonal cycles of sexual violence. Spoken by a female chorus, an unidentified ‘Council of Women’ (*R* 26) who have internalised the misogyny that has been enacted against them, the chapter opens with the sentiment, ‘What ho! Spring again! Rape again, and the Cock not yet at his Crowing!’ (*R* 21), before detailing how as ‘the Waters melt, and the Earth divides, and the Leaves put forth, and the Heart sings dilly, dilly, dill! It is Girls’ Weather and Boys’ Luck’ (*R* 29). Presenting the rural environment as a space of danger for women,

especially adolescents, the chapter laments the ‘Deflowering’ of a young woman in Tittencote, the English village where Wendell’s wife Amelia grew up:

A Girl is gone! A Girl is lost! A simple Rustic Maiden but Yesterday swung upon the Pasture Gate, with Knowledge nowhere, yet is now, to-day, no better than her Mother, and her Mother’s Mother before her! Soiled! Despoiled! Handled! Mauled! Rumped! Rummaged! Ransacked! No purer than Fish in Sea, no sweeter than Bird on Wing, no better than Beasts of Earth! (R 21)

An example of what Bonnie Kime Scott describes as a ‘repeated Barnes plot’ of women hunted like animals and forcibly brought down to the earth (*Refiguring II* 73), the chapter recasts springtime fertility myths in brutal terms of forced reproduction in which ‘Rape sit[s] hot among the Wheat’ and ‘Springs [...] up in the corn’ (R 23). Here women, ‘no better than the Beasts’ (R 21), are literally positioned as coterminous with an undifferentiated nature that exists only as it is organised by the sovereign agency of man, whose questions of ‘Whose child do you harvest? Whose First-Born springs from your Lap?’ (R 27), mirrors Wendell’s own rhetoric of a naturalised genealogy. Blaming not the men who commit rape, it is the girls whose ‘crouching, ambushed Flesh’ (R 21) invites springtime predation that are held responsible and criticised, not least since the offspring of such unions, born outside of wedlock, are ‘made Fatherless by too fast Fathering’ (R 27). As the chapter’s chorus narrator asserts, although such springtime raping is natural it must be located within a genealogical structure that ensures continuity, since while ‘Man is born to die [...] we, with Fortitude, have made the Farthest Outposts of Death a Lawful Goal [...] your Child shall, on the Day it first takes Breath, set before the World the Farthest Point yet gained in this misfortune’ (R 27). It is a sentiment echoed later when one of Wendell’s sons enigmatically boasts that the way in which ‘slaughter makes the shoulders rise and the head descend’ in animals is the same ‘miracle of nature’ that makes ‘little girls

stumbling to school' stare disconsolately downwards on account of 'their future maternity' (R 162).

The positioning of women and livestock in *Ryder* as subjects for sacrifice within a patriarchal economy that requires their bodies for the continuation of the male line makes literal what in contemporary feminist theory has been suggested is the structural relation between misogyny and meat eating. Most notably Carol Adams in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990) has argued that the slaughtering and consuming of animals is an entrenched 'symbol and celebration of male dominance' (58). This dominance, Adams argues, can be traced through overt and covert 'associations between meat eating and virile maleness' in popular cultural representations such as novels, advertisements and other mass media forms (25). To a certain extent, Barnes's novel offers examples that support Adams's argument. The maidens of 'Rape and Repining', for instance, are described as 'Quarry' promising 'White or Dark meat' to their captors, who see them as 'Sweet Chops' (R 24). The theme is also returned to in an early draft of Barnes's later play *The Antiphon* (1958). As Field summarises, the unpublished draft of the play includes a speech by the play's protagonist Miranda describing how when she was sixteen-years old she was bound 'up like a side of beef and [hoisted] to hang from a rafter in the barn' while her father, a figure who resembles both Wendell Ryder and Wald Barnes, 'goes off to barter her virginity for a goat among the local men' (Field 193). Like the adolescent Julie in *Ryder*, whose virginity it is implied is 'flung down into the market place' by Wendell (R 109), Miranda is, as Field puts it, 'the first virginal sacrifice of [her father's] new religion' (193).

Yet, while such moment in Barnes's oeuvre speak clearly to Adam's description of 'images of women butchered, fragmented, or consumable' (13), her writing resists straightforwardly mapping violence and slaughter onto a model of

binary gender relations. Her 1917 short story 'The Rabbit' offers a good example of the way in which Barnes complicates the connection between sex, animality and slaughter. The story's main protagonist, Amietiev, a timid, newly arrived Armenian immigrant in New York, is shocked early on in the narrative by a Manhattan butcher's grotesque window display of 'bright quarters of beef, calves' heads and [...] remnants of animals, pink and yellow in layers of fat' (CS 199). This 'harvest of death' (CS 199) stands in contrast with his bucolic memories of his home farm in Armenia where he had 'ploughed and tended the crops', 'groomed the feathers and beaks of his ducks' and 'watched his cows grazing' (CS 197). Subsequently falling in love with a confident and sardonic New Yorker named Addie, who not only does not return his affection but tells him that he is too 'woman[ly]' to ever 'be anything', Amietiev avows to become 'less like a woman' in order to win the affection of his love (CS 202-3). Associating masculinity with a heroism defined by violence, since 'all heroes were men who killed or get killed' (CS 204), Amietiev returns to the butcher's shop with its 'sides of beef hanging from their hooks, the chilled lakes of blood in platters, [and] the closed eyes of the calves' heads in ranks on their slabs, looking like peeled women' (CS 206). Physically sickened by the sight of the butcher's 'choked scrap-barrel, spilling out its lungs and guts', he nonetheless covertly enters the temporarily unattended shop, where he finds a box with a live rabbit in the backroom (CS 206). Forcing himself to strangle the rabbit, he returns with the carcass to Addie as proof of his masculinity. The story concludes with her 'harsh, back-bending-laughter' at his deed, while Amietiev, now 'shaking', runs out on to the streets of New York in terror at what he has done (CS 208). It is a story, then, that draws upon a lurid aesthetic of meat and slaughter in its presentation of the construction of masculinity. Yet while the story explicitly associates women with slaughtered animals in its likening of calves'

heads to skinned women, it also foregrounds the degree to which cultural practices surrounding the production and consumption of meat resist being neatly correlated with stable male and female identities. The protagonist's masculinity is not at any point synonymous with an aesthetic of meat eating, although the romanticism with which he remembers his previous life in Armenia, where he lived harmoniously with 'the creatures of his small land' (CS 197), suggest that it is an aesthetic revulsion at industrialised slaughter and consumption that horrifies him rather than meat itself. Most striking, however, is the way in which it is Addie who has more clearly internalised an ideal of masculinity associated with the killing and consumption of animals. Meat eating in 'The Rabbit' provides the basis for a construction of female, rather than male, agency, although, as the story's ending suggests, where Amietiev's terror makes Addie suddenly 'afraid of him' (CS 197) it is a form of agency that will not necessarily translate into new or positive gender relations.

Ryder further complicates the relation between sexual violence and carnivorousness, showing it not only to cut across demarcations of sex and gender, but to be constitutive to a certain figuration of subjecthood. In 'Chapter 5: Rape and Repining', for instance, the female chorus not only likens maidens to 'quarry', but, in an extension of their moral disapprobation towards rape victims, encourage married women to be like hounds in their pursuit of women who have fallen short of moral standards:

This way good Wives! Muzzles to Windward! The Hare is running, and you are well behind! She whisks over the Common and you cannot get scent of her! [...] Who is the most Infallible Pointer among you? [...] Now, now! She falls as yonder Ditch, and, like a Deer, turns face on, weeping for clemency. Now, have at her!' (R 24)

While elsewhere O'Connor asserts that 'a man's member is like a mighty bloodhound' sniffing out its prey (*R* 230), here the canine figure of the 'Infallible Pointer' stands as an internalised phallic symbol of power that impels women themselves to 'make a catch of [maidens] and an example' (*R* 24). Moreover, as in 'The Rabbit', the novel shows the mutability of meat tropes across gender distinctions that are themselves mutable. Wendell might, as above outlined, fashion himself as the 'ranchman' of the women securing his genealogical line (*R* 170), but in a further example of his ability to vacillate between beast and sovereign, elsewhere sees himself as 'a well-done fowl' whose 'aroma' teases the 'authorities of the state' like a 'pack of hounds, all slaving at the jaws' (*R* 169). Wendell's mother, Sophia, also offers a clear example of the way in which it is possible to occupy a position of both hunter and hunted. Described as '[b]egggar at the gates [and] [...] queen at home', she is, like Wendell, able to vacillate between positions, as she is both subject to and requires 'obeisance' in such a way that, as the novel simply states, 'She was the law' and in being the law 'gave herself to be devoured' (*R* 16). Here, then, we find a dynamic that, rather than avowing the vegetarian feminist critique of Adams, speaks rather more to Derrida's concept of carnophallogocentrism. For Derrida, carnophallogocentrism is a concept that outlines the degree to which the dominant notion of sovereign or autonomous subjecthood relies upon a carnivorous 'ingestion, incorporation, or introjection' of otherness which has often been both symbolised and actualised through meat eating ('Eating Well' 278). Like Adams, Derrida highlights how this structure of subjecthood has historically operated through phallogocentric constructions of subjectivity (hence his neologism of carnophallogocentrism) in which '[a]uthority and autonomy' are attributed to 'the man ... rather than to the woman, and to the woman rather than to the animal' ('Eating Well' 280-1). In a manner foreshadowed in Barnes's images of meat,

slaughter and gender identity, Derrida's 'carnivorous virility' does not describe a certain mode of identity but a set of social relations (280). For Derrida, as Amietiev in 'The Rabbit' also realises, meat eating is a practice that undergirds the dominant 'virile and heroic schema' of masculinity (280).¹⁵⁴

Derrida, however, emphasises that this 'carnivorous vitality' is not a symptom of a certain kind of patriarchal masculinity, rather, this 'sacrificial schema' underpins the Western idea of sovereign subjecthood itself. Indeed, for Derrida this carnivorous incorporation of otherness cannot be simply disavowed since, to a certain extent, it constitutes a fundamental set of relations between 'the self' and 'the other' (282). The implications, as such, are that:

The moral question is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this and not that, the living or the non-living, man or animal, but since *one must* eat in any case and since it is and tastes good to eat, and since there's no other definition of the good, [the moral question is] *how* for goodness' sake should one *eat well*? ('Eating Well' 282, emphasis in original).

The question of what it means to eat well is presented as constantly at stake in *Ryder*. While Sophia 'offer[s] her heart for food' to her family, Julie, her granddaughter, 'spew[s] it out' since she 'taste[s] a lie' (*R* 16), a metaphor that self-reflexively points to the processes of consumption, digestion and sublimation that Sophia appears to have not only internalised but capitalised upon in order to construct a position of power within the family's social relations. Furthermore, the degree to which the notion of *eating well* cannot be straightforwardly mapped onto a vegetarian ethics also finds

¹⁵⁴ Carrie Rohman suggests we can see a logic of carnophallogocentrism in the religious themes of *Nightwood* where transubstantiation is 'the symbolic cannibalism par excellence in which the ingestion of the flesh of God (the word that has become flesh) calls the subject into its highest relation to the ethical and metaphysical' (140).

expression in Barnes's novel. Wendell's experimentation with a 'meatless diet of vegetables' while a young man, proving to Sophia that her son is 'an artist' (R 34), is a moment that provides a further link with the transcendentalist philosophy of Thoreau, for whom the 'uncleanness' inherent to slaughter is an intolerable reminder of the 'slimy beastly life' and best replaced by a vegetable diet that will cultivate the 'higher or poetic faculties' (*Walden* 261-2). While it is implied that the adult Wendell is no longer vegetarian, his queasiness around animal slaughter and general aesthetic distaste for the visceral, because of which his wives must clean the 'dirty mess' of animal waste that accrues in the farm (R 114), express the way in which a certain lapsed vegetarianism conceals a process of abjection that shores up his patriarchal sovereignty.¹⁵⁵ An example of what Derrida describes as the way in which vegetarians are not situated outside of the carnophallogocentric schema but simply 'practice a different mode of denegation' ('Eating Well' 282),¹⁵⁶ *Ryder* demonstrates how carnivorous identities are capable of occupying positions that outwardly appear to renounce meat eating and slaughter.

While Derrida suggests that an ethics attentive to carnophallogocentrism should be premised on eating well, Barnes, more provocatively, presents a mode of feminist resistance grounded in *eating badly*. Chapter 46, entitled 'Ryder—His Race',

¹⁵⁵ A parallel might be made here between Wendell and the portrayal of Bloom running into George Russell coming 'from the vegetarian [restaurant]' with a 'listening woman at his side' in *Ulysses* (U 8.534-5). For an analysis of the sexual politics of meat in *Ulysses* see Adkins, 'The Eyes of That Cow'.

¹⁵⁶ Although Derrida makes clear that vegetarianism does not provide a position of moral absolutism, critics have pointed out that he overlooks the possibility of a self-reflexive vegetarianism that might provide the basis for a genuinely oppositional mode of politics and ethics. See, for instance, David Woods's convincing response to Derrida in which he argues that a deconstruction that truly looks to escape a 'humanist teleology' (17) would necessarily be vegetarian in its ethical commitments. It is also worth pointing out that Derrida's later writing is attuned to the ethical urgency of addressing the 'industrialization of [...] the production for consumption of animal meat' (*Animal* 25).

which as I briefly mentioned above sets out Wendell's sovereignty over both women and animals, is prefaced with an epigraph describing it as 'a treatise on carnivora' (*R* 205).¹⁵⁷ Beginning with the sentence that 'Of all carnivora man holds women most dear', the chapter, initially presented as a tract from the perspective of Wendell, praises women who practice the 'art of gourmandising', detailing how the sight of 'some sweet creature, putting away sides of ox' fills him with 'pure ravishment' (*R* 205). In 'consuming whole lamb[s], trawls of fish, an hundred guinea fowl, woodcock and grouse per annum', the chapter explains, 'slaughter may be transfigured' into female beauty (*R* 205). Where Wendell associates himself with the quasi-vegetarian realms of the artistic and the philosophical, women are associated with the carnal and excessive, figured through their taste for 'brisket, shoulder, leg [and] rump' (*R* 206). The chapter subsequently shifts to a narrative account of Wendell's seduction of the wealthy widow Lady Terrance Bridesleep, a former attendee of Sophia's salons. Attractive to Wendell since she is the apotheosis of an 'epicure and gustator', Bridesleep is a woman who by sixty knows 'scarcely a bird or beast that held adequate intricacies for her tastes' and whose French chef serves the 'hidden parts' of animals (*R* 208), and who has not only internalised the carnivorous vitality ascribed to her by Wendell, but subverted its abject carnality as a form of agency and resistance. 'Men came to her as men', the novel explains, 'and left as little girls' (*R* 208). For Wendell, who, despite Bridesleep's claims otherwise, wishes to establish her 'fecundity' (*R* 207) through the 'fertile pitch of [his] genius' and thereby absorb her within 'the Race that shall be Ryder' (*R* 210), Bridesleep's lust for meat is proof of her reproductive suitability. Her 'smiling' post-coital revelation, however, that the child she will bear

¹⁵⁷ Carnivora is a taxonomical term that describes an order of animals within the mammalian class with carnassial molars effective for shredding flesh. Humans are not typically classed within this order.

for him will take the name 'Nothing and Never' and that through this 'No Child' she will have accomplished what 'all the others leave undone', namely enjoyed sexual pleasure without the consequence of impregnation, sees Bridesleep turn her carnivorousness on Wendell's genealogy (*R* 211). Subsequently calling to her maid to 'bring [...] the calf's head that you'll find on the ice', a doubly horrified Wendell 'open[s] his mouth, but no sound came' (*Ryder* 211). It is, as Miller suggests, an 'image of [a] carnivorous woman' defeating Wendell's 'narcissistic vision' by forcing him to confront 'oblivion' (133-4), as Wendell is reduced to the status of a silent brute animal. Death, however, is not incidental to Bridesleep (whose very name suggests a putting to sleep of a bridal idea of womanhood). Instead of displacing the carnophallogocentric schema within which she has been interpolated, her affirmation of negativity and violence, symbolised in the decapitated 'calf's head' that stands in for the 'No Child', refuses the terms on which Wendell's treatise of carnivora is based. Instead, she fashions her own form of aesthetic pleasure from within the carnality to which she has been consigned. Bridesleep's lavish and grotesque taste for the very meat she is associated with becomes an act of cannibalism which disrupts patriarchal claims on female bodies by consuming the offspring she is expected to produce.

5.5 Genealogies of Difference

Bridesleep's cannibalistic mode of resisting the name of *Ryder* by consuming the offspring upon which the structure of patrilineal genealogy relies is implicitly endorsed by the novel's own cannibalistic form. The grotesque refashioning of recognisable literary genres does not just wryly affiliate *Ryder* with a recognisable literary history, but gorges on this literary history as means of subverting established

tropes and modes. While O'Connor suggests the name of the father is able to exert sovereignty even in death, since in death 'my corpse shall be, in my terms absolute, and by myself, myself made not myself' (*R* 203), we find in *Ryder* a reformulation of the terms of inheritance. Unlike *Bridesleep*, however, whose cannibalism is premised on eating her own offspring, the generative excess of Barnes's refiguring of literary history produces what Caselli describes as 'the text as illegitimate offspring' (203). Moreover, central to this illegitimacy is a questioning of the kinship structures upon which patrilineal genealogy rely.

We find a challenge to both genealogy and kinship in 'Chapter 44: Fine Bitches All, and Molly Dance', which introduces the character of Molly Dance, a 'dog fancier' who breeds 'fine bitches', producing 'pedigree[s] that would put a king to shame' and who are destined for the 'blue ribbon on dog-show day' (*R* 191-2). Like Wendell, Molly takes great interest in animal sex. She 'chaperon[s] her kennel assiduously' to protect against crossbreeding and has become so knowledgeable about animal sex that her 'ears could tell, to a howl, that which heralded, in the future, a brindle with a hound's ear' (*R* 191). Yet, where for Wendell animal procreation is the undifferentiated material from which a genealogy can be shaped, Molly, to Wendell's horror, reverses this order. For Molly, described as 'no better than her dogs and seldom as good', believes that 'the human breed was of no importance' and, indeed, does not know who has 'sire[d]' any of her ten children (*R* 191). Her fine pedigreed dogs and unfathered children stand in ironic counterpoint to one another: her 'outhouse stunk

and sounded with this breed and that; the kitchen stunk and sounded with her own' (*R* 193).¹⁵⁸

As Molly makes clear to Wendell when he visits her 'to buy a bitch, and stayed to talk' (*R* 194), her approach to animal sex is informed by a reimagining of nature, history and literature. Mirroring the novel's formal irreverence towards an authoritative version of literary history, Molly asserts that she believes 'Henry James was a horse-thief and Caesar the betrayer of Jesus', since 'what and who is Henry James that he should not be a horse-thief in his spare time' and Caesar 'might have betrayed Jesus' if he had the chance, leading, in turn, Wendell to accuse Molly of not knowing 'the *fundamentals* of anything' (*R* 194, emphasis added). Wendell's accusation that Molly has no knowledge of fundamentals, understood both in the sense of beginnings and in the sense of underlying principles, is met with a response by Molly in the form of an origins story that undoes the authority of all fundamentals. A chaotic, fragmented and exuberant description of creation that begins with Jonah as 'the First Man' coming 'out of a whale's mouth' (*R* 195), Molly offers a creation myth that challenges Wendell's framing of nature through linear heterosexual reproduction. A narrative composed of 'peelings and pits left scattered' that eschews sequential logic and temporality for a collage of detritus, Molly 'canter[s]' through the 'beginning' of this 'great world' in which the first man Jonah 'all decked out in olive branches and briars, and a crown of thorns, and his underneath all scaled' steps out into a world 'struck full of grass and flowers of all sorts and kinds, [...] and birds hanging on like grim death, all singing' religious songs (*R* 195). What follows includes moments of

¹⁵⁸ Wald Barnes, like Wendell, believed in the importance of genealogy in dogs and humans alike. Writing to Djuna in 1913 Wald explained how she was unlike the typical suffragette since she was in the 'whippet class' of women (12 Sept 1913).

absurdly sped-up Darwinian evolution, as ‘Jonah’s scales dried in the sun, [...] turned to feathers, and a bit later [...] turned into furs of all sorts and kinds, and after the fur [...] skin’ (R 195); a chronological resituating of Biblical narratives, as, after the Italians and Norsemen have established themselves ‘down in the cornfield Cain suddenly slew Abel and no sooner than had murder been discovered [...] poetry began walking up and out the place’ (R 196); and the conflating of natural history and contemporary events, as creation concludes with the emergence of ‘John Bull, England [...] and Ireland [...] and there’s never been peace since’ (R 196-7). When Wendell challenges Molly that she has forgotten about women’s involvement in ‘original sin’, Molly responds by relaying a visionary message given by a floating ‘calf’s foot [...] with wings’ that ‘the original sin was not a woman’s’ since although there was an apple involved it was man who ‘snapped it up, scattering the seeds [which] he uses to this day to get his sons by’ (R 197-8). Exposing what Caselli describes as the ‘lexical and syntactical choices’ through which any historical explanation derives its model of ‘causality, value and power’ (208), the exuberance of Molly’s narrative self-reflexively points to its own artifice and self-fashioning. In contrast to Wendell’s naturalised polygamy, Molly’s creation myth suggests that if there is an original sin in nature, it comes, paradoxically, in believing too readily in an authentic idea of Eden.¹⁵⁹

Rejecting, like Barnes’s newspaper article ‘Against Nature’, the possibility of a natural history which can be narrated without artifice and falsity, Molly’s creation

¹⁵⁹Wendell’s wife Amelia also offers a creation myth which displaces the centrality of man, describing how ‘[i]n the beginning was the jungle, and there you had turds of some account, beasts paying back the earth in coin new minted’, a state of affairs disrupted by the emergence of ‘man’ whose instruction to shit in ‘pots’ is of little ‘help to the land’ (R 115).

myth lambasts the notion of a pure or linear genealogy that Wendell sees as naturalising patriarchy. Instead, in her exuberant splicing of biblical myth, Darwinian evolution and modern history, in which the ‘First Man’ has only a ‘hint [of] the human’ to him (*R* 195) rather than a definitive essence or clear outline, Molly’s narrative of origins displaces man (in both the universalising and gendered sense of the word) and queers nature. Reflecting what Morton describes as the way in which a queer ecology would recognise that life is not ‘organic, coherent or authoritative’ but ‘catastrophic, monstrous, nonholistic, and dislocated’ (‘Queer Ecology’ 275), Molly’s origin tale fuses new forms of relation between humans, other species and their environment. A self-fashioned ecology that finds expression in her activities as both a mother and a dog breeder, Molly’s approach to animal sex opens up new genealogies and kinships that depart from heteronormative accounts of nature. Where Wendell’s transgressive view of nature is indicative of an ‘organicism’ that polices sex and gender by ‘naturalizing sexual difference’ (‘Queer Ecology’ 278), the queer agency to Molly’s vision of nature finds emphasis in the chapter’s closing moments. Wendell, still disgusted at Molly’s lack of knowledge of the ‘fundamentals’, is driven by a desire to impregnate her with one such fundamental, namely that she will ‘for once [know] the father’ of her child (*R* 194-8). Although Molly initially agrees, with bold asterisks marking out where Barnes’s description of the sexual act has been removed, her admission afterwards that ‘Dan, the corner policeman [...] not two nights ago’ (*R* 199) had the same idea as Wendell is, like Lady Bridesleep’s post-coital remarks, a revelation that retrospectively reframes the sexual act outside of the natural genealogical frame Wendell has established. For Molly, who has always ‘done her best with a bad tangle’ (*R* 192), sex, genealogy, and species are always already entangled. Indeed, it is the tangle’s badness, in the sense of being improper, that is the

basis for a sexual agency that subverts any participation in Wendell's 'setting things in order' (R 198).¹⁶⁰

As Molly sees it, 'one man's thoughts are not worth much more than another's' (R 199) since they can only think of sex and reproduction in singular terms. Her own pleasure in heterogeneity, creativity and artifice, instead, speaks to what Oliver describes as the potential for animal sex to open the 'imagination to the possibility of alternative sexes and sexualities' in which we can 'see and imagine alternatives to the limited and claustrophobic binary that reduces sex to a war between two' (150). A genealogy that affirms difference rather than opposition, the 'bad tangle' through which Molly approaches her 'fine bitches' pre-emptively affirms Oliver's assertion of sex as an 'open rather than closed system [...] [comprised] of multiple sexes, sexualities, and even multiple reproductive practices' (139). Like Barnes's ironic letter to Coleman that imagines the forms of desire and subjectivity that might emerge between a human and a horse given the right circumstances, Molly playfully challenges the ideals of sexual difference that structure patrilineality. Where Wendell's interest in animal sex is premised on a heteronormative logic of fecundity and fertility, in which reproduction and sex are conflated and women and animals are the materials for, as the first sentence of the novel puts it, 'the lives that shall spring from them [in a] world without end' (R 3), Molly, like *Bridesleep*, uncouples sex from reproduction and genealogy, revelling instead in a nature of unnatural sex.

Moreover, the novel ultimately shows how Wendell's attempt to naturalise his sovereignty is destined for failure. In the final paragraph of the last chapter—fittingly

¹⁶⁰ For Morton, entanglement is an aesthetic property of queer ecology ('Queer Ecology' 278). I discuss Woolf's presentation of queer entanglements in *Orlando* in Chapter 6.

titled ‘Whom Should He Disappoint Now?’—Wendell is made to realise the futility of his attempt to order the natural world according to his own phallogocentric schema. Having had to face the prospect that he has potentially ‘unfathered [himself]’ since the state is now prosecuting his polygamy, Wendell takes refuge among the animals on the farm (*R* 239). Here, standing among his livestock in the dark, he suddenly becomes aware that although ‘they lifted their lids and regarded him’ they ‘spoke not’ (*R* 242). It is a silence that grows in volume as, in the novel’s final moments, the livestock

closing in about him nearer, and swinging out wide and from him far, and came in near and near, and as a wave, closed over him, and he drowned, and arose while he yet might go. (*R* 242)

Here in the animals’ apparently intentional refusal to speak as they close over Wendell in a silent wave, we find a forceful rejection of the language that he earlier wished to grant his animals as a means of absorbing them within a logocentric philosophy of nature. A moment which resonates with *Bridesleep*’s silencing of Wendell with the calf’s head on ice, Wendell is alienated from a nature that he has constructed in his own image as the livestock disrupt the terms of relation that he has looked to entrench as both beast and sovereign. While earlier he has relayed how on his ‘honor’ Hisodalgus the horse ‘arose’ (*R* 68), the novel’s final sentence, ‘And whom should he disappoint now?’ (*R* 242), registers as a concluding moment of detumescence. Yet, where Wendell fears silence, the novel revels in cacophony. As in *Molly Dance*’s creation myth shaped from ‘peelings and pits left scattered’, *Ryder* is composed from excess and waste, recycling and queering not only literary history, but, in the process, species relations, natural history and, not least, the nature of sex itself.

6. The Sympathetic Climate of *Orlando*

The age was the Elizabethan; their morals were not ours; nor their poets; nor their climate; nor their vegetables even. Everything was different. The weather itself, the heat and cold of summer and winter, was, we may believe, of another temper altogether. (*O* 25)

The genesis of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* is usually traced back to a diary entry in March 1927 where, in the wake of *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf was contemplating 'an escapade after these serious poetic experimental books', a satirical 'fantasy' initially to be entitled 'The Jessamy Brides' (*D*3 131). Or else, *Orlando*'s origins are traced further back to December 1922 and Woolf's first encounter with the 'gifted aristocratic' Vita Sackville-West, the biographical model for Orlando and, for a period of time, her lover (*D* 216). Indeed, in their compositional history in the authoritative new Cambridge Edition of Woolf's mock biography, Suzanne Raitt and Ian Blyth trace the novel back to both these sets of events, although they emphasise that *Orlando* did not begin as a portrait of Vita but developed out of Woolf's interest in writing a satirical work exploring themes of 'Sapphism' ('Introduction' xxxvii-xxxviii; lv). Yet the finished novel also suggests a precedent that predates both of these moments: a 1920 review she wrote for the *Athenaeum* of a biography of Mary Russell Mitford. Here Woolf writes how:

The weather has varied almost as much in the course of generations as mankind. The snow of those days was more formally shaped and a good deal softer than the snow of ours, just as an eighteenth-century cow was no more like our cows than she was like the florid and fiery cows of Elizabethan

pastures. Sufficient attention has scarcely been paid to this aspect of literature, which, it cannot be denied, has its importance. (*E3* 219)

Following this passage is a lengthy description of an eighteenth-century snow storm that, as Alexandra Harris has shown, is wholly an invention of Woolf's own mind: there is no snow in the Mitford biography she was reviewing (*Woolf Winter* 5). Five years later, however, when Woolf decided to include the review in the 'Outlines' section of *The Common Reader* (1925) she would embellish precisely this aspect of the review. In addition to the above quoted section, Woolf would add that '[o]ur brilliant young men might do worse, when in search of a subject, than devote a year or two to cows in literature, snow in literature' (*E4* 192). As the epigraph to this chapter suggests, *Orlando*, with its attention to changes in 'the English climate' (*O* 31), charting the vicissitudes of England's climatic past alongside the transformations in Orlando's biography, engages the task that Woolf satirically lay down to 'our brilliant young men'. From the Little Ice Age reimagined through the 'carnival of the utmost brilliancy' on the frozen River Thames (*O* 32) to the 'irregular moving darkness' that covers the skies at the end of the nineteenth century (*O* 206) and the arid 'sky ... made of metal' that accompanies the modern era (*O* 270), Woolf engages with a range of literary tropes, modes, and traditions to show how one cannot 'pretend that the climate was the same' over the course of Orlando's centuries spanning life (*O* 211).

Weather had preoccupied Woolf from a young age. In 1899 she wrote in her journal, 'if I lived in the country, I should have been a weather prophet or something of the kind' (*Passionate* 137) and her writing registers how this ambition did not wholly diminish. Paul Maggio has helpfully collated and summarised Woolf's writings on weather in her pamphlet *Reading the Skies*, demonstrating the surprising breadth of references to weather we find in Woolf's writing (13). In a similar vein,

Harris has shown how weather frequently shapes narrative events in Woolf's novels, perhaps most memorably the rain that impedes the trip to the lighthouse in *To the Lighthouse* and interrupts the pageant in *Between the Acts* (*Romantic Moderns* 157-8). Yet, it is *Orlando* that presents Woolf's most sustained engagement not so much with weather, but with climate; that is to say, the aggregation of weather at a temporally and spatially macro scale. The climate in *Orlando* is, as Gillian Beer describes it, 'hyperbolic' (58) and its often comic presentation matches both the satirical tone of Woolf's instruction in *The Common Reader* and her diary description of *Orlando* as 'a joke' (*D3* 177). Yet, while critics such as Angeliki Spiropoulou have taken this as a cue to read the changing climate in *Orlando* as wholly ironic and arbitrary (87), we might instead take Woolf's humour seriously in understanding how parody is central to the novel's ideas around climate. Indeed, Jesse Oak Taylor, arguing that Woolf satirically entwines '[h]istorical and climatic change', has recently suggested that, in this regard, *Orlando* might be considered the first cli-fi novel (*Sky* 201; 207), while Bonnie Kime Scott and Helena Feder have similarly singled out the importance of *Orlando* as a text which unpicks ideas of human exceptionalism.¹⁶¹

For Taylor, Woolf's presentation of climate is best approached through a strategic presentism, which, as I discussed in the Introduction, sees the distance between historical and present ideas around climate as productive rather than limiting, in which, bringing contemporary theories of climate to bear on older texts offers new

¹⁶¹ Feder looks at *Orlando* in her ecocritical survey of bildungsroman novels, situating it as a novel in which the 'more-than-human world' becomes central to the developing 'human subjectivity' of Orlando (77), while Scott suggests Orlando is attentive to 'nature's sensual vitality' (*Hollow* 214). Taylor offers a relatively brief account of *Orlando* in his chapter on 'Climatic Modernism,' situating the novel in terms of a literary history of climate, but notably does not develop his analysis in relation to the text's concerns around sex, gender and sexuality as this chapter does.

ways of thinking about both. Yet, while such an approach enables new ways of reading across historical periods, it comes at the expense of looking at how Woolf herself theorised the climate within the novel. Writing to Sackville-West on 11 October 1929, exactly a year after *Orlando*'s publication, Woolf wryly suggested that she might employ Henry James's former secretary Theodora Bosanquet to respond to the correspondence she was receiving about her novel. Bosanquet might use a number of stock responses, Woolf states, including that in *Orlando* 'the climate changes in sympathy with the age' (*VWLA* 100). It is a sentiment which on the surface reiterates her earlier interest in the organic relationship between weather systems and literary history. Yet what Woolf means by *sympathy* requires some attention. In attributing sympathy to the climate, Woolf clearly does not mean human emotion but a structural relation or, more specifically, interrelation, between the climate and the age. While in the 1920s social questions of cause and effect around climate change did not carry the politically freighted implications that they accrued in the late twentieth century, Woolf is nonetheless framing a certain relationship between human society and climate in terms that suggests correlation. This in and of itself is not remarkable. Scientific theories of human influence on climate were well established by the time Woolf was writing *Orlando*. Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830), a foundational work in establishing the field of geology, looked to provide an answer to the question of whether humans could effect 'alteration of climate', ultimately concluding that, while humans could have *some* influence, such as the noticeable atmospheric changes that followed widespread deforestation, climate systems operated at too great a scale to be profoundly influenced by humankind (Lyell 697, 714-717).¹⁶² Lyell was a looming

¹⁶² The question of whether human deforestation causes change in climate goes back at least to ancient Greece (Weart 14).

figure in the nineteenth century and Woolf, who, as I outlined in the Introduction, is now recognised as having been widely read in science, would have very likely been familiar with his importance through works of popular scientific literature such as Arthur Holmes's *The Age of the Earth: An Introduction to Geological Ideas* (1913), a book which she and Leonard had in their library.¹⁶³ Indeed, Woolf's use of the word 'age' in her letter to Sackville-West teases at the influence of nineteenth-century geology, where ages, along with eons, eras, periods and epochs, had become the official demarcation of planetary time through efforts by Lyell and others to formalise geological discourse. Yet, by the early twentieth century much of Lyell's authority had come under strong scrutiny. Holmes's book, for instance, establishes Lyell's place in the history of geology but also signals the way in which his ideas around how climate systems operated were being questioned.¹⁶⁴ As I will show, Woolf's notion of the climate changing in sympathy with the age, reflects, on one level, a willingness to rethink precisely this question of the relationship between humans and climate.

If Woolf's idea of the climate acting in 'sympathy' with the age suggests an idea of reciprocity and response that goes beyond the human, the affective charge implied in such a term is also central to understanding the climate of the novel. Sympathy is a word that Woolf also uses in her aforementioned 1920 review of the Mitford biography. The difficulty of biographies, Woolf explains in the review, lies in how 'the deposit of certainty is all spun over by a myriad changing shades' and it is

¹⁶³ The Woolfs owned a 1928 edition of Holmes's book, meaning it is unlikely to have been a direct influence on *Orlando*.

¹⁶⁴ Although Holmes's book shows how Lyell's configurations of climate were being surpassed, it does not consider anthropogenic influence. It does, however, briefly discuss the impact of 'human agencies' on the 'sodium' content of rivers and waters (66) and in this respect looks ahead to R. L. Sherlock's 1922 account of the human as a geological agent that I discussed in the Introduction.

this which ‘never fails to stir vibrations of sympathy’ in the reader (*E3* 220-221). Woolf’s description positions sympathy as a bodily state, both attuning the reader to the world around her and enabling her to intuit the relation between the ‘deposit’ of objectivity and the ‘changing shades’ of subjectivity. In this latter respect it foreshadows her later more famous description in ‘The New Biography’ (1927) of biography as comprised of the ‘granite-like solidity’ of facts and the ‘rainbow-like intangibility’ of personality (*E4* 473), a metaphor that she would also use in *Orlando* which she was writing at the time. Moreover, in describing sympathy in terms of ‘vibrations’ Woolf invites us to understand it as a state not wholly located within consciousness or cognition, but as a molecular or bodily process. This *impersonal* idea of sympathy implies an affective state not wholly identical with the conscious subject who experiences it, but a process which shapes subjectivity, draws entities into relation, and acts as the catalyst for transformation.

Although Woolf removed the passage describing ‘vibrations of sympathy’ when she reworked the review for inclusion in *The Common Reader*, in the material and molecular structures of sympathy in *Orlando* these vibrations of sympathy continue to ripple through her prose. As Kirsty Martin has shown in her study of modernism and sympathy, modernist innovations enabled new literary modes of presenting sympathy not as a discrete emotional category but a ‘complex form of sensory entanglement’ (8), with Martin showing how Woolf in particular draws attention to the ‘physical matter of the brain and body’ in which sympathy emerges from a concatenation of ‘flesh’ and ‘energy’ (27). Martin’s work opens up exciting new ways of reading modernism through a material understanding of sympathy that revises how we see human relations. In this chapter, however, I want to suggest that these impersonal moments of sympathy in *Orlando* go beyond human subjects,

evident in moments such as ‘the truest sympathy’ that emerges in the tender cross-species kiss between Orlando and her spaniel (*O* 179), or the ‘sympathy’ between Orlando and her manuscript as it begins ‘shuffling and beating as if it were a living thing’ towards the end of the novel (*O* 249).¹⁶⁵ As this chapter has already begun to show, these vibrations of sympathy at the molecular level stand in productive contrast with the macro scale changes in climate that accelerate the novel’s forward motion through history. Sympathy becomes a locus that moves across scale, drawing attention to relations between entities and systems at various levels, presenting the human as bound up with large-scale material processes but also, I will show, enabling Woolf to remain alert to questions around sex, sexuality and agency at the level of embodied life.

In recent years a dynamic dialogue has emerged between Woolf’s interest in materialism and precisely these questions of sex and agency. Rosi Braidotti’s key work of posthumanist theory *Transpositions* (2006), for instance, situates *Orlando* as a text that radically captures material forces of desire. Reading Woolf’s novel alongside her diary entries about Sackville-West, Braidotti positions *Orlando* as presenting ‘a geology and a meteorology of forces’ that gather around but extend beyond embodied human subjects. Moreover, like Woolf, sympathy emerges as an important affective category in Braidotti’s inter- and impersonal economy of desire. *Orlando*, Braidotti suggests, presents an ‘assemblage of forces’ which produce ‘an ontological layer of affinity and *sympathy* between different enfolded subjects’ (*Transpositions* 190-1, emphasis added). More recently, Derek Ryan has further developed Braidotti’s approach, locating patterns of queer desire in the novel that are ‘irreducible to the

¹⁶⁵ See Ryan’s ‘Queer Animals’ for analysis of Orlando’s cross-species kiss in relation to the novel’s queer aesthetic.

human subject' and which entangle Orlando with 'nonhuman objects and environments' (*Materiality* 102).¹⁶⁶ In a similar way, Claire Colebrook describes how Woolf's texts present intensities of 'light, life, colour, sensation [and] the flux of time', putting pressure on the humanist idea of the autonomous subject and revealing the priority of 'sexual desire' as that which produces a material ontology of 'becom[ing] in relation' ('Woolf and Theory' 67; 71). This chapter builds on these readings of Woolf, opening up new points of affinity and sympathy between *Orlando* and a posthumanist materialism that remains alert to sexual politics. Yet, unlike these previous studies, I focus on how climate and climate change is central not only to the historical narrative of *Orlando*, but to its presentation of sex, gender and sexuality. For Woolf, this chapter will show, climate is not mere weather, but that from which we are materially constituted and in which our bodies and identities are entangled.

The chapter begins by establishing how Woolf contrasts a pastoral conception of nature, characterised by seasonality and stability, with the materiality of climate and climate change. While Orlando's change of sex midway through the third chapter is sometimes read as the off-centre centre of the novel, I locate another off-centre centre in the extensive description of the Victorian climate that bridges the fourth and fifth chapter and in which Woolf's climatic aesthetic is at its boldest. Looking in detail at how Woolf presents this crucial episode in the history of the Anthropocene, I suggest that it not only restages a moment of historical climate change but is alert to the nineteenth century's heightened attention towards climate itself. By resituating the novel within this Victorian climatological milieu, I suggest that Woolf playfully employs what can be called a climatic ontology. In the final section of the chapter, I

¹⁶⁶ Also see Beatrice Monaco's Deleuzian reading of *Orlando*'s 'hyperbolic historical materialism' through which 'moments' of cultural change are enacted (156).

explore how this climatic ontology is central to *Orlando*'s recasting of sex, gender and sexuality. Building on Raitt and Blyth's recent argument that Woolf's use of the word 'queer' cannot be ruled out as a 'coded reference to dissident sexualities' since by the 1920s this modern connotation had taken hold (*O* n371),¹⁶⁷ I examine how *Orlando*'s description of a 'nature' who plays 'queer tricks' (*O* 72) might be read as a queering of the relation between climates and bodies. As Brenda Helt has recently argued in *Queer Bloomsbury* (2016), Woolf's oeuvre reveals that what 'people do with their bodies in respect to ... their desires depend on socially constituted realities differing by geographical locale' (124). In *Orlando* we find evidence of the way in which geographical locales are not merely passive backdrops but participate in actively shaping those realities. Drawing out the ways in which Woolf presents a sympathetic (although not always positive) relation between climates and bodies, I suggest that *Orlando* broadens what is at stake when we think about climate change in the Anthropocene.

6.1 Nature Writing and Climate Change

The question of what it means to write about nature is a sustained concern in *Orlando* and, over the course of the novel, a certain Romantic idea of nature is presented as a counterpoint to the notion of climate. Not only is *Orlando* almost immediately

¹⁶⁷ Hermione Lee makes a similar point in regards the use of the word in Woolf and Sackville-West's correspondence (493). As Jane Goldman has shown, according to the OED the earliest use of queer in its modern sense can be traced back to a 1915 diary entry by Arnold Bennett, where he describes attending a party comprised of 'art students, painters and queer people' that included Woolf's sister Vanessa Bell as well as others in Woolf's circle (162-3).

introduced to the reader as a poet whose subject is nature, but the problems that attend anyone who wishes to write about the natural world also come to the foreground:

He was describing, as all young poets are for ever describing, nature, and in order to match the shade of green precisely he looked (and here he showed more audacity than most) at the thing itself, which happened to be a laurel bush growing beneath the window. After that, of course, he could write no more. Green in nature is one thing, green in literature another. Nature and letters seem to have a natural antipathy; bring them together and they tear each other to pieces. The shade of green Orlando now saw spoilt his rhyme and split his metre. (*O* 16)

It is a passage that establishes one of the subplots sustained through the centuries that follow: the inspiration, writing, rejection, rewriting, eventual publication and public reception of Orlando's pastoral poem, 'The Oak Tree'. Orlando, as Jane de Gay has convincingly argued, embodies a 'Romantic desire to represent nature in an unmediated fashion' against Elizabethan literary conventions of 'artifice and rhetoric' (63). In his desire to transcend the 'natural antipathy' between 'Nature and letters' he is, in a sense, ahead of his time. In contrast, at the turn of the twentieth century, it will be the poem's anachronistic stature, the absence of the 'modern spirit' from it, that will ensure its popular reception and accolades as a poem whose perceived 'regard to truth, to nature, to the dictates of the human heart' are celebrated (*O* 256). Nick Greene, the critic who disparages Orlando in the Elizabethan period, now compares 'The Oak Tree' to James Thomson's eighteenth-century proto-Romantic poem *The Seasons* (1726-30) (*O* 256).

The comparison to Thomson's *The Seasons* not only foregrounds the celebration of the natural world that provided the original impetus to Orlando's poem—the attempt to capture the 'sights [that] exalted him—the birds and the trees

[...] the evening sky, the homing rooks' (*O* 15)—it also points towards the way in which 'The Oak Tree' functions as a parody of Sackville-West's long poem *The Land* (1926), which, like Thomson, takes for its structure the four seasons and runs from winter to autumn. Although Woolf was dismissive of Sackville-West's poem, describing it as a 'prize poem' in her diary (*D3* 141), comparative studies have established the degree to which 'The Oak Tree' writes back not only to *The Land*'s pastoralism, but its encoded lesbian subtext.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, when the reader finally gets to read a short section of Orlando's poem, the four lines of verse are a direct citation of one of the most suggestive parts of Sackville-West's poem, in which 'hanging cups of fritillaries' are likened to 'Egyptian girls' who, in the poem, Sackville-West suggests, emit 'an ancient snaring spell' (*O* 241; *The Land* 44).

It is, however, also important to note that in the literary context of the 1920s Woolf's satire would have been understood to have had a broader aim. In the same way that, as I showed in Chapter 2, Joyce's modernist innovations were forged in response to the 'back to nature' aesthetics of the Revival, Woolf was writing at a point when a nostalgic pastoralism had come to dominate post-war English poetry. A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), for instance, had become hugely popular during the First World War and continued to grow in popularity during the 1920s, selling 20,000 copies in 1922 alone.¹⁶⁹ As Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy has argued, it was not high modernist poetry such as *The Waste Land* but pastoral poems by Housman and others such as Edward Thomas that found a wide reading public in the years

¹⁶⁸ Susan Bazargan offers an extended comparison, arguing that Woolf offers a politically alert riposte to Sackville-West's naturalising of 'rural poverty and destitution' ('The Land' 33) and Raitt has provided a convincing lesbian reading of *The Land* (*Vita & Virginia* 97-102). For a queer reading of *The Land* and its influence on Woolf's writing prior to *Orlando* see Adkins, 'Bloomsbury and Nature'.

¹⁶⁹ McCarthy provides this figure (21).

immediately after the war, appealing to ‘the culture’s attachment to a rural vision of England’ (21). In contrast to Eliot’s poetics of alienation, the poetry of Housman found a wide readership through its willingness to, in McCarthy’s terms, place ‘English readers in nature and [give] nature an essential Englishness with its village greens and cherry trees’ (21). Indeed, Woolf herself was alert to the differences between the poetry of Housman and Eliot, albeit in more evaluative terms. In her 1926 diary, she describes the poetry of Housman as ‘defunct’ when compared to attempts by Eliot and others to ‘animate’ poetry (*D3* 65).¹⁷⁰ In comparison, in her 1925 essay ‘The Pastons and Chaucer’ Woolf offers a more ambivalent evaluation of pastoral poetry. While the ‘nature worship’ of earlier Romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Tennyson was ‘morbid’ in its ‘shrinking from human contact’ their faults were made up for by the fact that both ‘were great poets’ (*E3* 9). In contrast, ‘modern poets’ of ‘smaller gifts’ who limit their poetic subjects to ‘the garden or the meadow’ overly rely on a simplistic aesthetic dichotomy in which ‘the country is the sanctuary of moral excellence in contrast with the town which is the sink of vice’ (*E3* 9). It is likely that Woolf, who did not read a manuscript of Sackville-West’s poem until later in 1925, has in mind here the kind of popular pastoralism which, like ‘The Oak Tree’, will run into multiple ‘editions’ and win ‘praise and fame’ (*O* 297). Indeed, it is precisely this ‘love of Nature’ that the Turkish gypsies (along with the narrator) see as the ‘English disease’ (*O* 132), a term which insists on Orlando’s pastoralism as a culturally and historically situated practice, rather than the timeless expression it believes itself to be.

¹⁷⁰ In a 1936 letter to Julian Bell, Woolf was more explicit: ‘I don’t altogether like him [Housman] [...] Always too laden with a peculiar scent for my taste. May, death, lads, Shropshire’ (*VWL6* 33).

As such, while Bonnie Kime Scott sees ‘The Oak Tree’ as reflecting an ecologically alert holism and operating as a powerful metaphor for female creativity (*Hollow* 214), the poem is more clearly a satire of the ‘nature worship’ that Woolf was questioning in the 1920s. Moreover, similar to what I showed in Chapter 5 to be Barnes’s criticism of the masculinist undertones to Romantic constructions of nature, *Orlando* presents the way in which pastoral idealisations of nature can work in the service of heteronormative configurations of gender and reproduction. As the narrator wryly explains in the first chapter, ‘what the poets said in rhyme, the young translated into practice’, hence if ‘Girls were roses and their seasons were as short’ then ‘Plucked they must be before nightfall’ (*O* 26), leading Orlando to do ‘but as nature bade him’ to a girl whose name is unrecorded, appearing in the text only as ‘his flower’ (*O* 26). This naturalisation of sexual possession through pastoral tropes (in which anonymous women are ‘plucked’ rather than courted) is presented as a correlative to Orlando’s youthful ‘confusion of the passions and emotions’ that he experiences in the parkland of his great house (*O* 15). Indeed, Orlando’s sense of poetic identification with ‘a place crowned by a single oak tree’ within the parkland, from atop of which he is offered the prospect of all that ‘was theirs’ including not only buildings but the ‘heath’ and ‘the deer, the fox, the badger and the butterfly’, suggests not ecological holism, but phallic mastery (*O* 18). Nature worship, in this sense, naturalises Orlando’s sense of proprietorship over his estate and the women he comes into contact with as a young man. It also establishes the novel’s sustained questioning of appeals to nature in relation to sexual identity. Later, Orlando’s transformation will be met with a public reaction in which it is held that ‘such a change of sex is *against nature*’ (*O* 128, emphasis added), a turn of phrase that foreshadows contemporary conservative

responses to transsexual identity on the basis of such categories being unnatural.¹⁷¹ I return to this question of Orlando's transformation being *against* nature later in the chapter, when I examine how it relates to Woolf's material presentation of sex, gender and sexuality.

Although Orlando and the poem change over the centuries, with the female Orlando being disinherited from the estate over which the oak tree had provided a phallic prospect, the novel does not indicate that her attachment to nature as an aesthetic category undergoes any meaningful transformation. As Orlando reflects in the Victorian age, 'through all these changes she had remained [...] fundamentally the same. She had the same brooding meditative temper, the same love of animals and nature, the same passion for the country and the seasons' (*O* 216). Indeed, the novel's conclusion sees Orlando return to the oak tree, which is still 'in the prime of life', and in a Romantic gesture, attempt to bury her poem at its roots as an act of 'return[ing] to the land of what the land has given to me', a deed ironically undermined by the resistance of the tree's roots (*O* 296).¹⁷² While the reader remains alert to the ways in which Orlando *has* undergone fundamental change, not least in sex, Orlando's self-identification as a nature writer undergoes qualification rather than transformation. Critics have tended to overlook this fact in readings of the novel which position 'The Oak Tree' as affirming female creativity.¹⁷³ As Spiropoulou has argued, the 'resilience' of the poem through the centuries reflects an 'oscillation between a view

¹⁷¹ See Chris Coffman's 'Trans-Studies' for an analysis of *Orlando* in relation to the contemporary field of trans-studies.

¹⁷² This is also, of course, Woolf's attempt to 'return' or refuse *The Land*.

¹⁷³ De Gay sees the poem as 'testimony to Sackville-West's achievement' (62), while Christine Froula's reading of the poem as presenting an Eden which 'disengages sexual desire from sexual difference' (186) takes an implicitly ecofeminist stance that I problematise in Chapter 3.

of human life as determined by historical change on the one hand and, on the other, [a] desire for stability and order, represented by the natural cycles’, while at the same time Woolf shows how ‘natural forms’ also ‘register historicity’ (106-7). Yet, it is Orlando’s attachment to the natural cycles of the seasons that is challenged by the novel’s historicising of climate. As Dana Phillips has argued, ‘ecological stability’, which finds poetic expression through the pastoral representation of seasonal cycles, only ‘seems stable to us because of our limited ability to appreciate the vast amounts of time involved in geological and climatic change, which can have and often does have cataclysmic effects’ (*Truth* 71). In other words, seasons present themselves as the basic unit of nature because of the parochialism of human perception. It is in this sense that ‘nature’ reveals itself to be an aesthetic category, not only in terms of its idealisation within pastoral poetry but also, more fundamentally, according to the classical understanding of aesthetics as an extension of perception itself. As Malcolm Budd explains, the word itself comes from the Greek *aisthanomai*, meaning perception by means of the senses (n.p.). Nature, in this sense of aesthetic experience, no longer points towards an external world of fields and woodland, but a mode of experience that is shaped and constrained by human temporality and spatiality.

Moreover, it is this human parochialism which Woolf’s novel departs from. Although Orlando does not witness the transition of different geological epochs, her 400-year youth enables her to witness first-hand climatic transitions that would remain beyond the purview of a typical human life and which disrupt the notion of seasonal stability. He watches from the banks of the Thames as the Great Thaw apocalyptically transforms ‘the whole gay city’ on the frozen river into ‘a race of turbulent yellow waters’, effectively signalling the end of early modern England (*O* 57). Later, Orlando will watch as a dark ‘turbulent welter of clouds’ suffocates London at the dawn of the

nineteenth century, bringing a dampness that will again alter ‘the constitution of England’ in all senses of the word (*O* 206-8). As the twentieth century arrives, the sky is shown to have ‘changed’ again; ‘no longer so thick, so watery, so prismatic’ as it was previously, the ‘dryness of the atmosphere’ ‘stiffen[s]’ the muscles of Orlando’s face (*O* 270-1). These moments of climate change in the text, some based on actual historical accounts that Woolf encountered in her reading, such as Thomas Dekker’s description of the extreme winter of 1607-8, present exaggerated and fantastical figures of climate change.¹⁷⁴ Where ‘The Oak Tree’, like *The Land*, takes a harmonious model of seasonal cyclicity for its structure, *Orlando* figures climate in terms of hyperbolic, irreversible, and singular transformations. While Orlando’s life span is drawn out, Woolf playfully *compresses* what in reality were temporally distributed moments of climate change into singular instances in order to have Orlando witness the kind of climatic cataclysms that Phillips describes as being beyond human perception. As such, in contrast to the seasonality of pastoral poetry, Woolf presents climate in terms of tipping points and thresholds, foreshadowing the neocatastrophist model of geological history that has come to ascendancy with the concept of the Anthropocene and which, as Jeremy Davies explains, departs from ‘the belief that the planet took on its current shape only through gradual and continuous operation of familiar processes’ (Davies 9).¹⁷⁵ Instead of *representing* the history of English climate, Woolf *figures* climate change through stark moments of ‘suddenness and severity’ (*O* 31) akin to a contemporary understanding of geology ‘as a drama without

¹⁷⁴ For Woolf’s reading in, and bending of, the history of the Great Frost see Briggs (*Inner Life* 194-5) and Fox (159-62).

¹⁷⁵ Neocatastrophism is distinct from the catastrophism of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century which looked to explain planetary change through events such as floods and was displaced by the geological discoveries of the nineteenth-century (Davies 212), an intellectual history Woolf would have likely been aware of.

any preestablished outcomes' (Davies 26). The climate becomes part of a temporal trajectory in which 'change [is] incessant and [...] perhaps would never cease' (*O* 162). As opposed to Orlando's attempt in 'The Oak Tree' to find a language that can get as close to nature as possible, *Orlando* points to the disruption, contingency and alterity of a climate that undoes any attempt to reduce the environment to a set of aesthetic ideals. Indeed, in this respect *Orlando* poses a radical challenge for the Anthropocene. In contrast to the kind of writing that, like 'The Oak Tree', might lament the demise of a stable nature threatened by the onset of climate change, *Orlando* instead affirms a material ontology that was constituted by change all along.

Yet, while the Great Thaw, the first stark moment of climate change in the novel, arrives with the '[h]uge noise as of the tearing and rending of oak trees' (*O* 57), Orlando remains committed to his/her own oak tree, emblematic of a conservative attachment to a pastoral aesthetic of nature and seasonality over climatic singularity. Indeed, if *Orlando* is the first cli-fi novel as Taylor suggests, Orlando is also the first climate change denier. When faced with the new Victorian climate, Orlando decides to 'mew herself in her house at Blackfriars and pretend that the climate was the same', only reluctantly admitting that the 'times were changed' (*O* 210-11). At stake in this satire of pastoralism is not merely Woolf's personal feeling towards Sackville-West's literary abilities, but deeper misgiving about nature as a self-evident aesthetic category and the parochialism of nature writing itself. The novel's hyperbolic transitions between climates upsets the idea of a holistic or harmonious nature and departs from a notion of ahistorical seasons serving as a backdrop to human history. Instead, the novel's scalar deviations present what Colebrook describes as a capacity not to 'see climate change as an event befalling a stable nature, [...] [but] stable nature as a product of the European imaginary' ('Post-Anthropocene' 13). If, as Colebrook

suggests, nature is a European fiction, it is a fiction that Orlando is heavily invested in. For the young Orlando, who measures his life in terms of ‘season[s]’, the pastoral notion of a stable nature is pivotal to the stability of his male aristocratic identity, believing a ‘mixture of brown earth and blue blood’ runs through his veins (*O* 27). Yet, where Orlando stakes his identity on an idealised notion of nature and seasonality, an identity which is uprooted over the course of the novel, Woolf foregrounds not only the contingent materiality of the climate, but human identity and agency itself. Indeed, as the Victorian section of the novel shows, climate and identity cannot be wholly disentangled but exist in a state of ever-shifting sympathy.

6.2 The Materiality of the Victorian Climate

The lengthy description of the ‘change [which] seemed to have come over the climate of England’ at the start of the nineteenth century, bridging the fourth and fifth chapters, presents the novel’s most sustained description of climate change. It is worth quoting this transition at length:

Orlando then for the first time noticed a small cloud gathered behind the dome of St Paul’s. As the strokes sounded, the cloud increased, and she saw it darken and spread with extraordinary speed. At the same time a light breeze rose and by the time the sixth stroke of midnight had struck the whole of the eastern sky was covered with an irregular moving darkness, though the sky to the west and north stayed clear as ever. Then the cloud spread north. Height upon height above the city was engulfed by it. Only Mayfair, with all its lights shining, burnt more brilliantly than ever by contrast. [...] As the ninth, tenth, and eleventh strokes struck, a huge blackness sprawled over the whole of London. With the twelfth stroke of midnight, the darkness was complete. A turbulent welter of cloud covered the city. All was darkness; all was doubt; all was

confusion. The Eighteenth century was over; the Nineteenth century had begun. (*O* 205-6)

The great cloud which hung, not only over London, but over the whole of the British Isles on the first day of the nineteenth century stayed, or rather, did not stay, for it was buffeted about constantly by blustering gales, long enough to have extraordinary consequences upon those who lived beneath its shadow. [...] Rain fell frequently, but only in fitful gusts, which were no sooner over than they began again. The sun shone, of course, but it was so girt about with clouds and the air was so saturated with water, that its beams were discoloured and purples, oranges, and reds of a dull sort took the place of the more positive landscapes of the eighteenth century. (*O* 207)

It is a passage that perhaps most clearly reflects Woolf's intention that the climate should change in sympathy with the age. Arriving at the stroke of midnight, the new climate emerges as an overdetermined site of darkness, doubt, and confusion that will characterise the Victorian age in contrast to the crisp airiness of the mannered and rational eighteenth century. In the passages that follow, Woolf further develops the way in which changes in climate influence the material developments of the nineteenth century. The new watery climate brings with it a 'silent, imperceptible, ubiquitous' damp that influences architecture and domestic spaces, with houses 'that had been of bare stone [now] smothered in greenery' and rooms so 'muffled' with furniture that 'nothing was left bare' (*O* 208). The climate also shapes clothing, fashion and diet: the Victorian popularity of muffins, coffee, and beards all are attributed to the new weather conditions (*O* 207-9). The damp eventually influences literary style itself, as the damp 'gets into the inkpot as it gets into the woodwork' and 'sentences swelled, adjectives multiplied, lyrics became epics and little trifles that had been essays a column long were now encyclopaedias in ten or twenty volumes' (*O* 209). It also has unequal implications for gender. As the narrator explains, 'the change did not stop at

outward things. The damp struck within. Men felt the chill in their hearts; the damp in their minds' and the 'sexes drew further and further apart' (O 209). The result is a deepening of patriarchy, as the 'life of the average woman' becomes a 'succession of childbirths' (O 209).

Woolf's ironic portrayal of the Victorian climate not only alludes to the obvious fact that the period really did see significant change in climate, or what we might now describe as the Victorian acceleration of the Anthropocene, but also the fact that the nineteenth century saw a newly heightened attention towards the idea of climate itself. Although, climate had been the subject of scientific enquiry since at least Robert Hooke and Robert Moray's seventeenth-century research in meteorology, Enlightenment thinkers, according to James Fleming, still largely relied on ideas inherited from the works of 'ancient and medieval philosophers, geographers and historians' (11-2). This began to change in the nineteenth century with the emergence of modern climatology, beginning with French scientist Joseph Fourier's study of solar radiation. Aiming to answer the question of why heat from the sun does not continuously warm up the planet, Fourier discovered that the surface of the planet emitted infrared radiation which carries heat away. When looking for an answer to the obvious subsequent question of why the Earth was not therefore very cold, he found that some of this dissipated heat was retained by the planet's atmosphere (Weart 2-3). Fourier's subsequent experiments with heat trapped in boxes covered with a pane of glass led to the discovery of the 'Green House' effect (a term not used until the 1930s) and in 1859 inspired the British scientist John Tyndall to investigate exactly *which* atmospheric gases trapped heat most effectively. Going against the scientific doxy that gases were transparent, Tyndall conducted an experiment testing the transparency of various gases, including the coal gas piped into his laboratory's gas lamps. He made a

striking discovery: coal gas was opaque to infrared radiation. It trapped heat. As the physicist Spencer B. Weart puts it, ‘the Industrial Revolution, intruding into Tyndall’s laboratory in the form of a gas jet, declared its significance for the planet’s heat balance’ (3-4). Although Tyndall did not foresee the possibility of global warming, his discovery made clear the mechanisms through which human actions could and actively *did* influence climatic conditions.¹⁷⁶

Moreover, Tyndall’s scientific interest in atmospheric gases was mirrored in the period’s growing cultural and political discussions around climate. Over the course of the nineteenth century London had grown to become the largest city in the history of the planet and the problem of its air pollution had become plainly visible. As Taylor details, by the 1880s Parliament had commissioned multiple reports, chaired numerous debates and proposed various pieces of legislation to tackle what was being referred to as the ‘smoke problem’ (*Sky* 2). In the same moment, cultural critics such as John Ruskin were turning their attention to the darkened skies of Victorian England and decrying moral as well as environmental degradation. Ruskin’s essay ‘The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century’ (1884), now often read as an outlier of social criticism on climate change, links industrialisation both to a new ‘cloud phenomena’ that he has observed in the skies and an incipient ‘moral gloom’ in society (267; 277).¹⁷⁷ Woolf was reading and thinking about Ruskin while writing *Orlando*, reviewing his autobiography *Praeterita* in December 1927 for *T. P. ’s Weekly* and, as several critics have suggested, the description in *Orlando* of a ‘great cloud’

¹⁷⁶ Tyndall’s importance in the history of climate science was recognised in 2000 when the Tyndall Centre for Climate Research, one the U.K.’s foremost climatic research centres, was named after him.

¹⁷⁷ Allen MacDuffie situates Ruskin’s essay in the context of nineteenth-century extractivism and resource use (165) while Jesse Oak Taylor has examined how Ruskin understood climate change to challenge ‘modern’ structures of belief and knowledge (‘Storm Clouds’ n.p.).

rising over England and the introduction of a new atmosphere in which men experience a ‘chill in their hearts’ appears to have Ruskin’s essay in mind.¹⁷⁸ Yet, where critics have tended to situate Woolf’s response to Ruskin as either a straightforward satire of or severance with Victorian discourse around the climate they have tended to overlook how Woolf’s attention to both aesthetics and materiality in the section playfully develops a potentially radical understanding of climate present not only in Ruskin’s essay, but other nineteenth-century climatological discourse by figures such as Tyndall.

Woolf had a personal connection to Tyndall. As Catherine Hollis has shown, he was an acquaintance of Leslie Stephen through their shared involvement with the Alpine Club (Hollis 132-3) and, although hard evidence is yet to emerge, it is entirely possible that Woolf could have met Tyndall at Hyde Park Gate while she was a child (he died in 1893 when Woolf was 11).¹⁷⁹ Critics have also suggested Woolf had some knowledge of Tyndall’s theoretical advances in physics. Beer, for instance, points out that in *Between the Acts* Mrs Swithin’s sense of how the blue of the sky ‘escaped registration’ suggests Tyndall’s discovery of how light travels in waves (*BTA* 17; Beer 107-8). Ann Banfield comes to a similar conclusion, speculating that the various presentations of waves throughout Woolf’s fiction suggests she ‘could have read’ Tyndall’s 1873 book, *Six Lectures on Light* (124).¹⁸⁰ Yet, where Banfield and Beer focus on wave theory, Woolf’s description in the opening to the Victorian section of *Orlando* of ‘air [...] so saturated with water, that its beams were discoloured and purples, oranges, and reds of a dull sort’ leaving

¹⁷⁸ Gillian Beer was the first to suggest that Woolf was satirising Ruskin’s moralism (98-99) while more recently critics have drawn out the suggestive ecological intertextual dimensions, with Caroline Webb seeing the Ruskinian allusion as central to Woolf’s ‘animus against Romantic and Victorian ideas about nature’ (244).

¹⁷⁹ Woolf records in her diaries memories of staying at Tyndall’s house in Haslemere after his death in 1896 (*D2* 190). Both Beer and Hollis have looked at Tyndall’s personal connection to Woolf, although Hollis emphasises his at times strained relationship with Leslie Stephen (Beer 107-8; Hollis 132-3).

¹⁸⁰ Although it is possible Woolf read this book, it is not one of the two books by Tyndall she inherited from her father in her and Leonard’s library.

the sky a 'bruised and sullen canopy' suggests that she might also have been aware of Tyndall's research into how atmospheric gases influence human perception of colour (*O* 207). Such a connection is lent further weight when considering that Woolf had a copy of Tyndall's 1860 book *The Glaciers of the Alps* on her bookshelf (inherited from her father).¹⁸¹ It is, as Tyndall sets out in his Preface to the volume, a work of two halves, the first giving an account of his travels in the Alps, replete with lavish descriptions of sunsets, and the second half serving as 'an attempt [...] to refer the observed phenomena to their physical causes' (*Glacier* v). Conceived as a popular science book, it details, among other things, the radiation through which the planet is heated by the sun, in which the 'atmosphere acts the part of a ratchet-wheel in mechanics' as it lets heat in but not out (245). It also details his experiments on the opacity of gas that would pave the way for modern climatology. Perhaps, most suggestively in terms of an influence on Woolf is Tyndall's 'prismatic analysis' of how moisture influences light and heat (253), a section of the book intended to provide a physical explanation for his earlier account of 'atmospheric regions [...] saturated with moisture' in the Alps, where clouds 'faded from a blood-red through orange and daffodil into an exquisite green' (184). Here, *Orlando*'s description of light as 'the effect of the sun on the water-logged air' (*O* 212) and of those few 'sunbeams' which 'managed to come to earth [...] marbling the clouds with strange prismatic colours' (*O* 211) suggests that Woolf's aesthetic for *Orlando*'s Victorian climate owes a debt, either directly or indirectly, to Tyndall's discovery that the colour of the sky depends on imperceptible atmospheric conditions.

Certainly, Tyndall is not the only influence on this opening passage. The damp prismatic light of the Victorian age seems also to have in mind in the watery aesthetics of nineteenth-century English painting, or what Woolf later described in her biography of Roger Fry as the way in which he saw the 'English climate' with its 'light [...] full of vapour' as

¹⁸¹ In *Mrs Dalloway* Clarissa's 'favourite reading as a girl' is 'Huxley and Tyndall' (*Dalloway* 68).

informing a conservative national aesthetic (*RF* 164).¹⁸² There is in this regard perhaps also a deeper buried allusion to Oscar Wilde's famous argument in 'The Decay of Lying' (1889) that nature 'imitates' art, as the skies appear to literally take the form of a Turner watercolour (Wilde 87). Yet, in contrast to Wilde, Woolf's interest does not appear to be in suggesting that either art or nature imitate and represent each other. Rather it is the reciprocal, or sympathetic, relationship between humans and nonhuman entities and processes that comes to the fore. For Woolf, this sympathetic relationship is figured through a materiality that seems to undo the very categories that would look to definitively separate the human from the nonhuman or life from art as the damp seeps into the 'constitution of England' in such a way that makes nature and culture difficult to disentangle (*O* 208). Indeed, the damp in the Victorian ink pot presents itself as a near direct refutation of Wilde's idea that culture precedes nature, or even that the two can be safely separated, as Wilde's own writing is implicitly situated within the body of rich and verdant prose produced by the new climate. Instead, the hyperbolic effects of the new climate foreground the active agency of climate on the act of writing, ironically dispensing with the idea of the autonomous, genius writer who is the master of his own craft. Writing, thus presented, is only partially a human act, but an activity shaped by inhuman forces outside of and beyond the individual.

6.3 Climatic Ontology

Instead of taking a dualistic view of human society and the climate, Woolf, like Tyndall, turns instead to questions of scale. Just as for Tyndall the explanation for grand prismatic sunsets resides in analysis of the molecular composition of water

¹⁸² Woolf makes a similar point in 'A Talk About Memoirs' (1920) where she ironically suggests that it is 'the atmosphere that makes English literature unlike any other—clouds, sunsets, fogs, exhalations, miasmas' (*E3* 181).

particles, Woolf employs a sliding scalar movement, turning from the vast, prismatic skies ‘saturated with water’ to a microscopic focus on the ‘silent, imperceptible’ damp that enjoys an agential ability to ‘stealthily’ infiltrate and influence objects, including literary history itself (*O* 207). The molecular presents a locus of meaning for the macro, and vice versa, as the damp becomes a figure of a material economy that collapses any binary distinction between earth and air, or solidity and fluidity. Moreover, as with the ‘Time Passes’ section of *To the Lighthouse*, where ‘certain airs’ are said to have ‘crept round corners and ventured indoors’ as the Ramsay family sleep, slowly transforming a human space into an inhuman one (*TTL* 103), the damp in *Orlando* puts anthropocentric distinctions under pressure as it shapes changing cultural and societal practices. The damp becomes a figure not only of imperceptibility but also impersonality as what appear to be personal events—such as the growing of beards, preference for coffee and the bearing of children—are resituated within an inhuman continuum in which human agency is no longer autonomous. Instead, human bodies and social practices are influenced by ‘imperceptible’ molecular transformations that make them coterminous with the new ‘climate’ visible in the skies (*O* 207-9).

Unlike the damp air of ‘Time Passes’, the insidious ‘damp’ that follows the arrival of a ‘huge blackness’ above England is explicitly presented as anthropogenic. It is a product of ‘the factory chimneys and their smoke’ that characterise the coal burning nineteenth century (*O* 268). Indeed, the novel even goes so far as to register the growing reliance on resource extraction from the sixteenth century onwards that would culminate in the dark clouds over the polluted metropolis. While in the first chapter the reader is presented with the apparently peaceful sound of ‘wood chopping’ in parkland (*O* 15), by the second chapter the grandeur of Orlando’s house has expanded so as every night ‘a whole oak tree, with its million leaves and its nests of rook and

wren [is] burnt to ashes' in 'vast fireplaces of wrought Italian marble' (*O* 78). When Orlando subsequently imagines her imminent return to England from Turkey in the eighteenth century she visualises 'heavy carts coming along the roads, laden with tree trunks, which they were taking, she knew, to be sawn for firewood' as 'the smoke went up from a thousand chimneys' (*O* 139). On her return to London she discovers that, indeed, the 'canopy of the sky' is now dominated by chimneys (*O* 197). While trees might inspire Orlando's Romantic poetry, over the course of the novel they also become an environmental synecdoche for resource depletion and atmospheric pollution.¹⁸³

Although it would be wrong to suggest that Woolf foresaw global warming as we now understand it, she was nonetheless alert to the fact that instead of there being a straight-forward or linear line of influence between climates and human societies, a more complicated co-constitutive relationship existed. Indeed, in the figure of the damp getting 'into the inkpot' (*O* 209) writing itself becomes part of a feedback loop; rather than representing the material world texts and literature become continuous with it. This distinctly material presentation of climate finds a clear parallel with the attention within Anthropocene studies around how we understand the relation between sociological and climatological systems. If, as Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz suggest, the Anthropocene necessitates seeing historical social relations as constituted by more-than-human 'flows of matter and energy' (33), then Woolf's novel offers a fictionalised narrative of that history. Moreover, Woolf's use of irony and hyperbole also comes into clearer focus, presenting itself as a way of self-reflexively gesturing to the impossibility of narrating that history from a position exterior to it. In the novel's ironic presentation of bodies in sympathy

¹⁸³ In the Victorian period most of London's pollution was produced by 'domestic hearths and kitchen fires' (Taylor, *Sky* 2).

with the climate at a level which is both personal and impersonal, perceptible and imperceptible, we find an ontology in which the human is, as Bradiotti describes it, a ‘a transversal entity, fully immersed in and immanent to a network of human and non-human [...] relations’ (‘Anthropos Redux’ 44). Humans do not experience climate change in *Orlando* so much as they become enveloped within a climatic ontology.

Again, there is evidence that Woolf might have found a precedent in Tyndall in this respect. In his famous 1874 ‘Belfast Address’ to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, a speech for which Tyndall earned a degree of public notoriety, the physicist asserted the rightful priority of science over religion when it came to explaining the mechanisms of the planet. As Jeff Wallace has shown, in his address Tyndall not only looked to depose dominant religious narratives but outlined a potentially radical vision of ‘the origin of matter’ in which, contrary to Darwin and foreshadowing Bergson, matter was presented ‘not as an empty physical capacity waiting to be animated by “life,” but as life in itself’ (Lawrence 68-9). We find something of this sentiment in Woolf’s essay ‘The Cosmos’, a 1926 review of Victorian artist James Cobden-Sanderson’s posthumously published journals for *The Nation and Athenaeum*. In the essay, Woolf not only explicitly foregrounds Cobden-Sanderson’s radical cosmology, his vision of the universe as an ‘extraordinary ring of harmony within harmony that encircles us’ (E4 371), but she recounts his discussion with Tyndall (whom Cobden-Sanderson knew) on ‘human destiny [as] the ultimate coalescence of the human intellect [...] with its other self, the Universe’ (E4 369-60). Foreshadowing the idea of the convergence of the human and the universe that would later be articulated by Teilhard de Chardin and which I discussed in Chapter 3, Woolf’s essay engages with a material ontology that appears to topple anthropocentrism by distributing agency more broadly throughout the universe. In a subsequent section of the essay which again returns to Cobden-Sanderson’s ‘desire to explain the meaning of the word Cosmos to [...] Professor Tyndall’, Woolf somewhat

sardonically suggests that his vision leads to the possibility that ‘a mountain wishes us well, or that a lake has a profound moral meaning to impart’ (*E4* 371). Here, then, we find an explicit (and far more anthropomorphic) idea of sympathy existing between human and nonhuman entities, as the nonhuman world becomes a site of affective reciprocity. Yet, it is a position that Woolf is critical of. Reminiscent of her critique of Thoreau that I discussed in Chapter 5, Woolf questions the implications of Cobden-Sanderson’s statement that he feels ‘more related to the hills and the streams [...] than to men and women’ (*E4* 372). It is not only a Romantic gesture that seems to reinstate the separation between the human and the nonhuman it claims to transcend, but, Woolf explains, it becomes detached from the material historical realities of events such as ‘the Boer War’ or ‘the Coronation’ of Edward VII. His journal shows how ‘the ideal got the upper hand’ (*E4* 372).

In contrast, Woolf’s presentation of the human as continuous with climate not only insists on what Braidotti describes as the need to recognise ‘the subject [as] an ecological entity’ within and constituted by ‘a variety of possible sources and forces’ (*Transpositions* 41) but engages with the fraught question of where to locate agency and responsibility within a material ontology located in history. The figure of the damp is, again, a good example to demonstrate this. In *Sentencing Orlando* (2018), Elsa Högberg and Amy Bromley argue that Woolf was particularly interested in the aesthetic unit of the sentence, or what they describe as a self-conscious ‘engagement with the sentence as a material element in the writer’s arsenal-toolbox’ (1), and that in *Orlando*’s experimentations with syntax, allusions and pastiche, Woolf ‘articulated her theory of the literary sentence’ (2). As we have already seen, in having the damp infiltrate the ink pot Woolf literally attends to the materiality of the sentence. But Woolf’s experimentation at the level of the sentence also extends to questions of material agency, as the grammatical framing of the opening to the Victorian chapter

blurs the lines between agency and actor. The second paragraph of the chapter, which begins by marking the fact that although ‘England was altered’ no one could be certain of ‘the exact day or hour of the change’ (*O* 208), concludes with a lengthy sentence:

Coffee supplanted the after-dinner port, and, as coffee led to a drawing-room in which to drink it, and a drawing-room to glass cases, and glass cases to artificial flowers, and artificial flowers to mantelpieces, and mantelpieces to pianofortes, and pianofortes to drawing-room ballads, and drawing-room ballads (skipping a stage or two) to innumerable little dogs, mats, and china ornaments, the home—which had become extremely important—was completely altered. (*O* 158)

Consisting of eleven clauses and sub-clauses, and proceeding via a structure of anadiplosis, in which the repetition of nouns connected by the same conjunction gives rise to a sense of accretive change, by the time the reader has arrived at the apparently straightforward concluding assertion that the ‘home’ was ‘completely altered’, the primary cause of that alteration is far from clear. Although the reader might retrace the sentence in search of *who* has altered the home, no agentive noun can be found. Instead, we find an example of what Benjamin Hagen describes as the ‘problems of reading’ that we repeatedly encounter in *Orlando*’s sentences, in which the syntax obscures its subject and the reader is required to make active interpretative decisions (‘Thomas Browne’ 175-77). Indeed, the entire paragraph refuses to name the agent responsible, despite there being plenty of verbs— ‘altered’ and ‘changed’ are repeated—that insist on agency. The result is a sense of diffuseness, as the described changes in bodies, buildings and social customs cannot be traced back solely to the damp, and instead agency appears to arise from the way in which the damp has become hybridised with other entities and processes that have, in turn, become hybridised with others. Akin to Braidotti’s monism in which ontology is understood as ‘symbiotic and material system[s] of codependence’ (‘Anthropos Redux’ 34) and speaking clearly to Latour’s notion that modernity is wholly characterised by an acceleration in

hybridised agencies (*Never Been Modern* 43-9), the damp becomes a figure for that which not only transgresses the binary between inner and outer, but which speaks to the very undecidability of such distinctions in themselves.¹⁸⁴ Not ‘stop[ping] at outward things’ (*O* 209), the damp arrives as a transformative materialism without presence; its agency located not in itself but in its readiness to become transformed into something which it is not. As in Cobden-Sanderson’s cosmology where ‘[n]othing exists in itself but only as a means to something else’, Woolf presents an agency which undoes the delimited idea of ‘[t]he solid objects of daily life’ (*E4* 372). Yet, where Cobden-Sanderson’s objects become ‘rimmed’ with a ‘symbolical’ idealism (*E4* 372), the objects of *Orlando* remain unstable, ready to transform at any given moment.

As opposed to seeing the chapter in terms of a distribution of agency that distinguishes agency from agent, instead critics have often read this section of *Orlando* as a satire of environmental determinism. This mechanistic way of explaining cultural geography had enjoyed popularity in the 1920s as a means of explaining the apparent superiority of cultures in the temperate global north and rested on the idea that climatic conditions were determinative of human societies. Woolf’s portrayal of ‘[l]ove, birth and death’ being influenced by the weather, with the ‘sexes [drawing] further and further apart’ and the ‘life of the average woman’ eventually becoming ‘a succession of childbirths’ in service of the British Empire (*O* 209) is, it has been suggested, a sardonic presentation of such mechanistic accounts.¹⁸⁵ Yet, it is noticeable that Woolf does not use the word ‘determine’ or its synonyms anywhere in the passage. Instead, the verbs that are used, such as ‘changed’, ‘appeared’, ‘invented’, ‘supplanted’ and ‘altered’, offer connotations of conditionality and transformation, rather than fixity or

¹⁸⁴ For Latour, it is important to note, that it is for this reason that what we call modernity (with all its implications of having left nature behind) does not live up to its name (*Never Been Modern* 7).

¹⁸⁵ See for instance Taylor (*Sky* 209) and Spiropoulou (87). For a view of environmental determinism as it relates to modernism more broadly see Jessica Berman’s *Modernist Commitments* (98-100).

finality. Cultural practices, such as writing, and social categories, such as gender, are shown to emerge not from some mechanistic idea of climate, but an understanding of climate in which agency is dispersed and diffuse. Moreover, within Woolf's distribution of agency, she remains alert to social and sexual difference. This is expressed, at least in part, through the section's ironic tone: the description of the 'essential' change of diet and household furnishings for the country gentleman, in contrast to the imposed changes in reproductive expectations for young wives, implicitly foreground how material adaptations and changes are always influenced in advance of time by class, gender, and sex (*O* 208). This was even clearer in Woolf's initial draft of the novel, where in a description of the Great Thaw that was excised prior to publication, she detailed how amidst the chaos and mass drowning '[n]obody of very high birth seemed to be included [...] which seemed to show that the upper sort had received warning & [sic] made for safety' (*Orlando Holograph* 46). In both instances, Woolf not only seems to be avoiding precisely the depoliticising thrust of environmental determinism, but is also foreshadowing contemporary cultural commentary on how climate change consolidates and deepens class, gender and sexual differences.

Later, in the Victorian chapter, when Orlando decides she must 'take a husband' since 'the indomitable *nature of the spirit of the age* [...] batters down anyone who tries to make stand against it', the narrator appears to playfully combine the climate ('nature') and society ('the age') in such a way as to emphasise the way in which the two cannot be disentangled but are bound up together (*O* 221-2, emphasis added). Like Braidotti, who insists that a monistic neo-materialism does not necessarily lead to a flattened ontology that would 'eliminate power differentials' but instead brings to light 'the play of complexities' through which matter 'multiplies [...] along various axes' (*Transpositions* 266), Woolf collapses an absolute distinction between the human and nonhuman but emphatically

does not evacuate all difference into an ontological gloop. The lives of women and their material agency remain foregrounded. Indeed, in this respect Woolf provides historical depth to Braidotti's transversal material ontology. If for Braidotti all material identities, including the category of 'gender', must be recognised as 'historically contingent mechanism[s] of capture of the multiple potentialities of the body' ('Four Theses' 36), Woolf draws out the historicity to such a claim as she traces this transformative materiality through transpositions that always exceed human history. In the narratives through which we retell the past it is not 'eight-hour bills nor covenants nor factory acts that matter', the narrator explains, rather it is 'something useless, sudden, violent; something that costs a life; red, blue, purple; a spirit; a splash' (*O* 263).¹⁸⁶ Here, then, the sympathy between the climate and the age presents itself in terms of conditionality and contingency; it names the process through which matter is transformed through widely-distributed agential processes. As opposed to eliding politics, especially sexual politics, it heightens them, as the climate gives rise to new '[e]vasions and concealments' between men and women (*O* 209) and brings into crises the two questions at the centre of the novel: 'What's an "age", indeed? What are "we"?' (*O* 188).

6.4 Nature's Queer Tricks

While, as I have suggested, the opening to the Victorian chapter foregrounds material conditionality and contingency over environmental determinism, it is nonetheless instructive to look at where Woolf *does* use the language of determinism in *Orlando*. Revealingly, the only reference to determination in the entire novel occurs in a passage

¹⁸⁶ Bryony Randall suggests this section of the novel articulates how 'history is no longer a discourse imposed on individuals [...] but instead a dynamic expression of corporeal life' (129).

immediately after Orlando's transformation, in which the narrator takes 'pause' to 'make certain statements' that might explain and rationalise Orlando's sex:

Many people, [...] holding that such a change of sex is against nature, have been at great pains to prove (1) that Orlando had always been a woman, (2) that Orlando is at this moment a man. Let biologists and psychologists determine. It is enough for us to state the simple fact; Orlando was a man till the age of thirty, when he became a woman and has remained so ever since. (O 128-9)

Here, the narrator invokes a rhetoric of determination only in order to disavow it. As the passages suggests, biological or psychological accounts that would look to *determine* Orlando's sex not only do so in a passive way (in the sense of uncovering a cause) but so as to actively define or categorise events.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, the structure of the sentence suggests that it is precisely these determinations that would enable those 'many people' to arrive at an explanation that is not 'against nature'. That is to say, determinism becomes a way of *naturalising* Orlando's change of sex and reconciling her transformation within a heteronormative idea of sex and sexuality present in cultural ideas of nature itself (ironically exemplified in Orlando's own nature poetry as a young man). Orlando's change of sex is 'against nature' since its uncertainty (that which is being discussed in this passage) disrupts the earlier prescription that 'nature bade' boys to pursue girls (O 26). As in the discussion of Barnes in Chapter 5, Woolf's narrator reveals the linguistic mechanisms through which claims to nature serve to actively regulate and determine categories of sex and sexuality. Yet, the narrator

¹⁸⁷ There is also a sense here in which the assertions of biologists and psychologists work as speech acts that *determine* a body's sex akin to Judith Butler's theory that sex (one's anatomical identity) cannot absolutely precede gender (cultural definitions). Woolf, like Butler, is suggesting a more co-constitutive understanding of materiality and identity (*Bodies That Matter* 69-71).

resists exactly this naturalisation. Dismissing biologists and psychologists, the narrator instead looks to merely 'state the simple fact' of Orlando's change from 'man' to 'woman', albeit with the earlier stated caveat that gendered pronouns such as 'her' and 'his' are there only for the sake of grammatical 'convention' rather than revealing an ontological foundation (*O* 128). An example of what Helt describes as the novel's disputing of sexed 'biological essence' (121), *Orlando* joins the dots between accusations of unnaturalness aimed at those with queer bodies and a form of 'nature worship' that carries with it a proscription of binary heterosexuality.

If questions of being 'against nature' are revealed as coterminous with attempts to 'determine' Orlando's sexual identity according to a binary understanding of sex and sexuality, then it is all the more striking that in the opening to the Victorian chapter, where the nonhuman world is shown to so clearly play a role in shaping human bodies and society, not only is the word 'determine' absent, but the word 'nature' is also not to be found. The question of the naturalness, or conversely unnaturalness, of the changes occurring at the turn of the nineteenth century is suspended amidst an entangling of human and nonhuman agency. Indeed, the transformations we see in sex in the Victorian age operate along the lines of both nature and culture, as the 'riot' of 'fertility' present in plant and animal bodies intersects with new social and cultural norms in a series of sympathetic (although not always symmetrical) correspondences that shape the sex lives of men and women (*O* 209). Moreover in the description of the Victorian climate's 'strange prismatic colours' which seem to 'call forth' material objects that paradoxically look as if they will both 'vanish with the first breeze' and 'endure for ever' (*O* 211), we find not only

a further allusion to Tyndall's climatic materialism but also an invocation of Woolf's own famous metaphor that life consists of rainbow and granite.¹⁸⁸

As mentioned above, this figure was first used by Woolf in 'The New Biography' to draw attention to the problematical relationship in biographical writing between factuality, likened to 'granite-like solidity', and personality, likened to 'rainbow-like intangibility', which the biographer must 'weld [...] into one seamless whole' (*E4* 473). Although Woolf initially appears to present a binary, with granite associated with darkness, stability and matter, and rainbow associated with colour, transformation and immateriality, these terms quickly reveal themselves to be unstable. In the second paragraph of the essay, the description of radium's 'atoms of light' and the soul's 'dar[k]' 'hidden channels' immediately invert the properties of granite and rainbow that have just been set out (*E4* 473). As Ryan has shown, drawing on this specific example and other figurations of granite and rainbow throughout Woolf's writings, this initial 'inversion of dark and light properties' in Woolf's essay undermines the opposition that Woolf has established (*Materiality* 30). Indeed, Woolf gestures herself to the artificiality of such rigid oppositions. It is the job of the biographer to 'weld' granite and rainbow into a 'seamless whole' precisely because, as she explains later, life itself is a 'queer amalgamation of dream and reality, that perpetual marriage of granite and rainbow' (*E4* 473; 478). Here, then, life is understood in terms of amalgamation and seamlessness; an immanence in which neither granite nor rainbow can be seen to claim priority. Instead, as Ryan concludes, both are 'always co-involved in their complexity' (*Materiality* 41). It is the task of the writer, Woolf suggests, not to impose an artificial binary separating the two.

¹⁸⁸ This is, it is worth noting, itself a metaphor that mixes meteorology and geology.

That Woolf describes this immanent relationship between matter and meaning as a *queer* amalgamation is all the more suggestive in light of the fact that she was reviewing *Some People* (1927) by Harold Nicolson, who was himself in a ‘queer ... perpetual marriage’ with Sackville-West.¹⁸⁹ As aforementioned, by the 1920s the term ‘queer’ already had some currency denoting transgressive sexual identities, yet the implications of ‘rainbow and granite’ for questions of sex and sexuality remain wholly implicit in ‘The New Biography’, teased at only in the idea that the ‘chaste, severe’ Victorian biography is a site of repression for the ‘personality’ of its subject (*E4* 474). Yet, when Woolf transposes this metaphor within the narrative of *Orlando*, the figure speaks more directly to questions of queerness implied in the essay, as well as broader questions of nature and naturalness that I have already shown to be central to the presentation of Orlando’s transformation:

Nature, who has played so many queer tricks upon us, making us so unequally of clay and diamonds, of rainbow and granite, and stuffed them into a case, often of the most incongruous, for the poet has a butcher’s face and the butcher a poet’s; nature who delights in muddle and mystery, so that even now (the first of November 1927) we know not why we go upstairs, or why we come down again [...] nature, who has so much to answer for beside the perhaps unwieldly length of this sentence, has further complicated her task and added to our confusion by providing not only a perfect rag bag of odds and ends within us [...] but has contrived that the whole assortment shall be lightly stitched by a single thread. (*O* 72-3)¹⁹⁰

Another example of the novel’s self-reflexive attention to the aesthetic unit of the sentence, the passage foregrounds Woolf’s interest not in abandoning the aesthetic and

¹⁸⁹ Perpetual since it held fast despite their respective affairs and departures.

¹⁹⁰ The date in the passage suggests that Woolf wrote it in the days immediately after ‘The New Biography’ was published (printed in the *New York Herald Tribune* on 30th October 1927).

ideological category of nature, but subverting it in service of a queer materiality. Here an apparently denaturalised and playful nature is responsible for the observable queerness that we find in human life, where people's appearances confound their identities and where causality (in actions even as quotidian as going upstairs) is not determined but subject to 'muddle'. The queerness of this ironically framed nature is further suggested in the extended metaphor where nature (with memory acting as the 'seamstress' (*O* 73)) is described as 'lightly stitch[ing]' the materiality of all life together into a 'rag bag of odds and ends' from a 'single thread'. This is a description which, on the one hand, appears to look back to the famous first sentence of the novel where the narrator asserts that there can 'be no doubt of his sex, though the *fashion* of the time did something to disguise it' (*O* 13, emphasis added). On the other hand, it also appears to look ahead to the moment later, after Orlando's transformation, in which the suggestion is raised that clothes merely stand as an outward expression of the 'vacillation from one to sex the other' within each 'human being' (*O* 173), contributing to a rhetorical circularity in which it is suggested that, as Christy Burns argues, 'what is essential ... is to be *without* essence' (350). Yet, if clothes are later held up as symbols of cultural identity (gender) that stand in opposition to one's natural or biological identity (sex), here, as with the opposition of granite and rainbow, Woolf undermines such a binary by personifying nature as itself a 'queer' artificer. As nature's queer tricks bring into crisis whether meaning is located on the surface (in someone's face or clothes) or below the surface (their personality or clothed body), the question of what is fundamentally *natural* remains unclear. In this light, Orlando's self-fashioning of identity after her transformation is no different to the 'perfect rag bag of odds and ends' that comprise everyone, while her later cross-dressing as a man

presents itself as *natural* as nature's queer tricks of 'stuff[ing]' people into the wrong 'case'.

The queer nature of *Orlando* extends Woolf's metaphor of life as a 'perpetual marriage' of granite and rainbow, and is, as I have suggested, central to Woolf's presentation of Orlando's transformation. It enables her to escape a binary of biological essence versus cultural difference as, instead, Orlando's transformation becomes part of a more-than-human materiality that is self-fashioning, and in which meaning and matter co-produce one another. As opposed to the pastoral idea of nature which is aligned with heterosexual structures of desire, this queered nature is in sympathy with the climatic qualities of immanence and transformation within which Woolf couches the narrative. Or, restated slightly differently, the broader climatic processes which Woolf shows to have clear ontological implications are always already queer: they transform bodies and undo static and heteronormative categories of identity. Woolf's queer nature thus presents itself not in terms of essence but hybridity. Orlando's embodied identity is necessarily entangled within a continuum of 'incessant' change that produces the 'strangest alliances' (*O* 295) (a term that itself recalls the notion of 'queer amalgamations'). Indeed, Woolf has shown us this from the very start. At the beginning of the novel, Orlando, slicing at the Moor's skull, is in an attic 'so vast that there seemed trapped in it the wind itself, blowing this way, blowing that way, winter and summer'; a room where 'bars of darkness' compete with 'yellow pools [...] made by the sun falling through the stained glass'. A moment later when Orlando 'put his hand on the window-sill to push the window open', he watches as it is 'instantly coloured red, blue, and yellow like a butterfly's wing' (*O* 14). Presented in terms of alien gusts of wind, bars of darkness and prismatic sun-beams, as the external climate shapes the interior human world, Orlando witnesses his body undergo a change in front of his eyes, becoming more-than-human as it takes

on an affinity with another species.¹⁹¹ The 400-years that follow present a sequence of transformations shaped by and through the changing materiality of the climates through which Orlando lives. Although Orlando's change of sex might present itself as perhaps the most striking change, and certainly has the largest influence on Orlando's identity, it is, the novel shows us, one only instance within an ongoing climate of transformation. *Orlando*, in this light, becomes a novel not of a single transformation but singular transformations.

Orlando, in this respect, might be compared to what I described in Chapter 4 as the way in which Robin in *Nightwood* inhabits a beastliness that undoes the figure of the human as a bounded individual. Indeed, in *Nightwood*, Robin is likened to 'an old statue in the garden, that symbolizes the weather through which it has endured, and is not so much the work of man as the work of wind and rain and the herd of the seasons' (N 39). Here, it is not only the fact that humans are shaped by more-than-human processes that is emphasised (bringing a new bearing on what it means to be weathered), but Barnes is also suggesting that by materially recontextualising the human one might challenge an idea of womanhood derived from the 'work of man'. Indeed, it is this wildness, figured through the agency of the weather, that Felix finds most 'painful' compared to the idealised image of her that he holds on to (N 39). Yet while Robin's beastliness, shaped by a more-than-human climate, sees her become a 'figure of doom' for those around her (N 39), Orlando occupies a more affirmatory position even in the face of similar patriarchal structures. We see this most clearly when, towards the end of the novel, Orlando is presented as struggling against the Victorian era's dictum of compulsory marriage. Despite the increasing emphasis on matrimony

¹⁹¹ Benjamin Bagocius has examined butterflies in Woolf's writing suggesting they inform her queer interest in the 'uncertain anatomy' of maleness (723). Curiously, however, he does not consider this moment in *Orlando*.

in human society, Orlando, looking at ‘the doves and the rabbits and the elk hounds’, sees ‘no indissoluble alliance among the brutes’ (*O* 220) and in rebellion vows to give herself to the ‘cold embraces’ of the earth and become ‘nature’s bride’ (*O* 225-6). In tension with her unwavering poetic attachment to a heteronormative pastoral aesthetic of stability and seasonality, Orlando presses ‘her head luxuriously’ on the ‘spongy pillow’ of the turf and pronounces herself the ‘mate’ of nature, as a moment of erotic sympathy passes between Orlando and the earth itself.¹⁹² The moment is followed by a climatic vision as Orlando turns from the earth to the sky and becomes aware of the ‘marvellous golden foam into which the clouds had churned themselves’, transporting her back to Turkey as, similar to the opening to the novel, the air effects both material and immaterial transformations (*O* 225-6).

While Orlando’s betrothal to nature is seemingly short-lived since it is immediately followed by the arrival of a ‘towering dark’ ‘man on horseback’ (*O* 228) who will turn out to be her future husband, Shelmerdine, nature’s queer tricks continue. When Orlando shortens Shelmerdine’s name to the more ambiguously gendered Shel, Woolf invites us to hear a homonym for the kind of shell that encases or conceals a surprising interiority, which, as we have already been told, is one of nature’s queer amalgamation of granite and rainbow. As such, when Orlando gives voice to her ‘suspicion’ that ‘[y]ou’re a woman, Shel!’ (*O* 230), the reader has already guessed as much from the androgynous shell which seems to encase an uncertain interior, as the ‘quickness of the ... sympathy’ (*O* 235) that emerges between the two presents itself not in terms of heteronormative categories of desire but as continuous

¹⁹² Kelly Sultzbach suggests that in *To the Lighthouse* we find a similar undoing of heteronormativity ‘through imagining alternative modes of erotic encounter with nature’ (127).

with the broader processes of impersonal sympathy that run through the novel. This is confirmed a short while later as the two prepare to marry. With the ‘organ booming and the lightning playing and the rain pouring’, Orlando and Shel’s real marriage takes place not inside the chapel but immediately outside in the rain. Here their pre-matrimonial vows are likened to ‘wild hawks together circling among the belfries’ (*O* 239), wedding them not only to each other but the queer nature Orlando has already given herself to. Although critics have sometimes struggled to reconcile Orlando’s marriage with the feminist agency elsewhere presented in the novel,¹⁹³ reading the marriage as a transformative event recasts this question of agency, presenting the moment as a further catalyst to transformation rather than a terminus. Climate, then, is not incidental but central to the design and ambitions of *Orlando*. The sympathy that emerges between the climate and the ages in *Orlando* is both decidedly non-anthropocentric insofar as it resituates human life within a broader material continuum and defiantly queer in its undoing of rigid categories of sex, gender and sexuality. Offering a riposte to the storm cloud of the nineteenth century which opens the chapter with its dim prospects for the lives of married women, the storm which closes the chapter resituates marriage in terms of a potential queer space of climatic (not to mention climactic) transformation in which, like their vows which soar ‘higher and higher, further and further, faster and faster’ (*O* 239), Orlando and Shel become entangled with more-than-human processes that take them beyond their individual selves.

¹⁹³ See, for instance, Leslie Hankin’s reading of Woolf’s ‘coded protest against marriage in her faintly dismissive portrayal of marriage’ (199). More recent readings of the novel have suggested that Woolf is attempting to move beyond the social opposition between lover and husband (Ryan, *Materiality* 112) or offering an embodied presentation of the ‘formal possibilities for continuity and rupture between the sexes’ (Frøsig 43).

7. The Disturbing Future of Woolf's Late Writing

It was an awkward moment. How to make an end? (*BA* 139)

The future insistently disturbs the present in Woolf's late writings. It looms as a sustained threat of uncertainty within a historical moment marked by war, social change and the possibility of human extinction. Indeed, the uncertainty of the future wholly structures *Between the Acts* (1941). Set on the eve of the Second World War, when the young mother Isa is faced with the question of whether the present 'isn't ... enough', she reflects that no, it is not enough for those 'who've the future', before clarifying that it is '[t]he future disturbing our present' that makes life so precarious (*BA* 60). Elsewhere in Woolf's late writings, it is the absence of any future at all that disturbs the present. In a letter to Ethel Smyth only three days after having finished the last typescript of *Between the Acts*,¹⁹⁴ Woolf recounts having said to Leonard that 'we have no future'. Leonard, in a response that contrasts with Isa's pessimism, is reported to have retorted that the lack of a future is 'what gives him hope' and that 'the necessity of some catastrophe pricks him up' (*VWL5* 475). Leonard's paradoxical hopefulness in the face of 'no future', a future whose negativity seems to disturb the present in a strangely productive way, might be seen to share some resemblance with Lee Edelman's influential argument in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004). Edelman rejects the conservative logic that he sees in the dominant notion of

¹⁹⁴ Although this was Woolf's last typescript she did not intend it to be the final version and, as her letters show, she intended further revisions (*VWL6* 482-4). Mark Hussey's extensive textual history of the novel in the recent Cambridge Edition emphasises why *Between the Acts* should be considered an unfinished novel ('Introduction' xxxix).

futurity, in which there is a desire for the present to be interminably extended into the future through a logic of heteronormativity that he terms ‘reproductive futurism’ (2). Instead, Edelman suggests, a more radical thought inheres in a queer politics of *anti-futurity* which rejects continuity and posterity (3-4).¹⁹⁵ Indeed, Edelman finds a queer predecessor for his anti-futurity in Virginia Woolf, opening his book with an entry from her diary in February 1941: ‘Yes, I was thinking: we live without a future. Thats whats queer, with our noses pressed to a closed door’ (*VWD5* 355).¹⁹⁶

This chapter traces figures of extinction and futurity in Woolf’s late writing, examining how her work is both thematising and structured by a relation to the idea of a future in which *we* (variously understood) are not present. Looking both at the final texts she wrote and the texts which can be considered ‘late’ by virtue of their being published posthumously (including *Between the Acts*), I examine how Woolf was deeply preoccupied with the aesthetical, and by extension, ethical, implications of extinction. I suggest that like Edelman, Woolf suspends normative thinking around questions of posterity and, instead, engages with an aesthetics of extinction that can reimagine ‘communal relations’ (Edelman 2). Yet, while the human-centred politics of Edelman’s idea of a present *without* a future have been critiqued as environmentally irresponsible,¹⁹⁷ this chapter suggests that we can find in Woolf an ethics of extinction that engages with a broader, non-anthropocentric conception of futurity. It argues that in Woolf we find an attention to a material alterity in which the human is no longer

¹⁹⁵ Edelman, however, goes further than Leonard. For Edelman hope itself is an ‘insistence of ... affirmation’ that subjects the present to pressures of reproductive futurism (4).

¹⁹⁶ Throughout this chapter I have retained the original grammatical presentation of Woolf’s diary entries.

¹⁹⁷ Queer ecocritic Nicole Seymour has criticised Edelman for his oversight of the way ‘corporate and governmental disregard for the future’ is precisely what enables exploitation, including environmental exploitation (7).

the barometer of existence and in which as certain worlds vanish other impersonal forms of life present themselves to be lived. In engaging with questions of extinction and the future, this chapter also looks to draw a conclusion to the thesis. If, as I have aimed to demonstrate in the previous chapters, the early twentieth century saw Joyce, Barnes and Woolf develop experimental modes of writing that could go beyond certain late-Victorian ideas of nature and pastoralism, this final chapter looks at how the late 1930s and early 1940s necessitated yet another reassessment of how to think about the human and its relationship to the wider material world.

In doing so, I look to suggest parallels and points of intersection between Woolf and the way in which the Anthropocene arrives as a crisis for futurity. Indeed, the Anthropocene as a concept is wholly structured by a relation to the future. A geological epoch yet to fully arrive, its epistemological and, by extension, political implications are based on ‘stratigraphic records’ that ‘might appear in the future’ rather than those which are currently imprinted on the planet (Finney & Edwards 7). As with the future that so profoundly disturbs Isa in *Between the Acts*, the Anthropocene’s *threat* of massive species extinction unsettles the ontological and ethical sureties of the present and draws into the foreground the inevitability of human extinction at *some point* in the future. A spectre threatening to bring about what Derrida described as a ‘remainderless destruction’ (‘No Apocalypse’ 24), the Anthropocene puts the present under pressure through events that are yet to have happened.¹⁹⁸ As Roy Scranton has outlined, the ‘*imminent* collapse of the agricultural, shipping, and energy networks upon which the global economy depends’ necessitates

¹⁹⁸ Derrida’s remarks from 1984 are in the context of impending nuclear war. For a re-evaluation of Derrida’s essay in the age of the Anthropocene see Drew Milne and John Kinsella’s ‘Nuclear Theory’.

an urgent re-evaluation of the conceptual frameworks through which we understand well-established philosophical notions of the good and the true (19-20, emphasis added). Indeed, for Scranton, following Montaigne's famous adage that 'to philosophize is to learn to die', the future promised by the Anthropocene impels nothing less than a need to 'to learn to die not as individuals, but as a civilization' (20-1). Not a wholly macabre enterprise, but a challenge to make 'meaningful decisions in the shadow of our inevitable end' (Scranton 19), Scranton is, like Claire Colebrook, an ethicist of extinction. As Colebrook writes, the end of our world contains the possibility of a new world able to free itself from 'the ethos of the present' (*Death* 43). Like Edelman's anti-futurity, for Colebrook and Scranton the Anthropocene's logic of futurity presents the possibility of rethinking the values and narratives that have attached themselves to the figure of the human.

In the same way that Edelman implicitly situates Woolf as a forebearer to his queering of the future, Colebrook also situates Woolf as a writer whose texts have a force that reimagines extinction. Woolf's writing, Colebrook argues, attends to the relationship between subjectivity and materiality in such a way as to convey 'an intuition of that which might be perceived after the destruction of "man"' ('Woolf and Theory' 77). Her ability to present affects and intensities that exceed human life create an aesthetic that shatters anthropocentrically framed ways of thinking about the future. We find examples of this in the recurring tableaux of a world without humans in *Between the Acts* where empty rooms momentarily present the reader with scenes of extinction. While it is the description of the empty barn, devoid of humans but replete

with creaturely life, that is frequently privileged in ecological readings of the novel,¹⁹⁹ we might find a more apt figure for the Anthropocene in the earlier description of the ‘empty’ library. Here the ‘light but variable breeze, foretold by the weather expert, flap[s] the yellow curtain, tossing light, then shadow’ on books that ‘if no human being ever came, never, never, never, would be mouldy’ (*BA* 12-3). It is a momentary image of a *dehumanised* space, in which an archive of human thought is contextualised in relation to broader material and climatological processes, and haunted by the possibility of its material erasure under the influence of these forces. It is a scene that also articulates an anxiety around the possible extinction not only of the human species but of human thought itself.²⁰⁰ Woolf’s mouldering library stages the moment that human systems of inscription, intended to carry human value forward into posterity, collapse into a material substrate and become part of a broader inhuman system of marks and signs. As in the Anthropocene, whose imaginary is structured by a future in which human life is ‘readable’ not through books or repositories of knowledge but the material ‘scars’ that constitute the stratigraphic ‘text of the earth’ (Colebrook, *Death* 24), Woolf’s extinction scenes stage what is at stake in reading and writing the end of the human.

As such, this chapter aims to show how Woolf’s writing is not only in dialogue with its own historical moment of possible extinction but can be brought into dialogue with current ideas and debates around extinction within Anthropocene studies. The chapter begins by tracing Woolf’s philosophy of the present through her reflections

¹⁹⁹ Shelley Saguaro, for instance, reads the barn as a ‘radical figure’ of ‘interconnectedness’ (11), while Louise Westling cites the scene as an important part of Woolf’s attention to the ‘nonhuman community’ (867).

²⁰⁰ The scene curiously foreshadows the bombing of Leonard and Virginia’s personal library in Tavistock Square in October 1940 where, from the ‘books all over the dining room floor’ Woolf ‘salvage[d]’ only Darwin (*VWD* 5 331).

on posterity and destruction in her late diary entries, letters, memoirs, and essays. In contrast to influential critical perspectives, such as Brenda Silver's, that see Woolf's late writing as characterised by an 'inability to see a transition from present to future' (Silver 359), I suggest that we find not only a heightened awareness to the way in which the relationship between life and death must be reconceived when faced with 'no future' but an alertness to the way in which the threat of extinction might become the basis for new ways of existing in the present. The chapter moves on to highlight how these questions of extinction are further developed in *Between the Acts*. Although it has the distinction of perhaps being the most ecocritically discussed of Woolf's novels (and, perhaps, of all modernist novels), less attention has been paid to the way in which the non-anthropocentric aesthetics of *Between the Acts* are structured through a relation to extinction.²⁰¹ Looking at how Woolf, like Edelman, identifies the figure of 'the child' as a key trope when it comes to questions of posterity and futurity, I examine how Woolf reveals both the anthropocentric and heteronormative ideals that structure our relation to the future and, thereby, queers the dominant narrative of extinction. In doing so, I argue, Woolf clears a space for an ethics of extinction that is able to ask the radical question of whether the present should inhere into the future.

²⁰¹ Carol Cantrell's 1998 essay 'Woolf, Modernism and Place' was the first explicitly ecocritical article on modernism and championed *Between the Acts* as 'woven of multiple layers of life' (34). Since then there have been many ecological readings of the novel, including analyses of its intertwining of human and natural history (Dickinson 16), its material presentation of language (Tazudeen 491), its Darwinian politics (See 658-9), its portrayal of sacrifice, both human and nonhuman, (Tromanhauser 86), its eco-phenomenological aesthetic (Westling 857-8; Saguaro 110-11) and its engagement with the nascence of ecology as a scientific subject (Alt 161-3).

7.1 Writing the End of the World

Writing in her diary in late January 1940, Woolf describes herself as ‘cling[ing]’ to a ‘tiny philosophy: to hug the present moment (in which the fire is going out)’ (*D5* 262). The extinguishing of light and heat sustaining the present can be read in a literal material sense: a severe cold snap had prevented Woolf from travelling from Sussex to London that day and the reflection that the fire is going out impels Woolf to stop writing her diary. But it also invites itself to be read metaphorically in the context of the war, as the possibility of her world being extinguished provokes the necessity for a philosophy of the present. As Benjamin Hagen suggests, Woolf’s interest in a ‘tiny philosophy’ speaks to an interest in an ‘aesthetics of existence’ that might provide an ‘ethos’ able to respond to her present moment (‘Bloomsbury and Philosophy’ 146).²⁰²

Woolf’s diary is instructive for tracing such a tiny philosophy, where the present is incessantly reassessed in the face of a threatened future. As early as 1936, with the ‘chaos’ and ‘slaughter’ of the Spanish Civil War giving the impression that ‘war surround[s] our island’ (*D5* 32), Woolf is reflecting on the relationship between ‘the future’ and ‘what I’m to write’, and records feeling buoyed by Leonard’s observation that she tends to ‘work from death—or non being—to life!’ (*D5* 35). A reversal of the trajectory from life to death and present to future, Leonard’s insight makes Woolf feel that a ‘weight [has] rolled off’ her, enabling her to begin work on *Three Guineas* (1938), whose opening question of how to ‘prevent war’ is itself predicated on the logic of a movement from death to life, impelled by a disturbing future that has not yet arrived (*TG* 89). By 1940, this tiny philosophy has shifted in

²⁰² Notably, Hagen suggests that Woolf found a predecessor in Montaigne in this respect, a philosopher who, as I have already set out, believed learning to develop a relation to death was one of the principle tasks of good philosophy. See also Judith Allen for the ‘lifelong’ influence of Montaigne on Woolf (9-10).

response to the realities of a war now arrived and in which, as Woolf writes to Smyth, London is already ‘like a dead city’ and invasion ‘seems imminent’ (*VWL5* 433). This more intimate proximity to destruction is registered in texts such as Woolf’s ‘Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid’ (1940). This essay, which opens with a description of ‘lying in the dark and listening to the zoom of a hornet which may at any moment sting you to death’, situates the present *within* an unfolding moment of extinction (*E6* 242). Moreover, for Woolf, there is more than just material destruction at stake. The temporal uncertainty between the present and a non-future, or life and death, finds its most acute expression in the way that the experience of hearing the ‘drone of the planes [...] overhead’ makes ‘all thinking stop’ (244). The war threatens to extinguish not only life, but thought itself.

Thomas S. Davis, borrowing a term from an Elizabeth Bowen short story, has described the socio-cultural moment of Woolf’s late writing as the ‘extinct scene’, a moment of looming material and intellectual dereliction that threatened the fabric of everyday life and compelled a socially engaged ‘outward turn’ in modernist writing (1-2).²⁰³ For Woolf, this question of possible non-futurity provoked questions around posterity, particularly around modernism and its afterlife. We see this expressed implicitly in her essays such as ‘The Humane Art’ (1940), where she argues that Horace Walpole’s letters were written not for his contemporaries but ‘for posterity’ (a word which is repeated five times in the first paragraph alone) (*E6* 225) and which concludes with the remark that ‘whatever ruin may befall the map of Europe in years

²⁰³ For Davis, this ‘outward turn’ marks a shift from interiority and subjectivity to exteriority and society and is characterised in Woolf’s writing by *The Years* (1936). This theory, however, arguably underplays the degree to which, as I have shown in Chapter 2 and 6 especially, earlier modernist novels were also interested in an exterior world in which nature *and* society are entangled.

to come, there will still be people, it is consoling to reflect, to hang absorbed over the map of one human face' (*E6* 228). In her own diary, we find a more explicit engagement with modernism's posterity. In January 1940, Woolf poses the question of whom of the Bloomsbury group 'will interest posterity most', deciding that John Maynard Keynes is the most probable and adding that 'if I had any regard for the future I would use this hour to record what he said' (*D5* 255). This question of posterity reemerges the following January in 1941, when Woolf hears that 'Joyce is dead' and remembers reading the early serialised episodes of *Ulysses* in 1918 as a potential publisher. It was, Woolf reflects, 'a scene that should figure I suppose in the history of literature' (*D5* 353).²⁰⁴ The description of 'tufts of smokes [...] from burning houses' and the 'desolate ruins' of central London that immediately follow these reflections situates Joyce's death and a modernist literary history she has already begun to memorialise within a broader context of 'completeness ravished and destroyed' (*D5* 353).²⁰⁵ Extinction, understood as a mass-death event in which certain forms of life are permanently ended, is shown here to bear a relation to an individual death. Indeed, in the same way that Woolf appears to read Joyce's death into a broader moment of extinction, her own death two months later invites itself to be read in similar terms. As both Hussey and Val Gough have argued, the bleak outlook of the late 1930s had shaped an intellectual culture in which taking one's life was being discussed as an act that was not only personal but ethical and political (Hussey

²⁰⁴ The Hogarth Press turned down the opportunity to publish *Ulysses* in 1918. In contrast to her often-quoted diary entries on Joyce from the 1920s, Woolf's even-handedness here is informed by a reappraisal of *Ulysses*, describing how she read it at Monks House 'one summer [...] with spasms of wonder, of discovery, & then again with long lapses of intense boredom' (*D5* 353).

²⁰⁵ Although Joyce's death was of natural causes it was shaped by the events of a wartime Europe in which he had to flee his home and experienced difficulties in getting his family across the border into neutral Switzerland (Ellmann, *James Joyce* 731-41).

‘Introduction’ xlv; Gough 186). While it is important not to overlook Woolf’s mental health in her decision to take her life, her diary description of a ‘matter of fact’ conversation with Leonard about ‘suicide if Hitler lands’ suggests an approach to individual death that is framed within a social context of mass-extinction and an understanding of suicide which is ethical as much it is personal (*D5* 284-5).

Perhaps surprisingly, we also find in Woolf’s late writing an interest in certain forms of extinction as potentially productive. This is articulated through a distinction that emerges between the end of *the* world and the end of *a* world in ‘The Leaning Tower’ (1940), an essay based on a paper read to the Workers Educational Authority in Brighton in April 1940. Beginning by theorising the influence of peacetime conditions on literature, Woolf discusses the current generation of ‘tower conscious’ male poets, self-aware of the privileged education that had been afforded them on account of their sex and class, and who are writing in a moment of social and political revolution which they embraced (*E6* 268). These writers, such as W.H. Auden, Cecil Day Lewis, and Louis MacNeice, Woolf argues, ‘took over from the elder poets [Yeats and Eliot] a technique which after many years of experiment, those poets used skilfully, and used it clumsily and often inappropriately’ in the service of a ‘didactic’ political ‘oratory’ (*E6* 271-2). As in her diary entries, Woolf’s polemic addresses modernism’s afterlife. Yet her argument is not only aesthetical here, but ontological: these writers face an ‘appallingly difficult task’ since, Woolf argues, refashioning a line from Matthew Arnold, they are ‘dweller[s] in two worlds, one dying, the other struggling to be born’ (*E6* 272-3).²⁰⁶ This figure of two worlds, a dying world that

²⁰⁶ See Arnold’s ‘Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse’ (1869) where he describes ‘Wandering between two worlds, one dead | The other powerless to be born’ (Arnold, *Poems* 338). Stuart N. Clarke notes this allusion in his endnotes to Woolf’s essay.

represents the old order and a nascent world of new social relations, becomes an extended metaphor for the rest of the essay, as Woolf describes the ‘deep gulf to be bridged’ between the two worlds and warns that it is within this gulf that ‘literature may crash and come to grief’ (*E6* 276). Insisting that there are ‘still two worlds, two separate worlds’, Woolf’s language not only delineates between an idea of ‘world’ as the totality of all material reality (i.e. *the* world) and a certain mode of existence (*a* world), it also again invokes a future world that has not yet arrived, but which is already marking the present. Turning from the ‘tower conscious’ writers, too quick to disavow the social privilege that has enabled their success, Woolf instead addresses the ‘next generation’ of writers who will come from a variety of backgrounds and will include ‘outsiders’ who have been historically excluded (*E6* 274; 277). In order to ‘bridge the gulf between the two worlds’ this next generation of writers will need to develop a mode of writing that can both ‘preserve and create’, Woolf insists; an act that involves ‘read[ing] ... critically’ and ‘trespass[ing] freely and fearlessly’ (*E6* 277-8). Here then, we find a more dynamic relation to the future, as the materials of the dead world become matter to be reshaped, and offering an extinction narrative of sorts that, as in Leonard’s optimism in the face of no future, suggests that the end of *a* world makes possible other future worlds.

7.2 Anonymity, Impersonality and Extinction

The instruction to ‘preserve and create’ which closes Woolf’s essay might be construed as a relatively conservative gesture; a tempered approach to social change that looks to emphasise preservation as much as it endorses creation. Indeed, in many respects the tension between resisting extinction and examining it that I have outlined

in Woolf's diaries and essays can be seen as a working through of her 'tiny philosophy' of the 'present moment' as it comes under increasing pressure. Yet, Woolf's insistence on the language of worlds—future worlds, towerless worlds, dying worlds—suggests a pluralistic understanding of life in which the end of one's own world (however construed) does not amount to the end of *the* world. If this is only suggested in 'The Leaning Tower', it finds clearer expression in the texts Woolf was writing at the same time, where we find an attention to a materiality that subtends human modes of thought and perception. Woolf's unfinished history of English literature set to be entitled *Reading at Random* or *Turning the Page* (the later title) presents itself as precisely one such attempt to preserve and create at a point when Woolf feared 'the future of language is almost extinct now' (quoted in Silver 416).²⁰⁷ Yet, Woolf's interest is not in ensconcing literature within a humanist narrative that might be shored against the threat of extinction. Instead, Woolf begins with a radical thought of extinction by attempting to imagine a world *before* ours, pre-empting what Colebrook frames as an ethical and ontological imperative to 'think beyond the world as it is for us' (*Death* 32-3). 'Anon', intended as the book's first chapter, begins by sketching out a prehistory that precedes literature, but which also provides its condition of possibility. Citing the historian George Macaulay Trevelyan, Woolf describes a 'moist and mossy' Britain in which the 'untamed forest was king' where, the essay speculates, the song of 'innumerable birds' in the 'matted boughs' gave rise to a 'desire to sing [among] the huntsmen', thereby providing the origins for what would become verbal art (*E6* 583). Woolf would draw upon the same passage from Trevelyan in a section of *Between the Acts* that she added while writing 'Anon'.²⁰⁸ In the final section of the

²⁰⁷ This is a sentence that appears in an early draft of the book that was later cut. The uncertain grammatical tense again speaks to a future disturbing the present.

²⁰⁸ I am relying here on Silver's dating of both manuscripts (Silver 402).

novel, as the ‘darkness increased’ and the ‘breeze swept around the room’, Mrs Swithin reads Trevelyan’s description of England as a ‘swamp’ where ‘[t]hick forests covered the land’ (*BA* 157).²⁰⁹ Woolf’s citations of Trevelyan’s *History of England* (1926) are important here and not only since his text enables her to situate human life within broader inhuman forms of existence. It also presents an example of Woolf reading what can now be seen as a proto-Anthropocene narrative of extinction. Trevelyan concludes his history with a remark that would become amplified in the environmental historiographies that followed later in the century. While in ‘the earlier scene, man’s impotence to contend with nature made his life brutish and brief. To-day his vey command over nature, so admirably and marvellously won, has become his greatest peril’ (Trevelyan 703).

Yet, where Trevelyan appears to be mourning the future demise of the human subject, situating the human as the species whose technological exceptionalism is also the site of its own destruction, in ‘Anon’, the figure of the anonymous singer is not an autonomous or self-enclosed human subject merely manipulating the nonhuman world to its own ends. Instead it is continuous with the materiality that it expresses. Woolf asserts that ‘[t]he voice that broke the silence of the forest was the voice of Anon’, later describing Anon as ‘sometimes man; sometimes woman [...] [living] a roaming life crossing the fields, mounting the hills, lying under the hawthorn to listen to the

²⁰⁹ Although Woolf uses a near-direct quotation from Trevelyan he is not, however, named in *Between the Acts* and the book that Swithin cites from is called *Outline of History*, which has led critics such as Tromanhauser to see it is an amalgamation of Trevelyan’s volume and H. G. Wells’s *The Outline of History* which it is thought Woolf also read (69). Like Trevelyan’s book, Wells juxtaposes human history with inhuman scales of time, highlighting a prehistory which, as Christina Alt has argued, details how ‘changes in climate and environment’ bring about massive change in life forms (163). See Silver for an overview of Woolf’s reading of Trevelyan and its influence on her final writing (357-8).

nightingale' (*E6* 581-2). 'Anon', here, is a figure that resists taking on a recognisable human shape. It is defined by an 'impersonality' which, unlike Eliot's famous formulation, is not the expression of an individual talent since Anon 'cannot stamp his own name'. Rather it is an impersonality that expresses a broader 'generality' and extends beyond the human world since Anon stands as both the human speaker and the world that speaker is expressing (*E6* 597-8). The chapter subsequently charts the development of 'Anon' up until the development of the printing press, itself a kind of extinction event insofar as it would both 'kill' and 'preserve' the possibility of anonymous works (*E6* 583). Yet, for Woolf, this quality of anonymity, in which literature is understood to be immanent to a more-than-human materiality that exceeds individual human subjectivity, is not definitively separated from the present. Instead, 'the anonymous world' is that which lies 'beneath our consciousness' and is emphatically something 'to which we can still return' (*E6* 584). Indeed, we see Woolf reflecting on precisely this aspect of her own writing in a section of her unfinished memoir, 'A Sketch of the Past', that she was writing while planning 'Anon' and revising *Between the Acts*.²¹⁰ Remembering her childhood holidays in St Ives, Woolf writes:

The lemon-coloured leaves on the elm tree; the apples in the orchard; the murmur and rustle of the leaves makes me pause here, and think how many other than human forces are always at work on us. While I write this the light glows; an apple becomes a vivid green; I respond all through me; but how? (*MB* 146)

²¹⁰ This section of 'Sketch' is dated 22 September 1940, while we find in Woolf's diary entries in the same month notes of ideas and research undertaken for *Reading at Random* (*VWD5* 317-322).

Here writing is recast as a ‘response’ that is subjective, but which does not wholly coincide with the subject of the human. The ‘other than human forces’, comparable with the description of the ‘anonymous world’ that exceeds our conscious world, constitute writing as an act that is impersonal. While for Eliot, impersonality is achieved through an aesthetic practice that eschews subjectivity through a ‘continual extinction of personality’ (*Selected Prose* 40), for Woolf it involves acknowledging one’s self as a ‘porous vessel’ and ‘yield[ing]’ to a world that exceeds our own (*MB* 146-7). It means, Woolf explains, listening to ‘a third voice’ that never seems to coincide with our own (*MB* 146), as writing becomes an encounter with the world that exists without us.

Woolf’s attention to the material anonymity that subtends the human and which always exceeds our own world presents itself as sympathetic with what Colebrook describes as the ‘stratigraphic’ imaginary. For Colebrook, stratigraphy, that is the analysis of geological layers (strata), allows ‘humans in a certain time frame to discern a broader and inhuman history beyond their ken’ (‘Grandiose’ 442). More importantly for Colebrook, the ability to ‘think stratigraphically’ enables a mode of ‘deterritorialization’ in which it becomes possible not only to consider other scales of existence, but to glimpse how it is this fact of ‘superimposition or co-existence [that] “is” the plane of immanence, within all the temporalities, chronologies, existing at once’ (‘Grandiose’ 450-1). The stratigraphic imaginary enables a mode of perception in which it is understood that *our* world is not *the* world. Woolf’s posthumously published essay ‘Flying over London’ explores precisely this question of stratigraphy as it relates both to the ability to think beyond the human and the implications therein

for extinction.²¹¹ Describing the view from an aeroplane flying over the capital, the essay describes a defamiliarised topography of ‘the River Thames [...] as the romans saw it, as paleolithic man saw it, at dawn from a hill shaggy with wood, with the rhinoceros digging his horn into the roots of the rhododendrons’ (E6 446). Momentarily challenging what Woolf describes as the ‘inveterately anthropocentric’ tendency of the human mind to assimilate the ‘nameless [and] unowned’ into the familiar and recognisable, this superimposition of perspectives produces a stratigraphic vista from which ‘England [is] earth merely, merely the world’ (E6 445-6). Both time and space are recast in stratigraphic terms as Woolf’s description lends itself to what Colebrook suggests is the possibility for ‘other worlds and other forms of existence [...] existing in the present’ to be imagined (‘Grandiose’ 452).

For Deleuze and Guattari, from whom Colebrook takes her stratigraphic concept of deterritorialization, the ‘plane of consistency’ is resolutely not a foundation underpinning appearances. Instead, the plane exists as ‘relations of speed and slowness’ which produces a ‘consolidation of [...] aggregates’ upon which material events present themselves as ‘the development of form and the formation of substance’ (589-90). It is a concept which undercuts the notion of either the permanence or transcendence of certain forms of life (such as “the human”) and which ‘stands opposed to all [...] finality’ (589). For Woolf, this radical stratigraphic perspective also opens on to questions of death and finality. Flying higher, Woolf reflects on how:

It was the idea of death that now suggested itself; not being received and welcomed; not immortality, but extinction. [...] [For] where there are gulls only, life is not. Life ends; life is dowsed in that cloud as lamps are dowsed with a wet sponge. That extinction has become now desirable. For it was odd

²¹¹ The essay was written in 1928, but not published until 1950 when Leonard Woolf included it in *The Captain’s Death Bed*.

in this voyage to note how blindly the tide of the soul and its desires rolled this way and that, carrying consciousness like a feather on the top, marking the direction, not controlling it. (*E6* 446-7)

Here extinction is recast in terms of affect and desire, as it is stripped of its familiar associations and comes to describe an experience in which conscious life becomes subject to intensities that exceed the conventional limits on human existence. Bringing the human into intimate proximity with a flighty animal life, experienced as a consciousness that is carried along by material flows and forces that it can mark but not control, Woolf's description of seeing 'merely the world' speaks to the defamiliarising thrust of Deleuze and Guattari's anti-foundationalist stratigraphy. It also firmly links an experience of extinction to Woolf's insistence on impersonality that we find in *Moments of Being* and 'Anon'. Extinction becomes a reminder that, as Braidotti describes, just as life is both personal and impersonal, there is also a 'personal and impersonal death' (*Transpositions* 235). Death no longer serves as the horizon of life, but as the 'opening up of new intensities' beyond individual life, presenting itself as a nodal point within a 'synthesis of flows, energies and becomings' (*Transpositions* 235). Yet, in Woolf's essay, while this experience entails a shift in perspective, since 'everything had changed its values [when] seen from the air' (*E6* 449), it also stands as a reminder of the necessity of returning to the ground and the embodied life of 'the heart, the legs, the arms' (*E6* 449-50). Indeed, the essay's twist ending—that thanks to a machine fault Woolf actually 'had not flown' and has imagined the whole experience from the safety of the airfield (*E6* 450)—offers a conclusion that, bringing the essay back down to earth, suggests the limits to flighty imaginings of extinction.

‘Flying over London’ not only stands as an important reflection on extinction within what I have been describing as Woolf’s late writing by virtue of its being posthumously published. There is also evidence that suggests Woolf returned to the essay when writing what she described as ‘the airy world of Poyntz Hall [*sic*]’ in *Between the Acts* (VWD5 141).²¹² The essay’s aerial description of the landscape as ‘the romans saw it’ (E6 446) finds a parallel in the novel’s opening description of the village as seen from an ‘aeroplane’ in which history is presented in terms of material ‘scars [on the landscape] made by the Britons; by the Romans; by the Elizabethan manor house; and by the plough, when they ploughed the hill to grow the wheat in the Napoleonic wars’ (BA 3). Similarly, the ‘rhododendrons’ that provided food for the ‘rhinoceros’ in ‘Flying Over London’ (E6 446) are echoed in the elderly Mrs Swithin’s fascination with the prehistoric ‘rhododendron forests’ populated by ‘the mammoth, and the mastodon’ that once stood where ‘Piccadilly’ is now (BA 6). Importantly, both instances speak to what Gillian Beer describes as the novel’s interest in ‘prehistory’ as ‘pre-narrative’, understood as that which ‘will not buckle to plot’ and articulating a ‘story [of] extinction’ that has happened before and could happen again (9). Yet, if the ontological vision that we find in ‘Flying over London’ can be seen to inform Woolf’s approach to writing extinction in *Between the Acts*, the novel extends and develops that earlier vision, moving towards what might be seen as a queering of the anxieties and hopes which structure the concept of extinction itself.

²¹² *Poyntz Hall* was the working title of the novel up until February 1941.

7.3 Queering Extinction in *Between the Acts*

The very title of *Between the Acts* insists on foregrounding the temporal relation between the present and the future as well as the past, and fears of extinction are an explicit concern throughout the text. Indeed, questions of extinction structure both the novel's opening and closing. The aerial perspective that I described above frames a discussion of the planned installation of a 'cesspool' in the village, firmly positioning the first scene within a broader narrative of rise and decline, in which civilisation and modernity are diminished through their relation to a stratigraphic perspective (*BA* 3). The novel's ending makes this point much more strongly, as the end of the day also marks a greater finality:

The window was all sky without colour. The house had lost its shelter. It was night before roads were made, or houses. It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from high place among rocks.

Then the curtain rose. They spoke. (*BA* 158)

The characters also reflect on decline and extinction. For William Dodge, visitor to Pointz Hall from London, the 'doom of sudden death' is 'hanging' in the air (*BA* 83), a metaphor that takes material form a short while later when 'twelve aeroplanes in perfect formation' fly overhead (*BA* 138). It is within this same militarised context that Isa considers if she would 'mind not again to see may tree or nut tree? Not again to hear on the trembling spray the thrush sing, or [...] the yellow woodpecker' (*BA* 76) and the romantic poetry that she spends the day secretly composing aestheticises a fantastic 'dark antre of the unvisited earth' that will emerge from the ashes of the future (*BA* 37). Elsewhere a more Darwinian conception of extinction is contemplated. Mrs Swithin is not only interested in the life forms that once populated the 'primeval forest[s]' (*BA* 7) of England, but is herself described as a species soon to be 'extinct'

(BA 125). A ‘dinosaur’ to Isa, Swithin ‘must be’ nearing extinction since ‘she had lived in the reign of Queen Victoria’ (BA 125).²¹³ Yet, as Woolf also shows us, it is not extinction *in general* that is a source of anxiety for the inhabitants and visitors of Pointz Hall but as Isa’s possessive pronoun suggests when she complains of ‘the future disturbing *our* present’ (BA 60, emphasis added), it is rather a certain question of posterity that is at stake.

What *is* threatened with extinction in *Between the Acts* is not life itself, or even human life broadly conceived, but a certain way of living. Mrs Swithin’s remarks to her brother Bart Oliver that ‘what makes a view so sad’ and ‘so beautiful’ is that it will ‘be there [...] when we’re not’ frames extinction through an aesthetics of sublimity that is explicitly anthropocentric (BA 39). Importantly, her remarks follow the narrator’s description of the area as described in ‘Figgis’s Guide Book (1833)’ in which the aesthetic permanence of the landscape is also emphasised (BA 39). As the narrator explains:

The Guide Book still told the truth. 1833 was true in 1939. No house had been built; no town had sprung up [...] the very flat, field-parcelled land had changed only in this—the tractor had to some extent superseded the plough. The horse had gone; but the cow remained. (BA 38)

Indeed, it is the ‘fine view over the surrounding country’ (BA 39) described in the guide and enjoyed by the Oliver family from the garden of Pointz Hall that Mrs Swithin sees as that which needs to be preserved as a site of beauty *after* they have died. The fear of extinction here, framed in terms of generational demise, articulates not a fear of personal death but an anxiety around what would, in contemporary terms,

²¹³ The elderly Lady Haslip, who attends the pageant, is similarly described as ‘nearly extinct’ (BA 68).

be described as the sustainability of the environment for future generations. As the ecocritic Adeline Johns-Putra has argued, the concept of sustainability is not only wholly premised on the notion of ‘future generations’ but has historically been expressed through a conservative impulse to maintain and preserve things as they are, with the contemporary notion of sustainability having been developed through attempts to combine environmental concerns with capitalist economic structures (‘Unsustainable Aesthetics’ 178-81).²¹⁴ In this respect, sustainability can be seen as the most recent iteration of longstanding anxieties around environmental change. As Hussey has shown, in the 1920s and ‘30s, such anxieties were expressed through the emergence of a ‘rural preservation movement’ that looked to decry and stall what it saw at the despoliation of the English countryside through the rise in the building of new roads and houses (*Penal* 9). At least partially informed by the rise in English pastoralism that I discussed in Chapter 6 and buttressed by class prejudices, the movement’s banner of ‘Save Our Countryside’ spearheaded campaigns that looked to highlight what was perceived as the encroachment of the city into the country, evident in the growing problem of litter from day trippers and the visual blight of advertising hoardings. It also argued for new legislation that would prohibit the construction of rural buildings that did not reflect traditional architecture (*Penal* 9-10). Hussey has also shown that Woolf’s letters and diaries often present themselves as echoing such concerns, most notably apparent in her fervent dislike of the red brick bungalows that had grown in number in the Sussex countryside and her anxieties around potential

²¹⁴ The United Nations definition of sustainability is ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (quoted in Johns-Putra 178). For an appraisal of how a more radical concept of sustainability might be put to ecocritical use see Wendy Parkins’s introduction to *Victorian Sustainability* (‘Introduction’ 1-5).

development on the South Downs (*Penal* 10-11).²¹⁵ Yet, while Hussey points out confluences between the rural preservation movement and *Between the Acts*—such as the remark made by a pageant audience member that she would make ‘leaving litter’ ‘penal’ (*BA* 88)²¹⁶—the novel also interrogates the grounds upon which claims for posterity are made.

Johns-Putra argues that discourse around sustainability, which is wholly structured through appeals to ‘future generations’, can be likened to Edelman’s concept of ‘reproductive futurism’ in which the future is envisioned as an interminable continuation of the present (Johns-Putra, ‘Unsustainable Aesthetics’ 181-82; Edelman 2). For Edelman, reproductive futurism names the way in which the prevalent understanding of futurity has come to be shaped by a heterosexual logic of endless self-replication through reproduction. This not only imposes ‘an ideological limit on political discourse’ but comes to enforce heteronormativity through a ‘rendering unthinkable’ the ‘possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of [the] communal relations’ that stretch endlessly into the horizon (2). In contrast, extinction, although only at the periphery of Edelman’s study, is presented as a potentially productive space of negativity that can expose *whose* future interests are being served within any given discourse.²¹⁷ Central to Edelman’s argument is what he identifies as the way in which ‘the image of the Child’ regulates and enforces reproductive futurism

²¹⁵ Also see Clara Jones’s careful analysis of a recently discovered unpublished letter from the early 1930s in which Woolf voices concerns around the effect of the upwardly mobile middle classes on rural life (77-9).

²¹⁶ Tellingly, this remark arises from within a montage of reported speech that implicitly links it to fears of ‘refugees’ and European ‘Jews’ arriving in the countryside (*BA* 88), suggesting Woolf could be self-reflexive of the politics underpinning anxieties around rural preservation.

²¹⁷ The word ‘extinction’ does not occur in *No Future*, instead Edelman’s preferred term is the more ambiguous ‘anti-futurity’.

(10). Cultural representations of children, Edelman argues, are utilised to ‘embody ... the telos of the social order and come to be seen as [those] for whom that order is held in perpetual trust’ (11). These images of ‘the Child’, not to be confused with the lived experience of real historical children, mark ‘an erotically charged investment in the rigid sameness of identity that is central to compulsory narratives of reproductive futurism’ (21).²¹⁸ The image of the Child metonymically underpins a reproductive futurism in which heterosexuality is timeless and ahistorical, structuring not only the present but also the future yet to come.

In *Between the Acts* we find, as in Edelman, an awareness of the way in which children can be associated with heteronormative ideas of posterity and, in becoming so, are made to dispel a more radical thought of extinction. Although little remarked upon, Woolf’s presentation of children in her final novel contrasts sharply with her earlier works. Where novels such as *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* respectively employ free indirect and direct discourse to explore the way in which children see and think about the world,²¹⁹ *Between the Acts* is noticeable for the fact that—with the exception of one important scene which I discuss below—the reader only ever sees children through and in relation to the projections, anxieties, and preoccupations of adults. This is established early in the novel, where Woolf presents us with the only

²¹⁸ Again, although Edelman is not writing with environmental concerns in mind here, there are clear parallels with how alarmist rhetoric around climate change often invokes the idea of protecting the world that *our children will inherit*. Johns-Putra has analysed the way in which the ‘figure of the child embodie[s] climate-change concerns’ in mainstream environmental media such as *An Inconvenient Truth* (‘My Job’ 523).

²¹⁹ Both of these novels introduce such perspectives in their opening scenes. The perspectives of children also play an important role in *The Years* (1937). Unlike Edelman who, despite insisting that the image of the Child needs to be distinguished from real children, does not discuss the implications of his theory for children, Woolf’s oeuvre displays a clear interest in the lives of children.

instance where the reader glimpses the interiority of a child character, only for it to be displaced by an adult projection in such a way that draws attention to the contrast between the two narrative perspectives. Introduced initially through the impersonal title of ‘the little boy’, Isa’s son George is described as ‘grouting in the grass’ before the narrative appears to both enter his perspective and remain detached from it, maintaining an uncertain distance:

The flower blazed between the angles of the roots. Membrane after membrane was torn. It blazed a soft yellow, a lambent light under a film of velvet; it filled the caverns behind the eyes with light. All that inner darkness became a hall, leaf smelling, earth smelling of yellow light. And the tree was beyond the flower; the grass, the flower and the tree were entire. (*BA* 8)

Recalling Woolf’s own childhood memory in ‘A Sketch of the Past’ of ‘looking at the flower bed by the front door’ and seeing ‘suddenly that the flower itself was a part of the earth’ (*MB* 80), a passage often provided as evidence of Woolf’s ecological imaginary,²²⁰ the uncertain proximity between the child and the earth presents the antithesis to the aesthetic pleasure that the adults take from viewing the landscape from the distance of the garden. Where Bart observes the surrounding ‘fields, heaths and woods’ as a ‘picture’ to be ‘framed’ (*BA* 10) and Mrs Swithin sees a landscape which in outlasting her paradoxically confirms a sense of posterity, the uncertain proximity between the child and the earth insists on terms of impersonality and anonymity in which the distinction between self and non-self is not yet rigid. The ‘inner’ ‘hall’ of the child, subtended by the outer world’s materiality of light, smell, and tactility, stands as a figure of uncertain ecological relations that contrast with Pointz Hall, which, according to Bart, was built ‘to escape from nature’ (*BA* 6).

²²⁰ See, for example, Bonnie Kime Scott (*Hollow* 213) and Helena Feder (86).

Just as important, however, is what immediately follows this moment in the narrative, when the former colonial civil servant Bart, wishing to instil masculine values of bravery within the boy, springs ‘upon him from [...] behind a tree’ with a newspaper ‘cocked into a snout’, leading to Bart swelling with ‘anger’ when the boy is revealed to be ‘a cry-baby’ (*BA* 10). Later Bart thinks of this moment as an act that ‘destroyed the little boy’s world’ (*BA* 145) and its function in the text is not only to puncture the radical perspective that has just been described from within and without the child’s perspective, but also as the first instance of a recurring narrative motif in which children become receptacles for adult projections. We find a further instance of this a short while later, when the ‘perambulator [passes] across the lawn’ in front of Isa and Mrs Swithin is seen to ‘salute the children’ in order to ‘beat up against [the] immensities’ of the sky (*BA* 17). Against this idiomatic and, perhaps surprisingly, militaristic gesture the sky stands not merely as embodying the threat of rain for the outdoor pageant, but as a more disturbing reminder of the cosmological inconsequence of human life. As Mrs Swithin has been reflecting immediately prior to saluting the children, beyond the clouds is:

blue, pure blue, black blue; blue that had never filtered down; that escaped registration. It never fell as sun, shadow, or rain upon the world, but disregarded the little coloured ball of earth entirely. (*BA* 17)²²¹

For Mrs Swithin, who, of all the adult characters, most frequently contemplates questions of life before and after humans, and whose interest in the natural world leads

²²¹ This is also the passage that I highlighted in Chapter 6 as suggesting Woolf’s familiarity with John Tyndall’s theory of how light travels as waves.

her to see existence in terms that are not resolutely anthropocentric, the figure of the Child nonetheless occupies a site of futurity that resists the thought of extinction.

It is through Isa, however, that the image of the Child is both most strongly expressed and resisted. In an early scene, Isa is alone in her bedroom and remembering the 'silent [and] romantic gentleman farmer' neighbour who had visited Pointz Hall along with the other villagers the previous evening. The 'presence of his body in the room last night', Isa recalls, produced a 'tingling, tangling, vibrating' within 'a certain spot in her' (*BA* 11). This implicitly orgasmic sensation, which the text suggests is being relived in the present, is held in tension with competing thoughts of fidelity towards Giles not as her husband but, importantly, as '[t]he father of my children' (*BA* 10). This phrase, which becomes a refrain, repeated by Isa a further three times (*BA* 35; 149; 155) is, the narrator tells us, a 'cliché conveniently provided by fiction' (*BA* 10) intended to suppress the kind of sexual thoughts and feelings that Isa is currently experiencing. Seeing George 'lagging behind' his nurses from her bedroom window (*BA* 11) at the same time as she is recalling the sexual sensations provoked by the gentleman farmer, Isa's son becomes a figure of posterity and duty weighed against self-pleasure. There is a parallel here with 'The Leaning Tower', where the figure of the male child is similarly presented as an overdetermined site of posterity. Woolf quotes from a mother who has written a letter to the *New Statesman & Nation* explaining that although she is in favour of 'free national education' over private schooling she is unsure where she will send her own child to be educated, since she wants 'the best of both worlds for my son'. It is a sentiment, Woolf understands, that desires for 'the new world and the old world to unite' (*E6* 276). The Child, but more particularly the *son*, becomes a figure not only of patriarchal lineage, establishing a historical line that consolidates the present, but is projected into the future, protecting

posterity against the threat of the end of a certain world.²²² The image of the Child, as Edelman argues, is shown to ‘shield [...] against the persistent threat of apocalypse’ (18).

Indeed, it is not inconceivable that Woolf had extinction in mind when writing the scene with Isa in the bedroom. The ‘tingling, tangling, vibrating’ bodily sensation—which the image of the Child is meant to suppress—leads Isa to think of ‘the infinitely quick vibrations of the aeroplane propeller that she had seen once at dawn at Croydon’ (*BA* 11). Again suggesting that Woolf returned to her unpublished essay ‘Flying over London’ when writing *Between the Acts*, the description that follows appears to refashion imagery from the essay. The essay’s description of a seductive impersonality, in which ‘consciousness [is] like a feather’ as ‘the soul and its desires rolled this way and that’, and ‘extinction [becomes] now desirable’ (*E6* 446-7) finds a correlative in Isa’s reflections on ‘flying, rushing through the ambient, incandescent, summer’, impelling her to speak aloud an improvised poem that describes ‘a feather, a blue feather ... flying mounting through the air ... there to lose what binds us here’ (*BA* 11). The parallel is further strengthened by the fact that Isa, like Woolf in her essay, is not actually remembering being in flight but watching a plane from an airfield and *imagining* the sensation of being airborne. Once again, however, it is suggested that Isa’s desires and an openness to a radical self-extinction is held in check by duties as a mother and wife. Deciding that the ‘words [just spoken] weren’t worth writing’ in her notebook, she reflects on how ““Abortive”, was the word

²²² Patricia Cramer has argued that in *Between the Acts* we find a lineage of ‘matriarchal mythology’ that works to displace the patriarchal line (179).

that expressed her' (*BA* 11), as the scene concludes with Isa aborting her desires in deference to the 'father of my children'.²²³

The connection between the image of the Child and extinction is further amplified in the character of William Dodge, the visitor to the Oliver house whose homosexuality is identified yet unspoken by the other characters, in what Stephen Barber describes as Woolf's sensitivity to the way in which queerness was (and remains) subject to 'social codifications [and] regulatory labelling' (402). For Barber, Dodge not only resists the 'epistemic configuration' of homosexuality within which he finds himself situated, but, more importantly, is an example of a character whose queerness enables 'conspiratorial relationships' with the women of the Oliver family (403). Notably, this is repeatedly expressed in terms that challenge the authority of the Child. We find an example of this as Mrs Swithin shows Dodge around the house. Having 'guessed his trouble' (*BA* 52), Swithin not only identifies Dodge's queerness, but in a certain sense identifies *with* it. Catching him looking at her in a bedroom mirror the narrator describes how 'their eyes smiled' (*BA* 52), following which she decides to show him the children's room. Introducing the room simply as 'the nursery' but in such a way that the '[w]ords raised themselves and became symbolical' and

²²³ That Woolf intends the reader to see the word *abortion* here is highly suggestive and adds to the reading of reproductive futurism that I am establishing here. Although Woolf critics have historically not tended to make this connection, possibly due to the word 'abortion' being seen as anachronous, research is beginning to emerge that suggests the term *was* being used in its modern sense in modernist literature, see for instance Lesley A. Hall's glossary of references to abortion in modernist-era literature (among other periods) at <https://www.lesleyahall.net/abortion.htm>. In addition, Stuart N. Clarke has documented how the newspaper report of the rape of a fourteen-year old girl which Isa reads a short while later resulted in a landmark trial against the doctor who performed an abortion for her ('Horse' 2-4). More research (beyond the limits of this chapter) is required to determine exactly how abortion figures in the novel. I am indebted to Caitlin Stobie, who is writing a thesis on abortion and literature at the University of Leeds, for her expertise and guidance here.

seeming to say to Dodge that children are ‘the cradle of our race’ (BA 52), the room paradoxically insists on the absence rather than the presence of children and the futurity they would promise:

The room was like a ship deserted by its crew. The children had been playing—there was a spotted horse in the middle of the carpet. The nurse had been sewing—there was a piece of linen on the table. The baby had been in the cot. The cot was empty. (BA 52)

Sensing that she has shown him the abandoned room so that he can confess, as he indeed wishes to, that ‘I [am] married; but my child’s not my child’ (BA 53-4), Dodge’s unspoken words not only articulate his homosexuality, but speak to what Edelman describes as the capacity for a ‘queer negativity’ to destabilise categories of identity and reproduction associated with children. As Erica Delsandro has shown in a brilliant reading of queerness in *Between the Acts* which also draws on Edelman’s concept of queer negativity, Dodge not only resists, qua Edelman, ‘every substantiation of identity’ projected onto him but challenges the stable ‘determinate identities’ that shore up ‘sexual, national and historical’ identities (Delsandro 96). More specifically, we can see how Dodge’s queerness, articulated through a childlessness in the space of the deserted nursery, comes to ‘names the side of those not “fighting for the children”, the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism’ (3) and which, in Pointz Hall, names the posterity of the Oliver name and a metonymic idea of Englishness. As in Chapter 4, where I discussed Edelman’s concept of queer negativity in relation to Robin in *Nightwood*, Dodge not only *dodges* the identities projected onto him but figures as a character who can also ‘disturb other identities’ (Edelman 17). Although Swithin has ‘two children, one in Canada, the other married, in Birmingham’ (BA 39),

she is seen by other characters in terms that explicitly situate her in terms of childlessness. Bart, for instance, questions how ‘she [had] ever borne children’ (*BA* 85). Rather than resisting this projection in which she is cast as ‘extinct’ not only on account of her age but her infertility (*BA* 125), within the space of the deserted nursery she momentarily enters into a queer affiliation with Dodge. Presented in a corpse-like light, with her ‘lambent’ ‘eyes in their caves of bone’ and a ‘blue vein wrigg[ing] like a blue worm’ on her forehead, Dodge wishes to ‘kneel before her [and] kiss her hand’ (*BA* 53). It is a moment that affirms the threat of extinction elsewhere resisted in the novel, as a queer rapport derives from their both being outsiders to the reproductive futurism that structures the social relations around them.

Indeed, Woolf explicitly associates Dodge with the kind of anti-futurity that Edelman aligns with queer agency, insofar as he not only stands in contrast with the familial structure of the Olivers but undermines the futurity upon which its stability relies. This is precisely what Giles intuits when he expresses his hatred of Dodge through the language of ‘half-breeds’ (*BA* 36), drawing on a rhetoric of degeneracy prevalent in early twentieth-century homophobic discourse.²²⁴ Indeed, Dodge is aware that Giles sees him both as a ‘half-man’ and a ‘flickering, mind-divided little snake in the grass’ (*BA* 54), and, as such, when Giles later stamps to death the ‘monstrous inversion’ of a snake ‘choked with a toad in its mouth’ ‘couched in the grass’ (*BA* 72) the text invites us to read his act of violence as nakedly symbolic of a desire to annihilate Dodge upon the same grounds. Moreover, if, as Alt has shown, the spectacle

²²⁴ As Barber points out the ‘half-man’ rhetoric reflects a Freudian ‘psychoanalytic narrative of [stunted] psychosexual development’ (419). As Dana Seitler has shown in her study of atavism and modernity, homosexuality, was along with criminality, interracial relationships, and prostitution, seen as ‘causes and symptoms of [...] widespread cultural degeneration’ (55).

of a snake consuming a toad is not an aberrance in nature as Giles believes it to be but a feeding behaviour not uncommon in snakes (165), then we might think about the queer correspondence between Dodge and the snake-toad assemblage in a new way. In this light, Dodge's challenge to reproductive futurism is continuous with a nonhuman world that similarly does not align with Giles's heteronormative ideals. Nature, here, is, as in *Orlando*, queer. Where Giles's brute violence is premised on the snake-toad assemblage being engaged in 'birth the wrong way round' (BA 72), a linguistic construction which again returns the scene to the image of the Child, the novel invites the reader to disavow such a narrowly proscriptive view of life based on heterosexual reproduction.

Yet, while Giles's violence exhibits how the threat of death often comes from those who claim to be on the side of life and the future, Dodge's queerness also exhibits a quiet agency in the face of a militaristic heteronormativity that would otherwise stamp it out. That Dodge's anti-futurity might be a source of hope, akin to Leonard Woolf's hopefulness in the face of 'no future' (VWL5 475), finds its clearest expression when he finds himself alone with Isa in the greenhouse. Reflecting how, on account of his homosexuality, she has 'nothing to fear, nothing to hope', Isa feels that they are able to talk with one another 'as if they had known each other all their lives' because, as she explains to him, 'we've never met before, and never shall again' (BA 83). That, Dodge explains, is because of the 'doom of sudden death hanging over us', in which there is 'no *retreating* and *advancing* [...] for us as for them' (BA 83, emphasis added). This queer temporality, in which the shared threat of extinction means that the past, present and future no longer follows a linearity that can uphold the logic of reproductive futurism, provokes a vision of the possibilities that extinction produces, as Dodge's remarks lead into the following description:

The future shadowed their present, like the sun coming through the many-veined transparent leaf; a criss-cross of lines making no pattern. (*BA* 83)

Although the text gives us little clue as to whether this description is to be read as the thoughts of either Dodge or Isa or as an omniscient narratorial observation, the imagery of foliage and light implicitly parallels George's earlier observation as he sits in the grass. Whereas elsewhere the image of the Child is a figure for resisting extinction, here a child-like perspective produces a moment of impersonality in which the relationship between the present and the future is no longer required to fit a predetermined pattern. While appearing on the surface to contradict Woolf's famous 'philosophy' in 'A Sketch of the Past' of a 'pattern hid behind the cotton wool' of daily life (*MB* 81), we might here instead read Woolf's 'philosophy' back through the novel that she was writing at the same time. The 'criss-cross' of the sun through leaves, as in the 'swallows darting' through the trees who 'make a pattern' (*BA* 47) or the opening aerial description of the landscape's 'scars' (*BA* 3), suggests a relationship between form and materiality in which meaning and identity are necessarily immanent and in which patterns emerge and dissipate, rather than remain in a fixed relation. Woolf's philosophy of patterns hidden beneath daily life might be understood to be not only subterranean in the sense of waiting to be exposed, but as taking shape through how they emerge and are then perceived. As the encounter between Dodge and Isa shows, in which a pattern that resists interpretation becomes a simile for the relationship between the future and the present, it is a philosophy from which a radically different and potentially queer understanding of futurity might emerge.

7.4 Extinction Ethics

Woolf is not only concerned with queering futurity in *Between the Acts*. The text also presents the way in which revising how we think about extinction enables new ethical modes of thought. For Colebrook, ‘faced with extinction the human species might, finally, be presented with a genuine ethics’ insofar as it would return ethics to its roots in the notion of ‘what it owes to place (ethos) and to those beyond its own organic life (the future)’ (*Sex* 137). As Colebrook explains, in a statement that articulates a self-reflexive variant on what Trevelyan was arguing in 1926, such an ethics would need to ask the radical question of whether human life as it is currently lived should be sustained, since it is precisely because ‘the human species [...] has remained committed absolutely to its own survival as uniquely human and blessed with a duty to live that distinguishes it from other species’ that it now faces its own extinction (*Sex* 138). For Colebrook, such an ethical imperative involves revising how we imagine community, or what she describes as ‘the viability and justification of who “we” are’ (*Sex* 137) and a willingness ‘to question the “we” who would subtend and be saved by the question of ethics and politics’ (*Sex* 148). Woolf was similarly preoccupied with reconsidering what constituted a ‘we’ during the composition of *Between the Acts*. Her intentions are captured in an often-quoted early reference to the novel in her diary:

“I” rejected; “We” substituted: to whom at the end there shall be an invocation?
“We” ... composed of many different things ... we all life, all art, all waifs &
strays—a rambling capricious but somehow unified whole—the present state
of my mind? (*VWD5* 135)

Whether Woolf intended ‘the end’ that structures the ‘invocation’ of a ‘we’ to mean the end of the novel or in a more general and decisive sense, it is nonetheless the case that the ‘we’ that emerges in *Between the Acts* explicitly articulates a collective

response to the possibility of impending destruction and most clearly emerges from within the village pageant of ‘our island history’ organised by Miss La Trobe (*BA* 56). As Jed Esty has shown, the rise of the pageant as a ‘village rite’ in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was premised on its ability to ‘produce a pastoral, apolitical, and doughtily cohesive version of national identity’ (55). Yet, while Esty reads the pageant as invested in refiguring national identity against the backdrop of European fascism (93), we also find in La Trobe’s pageant an expression of the hesitancy and uncertainty around the ‘we’ articulated in the ellipses in Woolf’s diary’s entry. While La Trobe’s pageant is in one clear sense a performance of English history, a refashioning of the relationship between the past and the present, and more specifically what Delsandro has described as a queering of the ‘identities that compose’ that history (102-3), I want to suggest that it is also a performance that looks ahead to a future that has not yet arrived, but which is already putting the ‘we’ of the present under pressure.

Like Dodge, La Trobe is a childless character whose queerness separates her not only from the Oliver family but the heteronormative idea of the familial unit. A ‘swarthy, sturdy and thick set’ woman with ‘a passion for getting things up’, La Trobe is, the narrator tells us, not seen as ‘altogether a lady’ by her fellow villagers (*BA* 42-3). Like Dodge, La Trobe is self-conscious both of her difference and how it is perceived. As she paces the lawn before the pageant begins, she pauses and imagines ‘[t]he butterflies circling; the lighting changing; the children leaping; the mothers laughing’ before muttering that ‘I don’t get it’ and resuming her pacing (*BA* 46). As Woolf would have likely been aware, La Trobe’s resistance to motherhood has political implications for her queerness since, as Sam See outlines in his reading of the novel, ‘Hitler’s campaign against non-reproductive women attempted to

institutionalize reproductivity as the only natural state of being' (646). In the face of an impending war, La Trobe's queerness, like Dodge's, is structured by the threat of extinction precisely because the horizon is dominated by a heteronormative image of the Child.

As such, it is all the more striking that the pageant La Trobe has written opens with the figure of the child, as 'a small girl, like a rosebud in pink' advances to the stage and introduces herself in verse: 'England am I [...] A child new born [...] sprung from the sea whose billows blown by mighty storm cut off from France and Germany this isle' (*BA* 56-7). This 'weak and small [...] child' who allegorises England is subsequently joined by a chorus who recall 'cutting the roads' and transforming the valleys and hilltops into agricultural land (*BA* 57).²²⁵ From this highly gendered, anthropocentric, and patriotic figuring of Britannia, however, the pageant proceeds to undermine the 'we' that it seemingly establishes in its opening movements. The arrival of Queen Elizabeth a few pages later, for instance, sees the boundary between the human characters within the play and the broader environment in which it is being performed become uncertain. A line stating that 'Shakespeare sang' for the queen is followed by the report that a 'cow moored' and a 'bird twittered' that, although in parentheses, implicitly become an ironic component of the performance (*BA* 61).²²⁶ This more-than-human involvement in the pageant becomes increasingly amplified as subsequent nonhuman participants heighten the pathos of the performance. The

²²⁵ Resource extraction is a recurring motif in the pageant, with a subsequent section describing the 'distant mines [in which] the savage sweats' (*BA* 89).

²²⁶ Hussey's decision in the Cambridge Edition to reverse Leonard Woolf's editorial instruction that the dialogue from the pageant should be set in italics (which Hussey argues is not consistent with Virginia Woolf's typical compositional decisions) restores a sense of typographical continuity between the performance and the rest of the narrative events ('Introduction' lxiv-lxviii).

‘yearning bellow’ of a cow who ‘had lost her calf’ offers an aural accompaniment to the tragedy of the Valentine and Flavinda, while the ‘swallows’ darting through the comic Victorian ‘Picnic Party’ add to the scene’s joviality (*BA* 118). Later, when the rain pours on the audience, trickling down La Trobe’s cheeks ‘as if they were her own tears’, she reflects on how ‘Nature once more had taken her part’ (*BA* 129-30). Indeed, as Westling has argued, the pageant ‘posits nonhuman forces and beings as crucial players in the human drama’ as ‘[s]wallows, butterflies, trees, cows, clouds and rain interweave with human activities’ (865) and, as Tazudeen similarly argues, the result is ‘a shared affective space’ that bridges human and nonhuman life (505).²²⁷

This sense of what Christine Froula describes as the pageant’s ‘purposiveness without purpose’ (302), in which the performance’s framelessness is its condition of expression, finds its clearest expression in the ‘present time’ section of the pageant, as the audience are themselves interpolated within the performance. Described in the programme as ‘The present. Ourselves’, before the final act has even begun it is met with audience ambivalence, with Giles portentously stating that he ‘hope[s] to God that’s the end’ (*BA* 127). For Johns-Putra, desire for narrative endings not only speaks to a wish for ‘stability and continuity’ by means of plot resolution, but can be linked to ‘a desire for reproductive continuity’ in which ‘happy endings’ shore up the ‘prevalent heteronormative [...] logic of progress, procreation and posterity’ (‘Unsustainable Aesthetics’ 181). According to this logic, which Johns-Putra develops from Frank Kermode, the linear structure of prose narrative establishes a reassuring relation between the past, the present and the future. The ending, necessarily written

²²⁷ Also see Derek Ryan’s argument that animal involvement in the pageant enacts a ‘deterritorialisation of humanity where the human makes an *animal* connection’ (‘Territory of Cows’ 549).

into the beginning, is always safely foreclosed ahead of time. Indeed, in the figure of Giles, who cannot stand Mrs Swithin's 'open books' and her predilection for coming to 'no conclusion' (*BA* 44), closure is explicitly linked to heteronormativity and patriarchy. In contrast, La Trobe is less interested in closure than what she calls 'present-time reality', which, although she is aware that it might be 'too strong' for the audience (*BA* 129), unravels the linear temporality that the pageant has established until that point and resists the sense of an ending that audience members such as Giles so desire.

Reversing the pageant's opening scene, where England is figured as a 'weak and small' child, what first appear to be 'children' but are revealed to be 'Imps—elves—demons' take to the stage with an assortment of discarded items, including 'tin cans', 'bedroom candlesticks' and a mother's 'cracked' 'mirror' (*BA* 131-2). Using these fragments of 'bright' domestic objects to 'reflect' the audience, the demon children reverse the 'distorting and upsetting' gaze of the adults back onto themselves (*BA* 131-2), with the 'anonymous' voice of the megaphone instructing the audience not to 'presume there's innocence in childhood', among other pronounced dictates (*BA* 134). While elsewhere in the novel the image of the Child, projected onto children by adults, underwrites the construction of a reproductive futurism, here, at precisely the point at which the audience expects an ending, it is the return of this gaze back onto the adults that underscores La Trobe's rejection of closure, forcing them to see themselves as 'scraps, orts and fragments' (*BA* 135) rather than a unified whole. Accompanied by a switch from traditional forms of music, structured by melody and resolution, to a jazz which 'snapped; broke; jagged', and which the audience hear as a 'cacophony' and 'chaos' in which 'nothing ended' (*BA* 131), the sounds and images of the final act unravels the unity that the pageant previously seemed to promise, as

the audience members are fragmented into ‘here a nose ... There a skirt ... [...] Perhaps a face’ (*BA* 132).

A moment of dissolution rather than resolution, the pageant removes any sense of a frame between the space of the pageant, its audience and the external nonhuman world, as the ‘very cows joined in’, ‘walloping’ and ‘tail lashing’ with the ‘leap[ing], jerk[ing]’ children, as the ‘barriers which should divide Man the Master from the Brute’ are dismantled and ‘the reticence of nature [is] undone’ (*BA* 132). It is from this more-than-human assemblage of body parts, objects, animals, and nature, or what Tazudeen describes as the pageant’s presentation of ‘raw materials’ prior to taking on the form of subjects (506), that La Trobe and the audience are made to undergo the double ‘indignity’ of not only seeing themselves through the fragmented reflection of the demon children but not knowing whether ‘the play’s over’ (*BA* 133-4). Akin to the shapes and forms that emerge without predetermined ‘patterns’ from the sun, leaves and glass of the greenhouse or in the unsettling assemblage of snake and toad, the pageant becomes a space of immanence and impersonal potentiality, in which the relation between the present and the future remains undetermined. Although Reverend Streatfield’s ‘awkward’ attempt to ‘make an end’ *after* the performance includes an ‘interpretation’ in which he suggests the play’s message is that ‘[s]urely we should unite’ (*BA* 138-9), it is the question of who constitutes this ‘we’ that the play has put under pressure. If for Colebrook, an extinction ethics might be discovered through ‘lines drawn without any preceding or ideal community’ (*Death* 44-5), the denouement to La Trobe’s pageant performs a similar function, as it both disassembles and broadens the ‘we’ of the audience. While the audience members articulate a desire for a strong sense of unity against the threat of war, the play instead suggests the

possibilities inherent in dismantling the reproductive futurity which would sustain the 'we' of the present indefinitely.

While the pageant finishes by unsettling the present, La Trobe's next play is to be firmly located in a future yet to arrive. Reflecting on what she perceives to be the 'failure' of the pageant, since nobody 'had understood her meaning' (*BA* 150), La Trobe immediately begins devising a radical sequel. Organised around the motifs of 'shelter; voices; oblivion', the play will take place on 'high ground at midnight' with 'two scarcely perceptible figures' whose words sink into and rise up from the 'fertile' 'mud', linking language and stratigraphy in the same way as the aerial perspective that opened the novel did (*BA* 152). La Trobe's final vision, then, is of a depersonalised space in which oblivion becomes a condition for potentiality and new modes of relationality. In the following, final scene as 'shadows' fall over Pointz Hall and its elderly occupants take on a 'spectral' and 'monumental' appearance, with Mrs Swithin reading about 'prehistoric man' as 'the darkness increased', the movement seems to be towards a future that, like La Trobe's, resembles a forgotten deep past (*BA* 156-7). It is in this space that Giles and Isa are left 'alone' and in which:

before they slept, they must fight; after they had fought, they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born. But first they must fight, as the dog fox fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night. (*BA* 157)

Once more returning to the language of futurity through procreation the future is, however, this time recast not in terms of the Child but the birth of 'another life', a phrase that invites itself to be read in terms of either continuity or difference. Employing the language of uncertainty and equivocation that Giles has explicitly rejected, but which Isa has increasingly been drawn towards, it situates the present in

relation to a future that cannot be determined in advanced. A site of potentiality that necessarily encompasses all possible outcomes, it embodies what Derrida memorably described as the way in which a genuine idea of the future ‘can only be anticipated in the form of an absolute danger [...] [as] that which breaks absolutely with constituted normality’ (*Grammatology* 5). As Isa lets ‘her sewing drop’ and stands against the backdrop of a ‘sky without colour’ in a house that has ‘lost its shelter’, Woolf’s unfinished novel, like La Trobe’s pageant, eschews closure and opts instead for an aesthetics of extinction.

For Woolf, the threat of extinction and questions around the end of the world that were so prevalent in the late 1930s can be seen to have informed a mode of writing invested in re-examining how we imagine the future and the ‘we’ that is constituted within such a statement. In this we find a further parallel with Derrida who, in an interview published shortly before his death, described how ‘[l]earning to live should mean learning to die [...] so as to accept, absolute mortality (that is without salvation, resurrection, or redemption—neither for oneself nor for the other)’ (*Learning* 24). Derrida’s insistence on a relation to death through an idea of mortality that does not rely on an idealised future offers an ethics that we also find in Woolf. Writing as the world in which she had lived her adult life was coming to an end, and in which it could not be taken for granted that life itself would survive as it had previously existed, Woolf’s late writing radically reimagines an impersonal ontology in which the human is resituated within a broader materiality that both antedates it and will be there long after it has vanished. Yet, as *Between the Act*’s queer challenge to reproductive futurism demonstrates, such an ontology of extinction carries ethical implications that intersect with the socio-political realities of any given historical moment. In its challenge to anxieties that are premised on interminably sustaining the present,

Woolf's extinction ethics suggest the potentiality for different futures in which life as it is currently lived is not sustained. The 'queer' fact of 'liv[ing] without a future' (*VWD5* 355) become the possibility for a world in which 'another life might be born' (*BA* 157).

Afterword:

The Nuclear Anthropocene

The threat of extinction that Woolf was writing in response to in her late works serves a conclusive (if not final) moment in the Modernist Anthropocene that I have presented in this thesis. As outlined above, both Woolf and Joyce died in 1941 with their deaths shaped, if not caused, by a world war that must have seemed even more far reaching, both geographically and technologically, than the one through which they had previously lived. The events of the Second World War also mark an important turning point in Barnes's life. In 1939 Barnes, suffering from alcoholism and living in Paris as war broke out, was given an ultimatum by her benefactor Peggy Guggenheim to either return to the USA or have her finances cut off. Forcibly placed on a train to Bordeaux by Guggenheim and Helena Joyce (James Joyce's daughter-in-law), Barnes set sail to New York on 12th October 1939. She would not see Europe again. By April 1941, when she heard of Woolf's death, writing to Emily Coleman asking, 'What is this about Virginia Wolf [*sic*] killing herself?' (19 April 1941), Barnes was living in 5 Patchin Place in Greenwich Village, where she would remain until her death in 1982. The sense that a certain world had come to an end was apparent. A few months later, in June 1941, she would recount to Coleman having bumped into Eugene Jolas in a library in New York. 'He says Joyce's son and boy [Giorgio and Stephen Joyce] are starving [...] Nora, poor lost creature, is so stunned (also starving more or less) that she can hardly speak, not even to her son' (6 June 1941).

Three years later, on the 16th July 1945, as the war continued to be fought in Asia, the United States military would detonate the Trinity A-Bomb at their test site in Alamogordo, New Mexico. The event, which sent human-made radioactive material into the atmosphere for the first time, marked a turning point not only in the war but in planetary history. Over the course of the next forty years, nuclear bombs would continue to be detonated at the average rate of one every 9.6 days, leaving a chemostratigraphic inscription that will remain detectable for the next 50,000 years. For the Anthropocene Working Group, that first explosion in New Mexico stands of such importance as a boundary event, both symbolically and materially, that they have argued it should be the location for the ‘golden spike’ in the stratigraphic record and formally mark the beginning of the Anthropocene as a geological epoch (Zalasiewicz et al 200-1). While the AWG’s conclusion is reached through an approach necessarily guided by scientific methods of empirical observation, measurement and calculation, this thesis has shown how, in the context of a humanities approach that looks to understand the history, philosophy and aesthetics of the relationship between the human and the nonhuman, a much broader and longer understanding of the causes and formations of the Anthropocene can be reached. This boundary event that took place so relatively soon after Woolf’s and Joyce’s death and Barnes’s return to the USA, instead might be more aptly described as the arrival of the Nuclear Anthropocene.

There can be no doubt that Joyce and Woolf would have understood the significance of events in New Mexico in 1945. *Finnegans Wake*, a book which has fallen beyond the scope of this thesis and whose implications for the Anthropocene are yet to be fully analysed, describes the ‘abnihilation of the etym’ by ‘lord of Hurteford’ (*FW* 353), a reference to Rutherford’s splitting—or annihilation—of the

atom in 1919.²²⁸ For Joyce, it was a moment that had explosive implications. As the atom ‘explolodotonates’ in the text, we find a ‘confussion’ of ‘perceivable moletons skaping with mulicules’, as an apparent moment of nuclear fission leads to a violent scraping of molecules up against one another (*FW* 353). Short of foreseeing nuclear warfare, Joyce seems to have intuited the implications of atomic science for fundamentally changing the world. In contrast to the subatomic aesthetic that we get in late Joyce, Woolf’s *Between the Acts* offers a macroscopic perspective in its description of the earth as a ‘small coloured ball’ (*BA* 17). This cosmological image, produced in the scientific imaginary of Mrs Swithin, presents itself not only as a forerunner to a planetary aesthetic that would become ubiquitous after the 1968 *Earthrise* photograph of the Earth as seen from the moon (see Figure 8.1) but captures the sense of planetary vulnerability such an aesthetic would come to occupy within the nuclear age.



Figure 8.1 - Earthrise. Taken on December 24, 1968, by Apollo 8 astronaut William Anders. Source: <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/History/alsj/a410/AS8-14-2383HR.jpg>

²²⁸ Breon Mitchell offers in-depth analysis of Rutherford’s importance to this section of the *Wake*. As he points out, Rutherford did not really split the atom in 1919, but rather ‘chipped it’. It would finally be split through nuclear fission in 1938 by Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassman (Mitchell 96-9).

While we can only guess how Joyce and Woolf would have responded to the Nuclear Anthropocene, Barnes's late archive presents evidence of a direct response. In what might be seen as the porous boundary between a Modernist Anthropocene and the Nuclear Anthropocene, Barnes's poem 'Fall-out over Heaven', written in 1958 for T. S. Eliot on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, opens with a description of how 'The atom broken in the shell, | Licks up Eden's reach, and Hell' (*CP* 133). The fallout of the atom bomb, for Barnes, both reverses time and dampens the hope of redemption, as 'Lucifer roars up from earth | Down falls Christ into his death' (*CP* 133). Eleven years later, Barnes was still writing radioactive verse. 'Quarry' (1969) describes an apparently atavistic speaker pursued by hunters, who, when they capture her, will determine her age with the 'carbon fourteen' isotope used in radiocarbon dating (*CP* 136). These are only two examples of the ways in which Barnes's late writing was responding to the scientific and environmental implications of a Nuclear Anthropocene, with her still largely unexplored archive at the University of Maryland suggesting the potential for further work in understanding both modernism and the implications of the Anthropocene.

I started writing this thesis in September 2015 on the cusp of another boundary event. 2015 was the first year in which the average surface temperature of the planet crossed the threshold of one degree Celsius above pre-industrial averages, making it the warmest year in more than 11,000 years. As I write this conclusion in early 2019, the Met Office have just released figures that show the duration of my doctoral research coincides with the 'warmest years on record in all surface temperature data sets' ('An Overview' n.p.). For Dipesh Chakrabarty, the warming planet—along with other markers of the Anthropocene such as rising sea-levels, biodiversity loss, bleaching of coral reef, habitat destruction, species extinction and social inequality—

does not merely provide a new context for our thinking. The Anthropocene makes necessary the emergence of a “new” humanities’ whose ‘primary purpose’ will be ‘to develop points of view that seek to place the current constellation of environmental crises in the larger context of the deeper history of natural reproductive life on this planet’ (‘Humanities in the Anthropocene’ 394). The explosion of monographs, edited collections, special issues, and journal articles that have emerged under the banner of Anthropocene studies in the last four years are testament to the degree to which the implications of Chakrabarty’s call have not only been heard but recognised as urgent and necessary.²²⁹

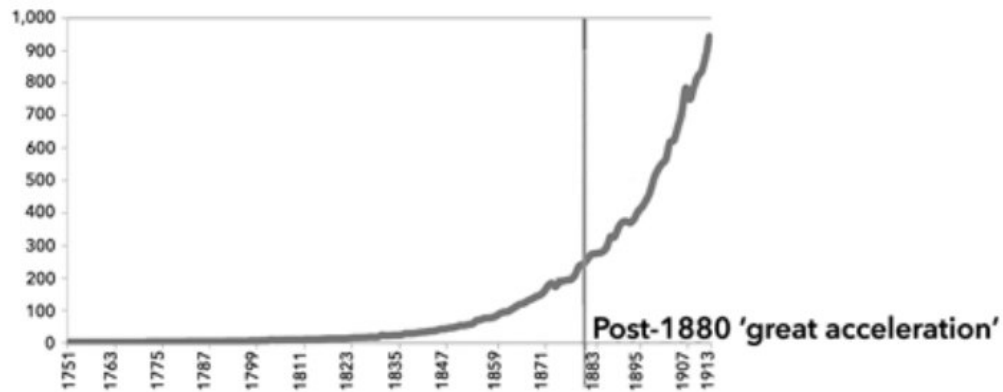
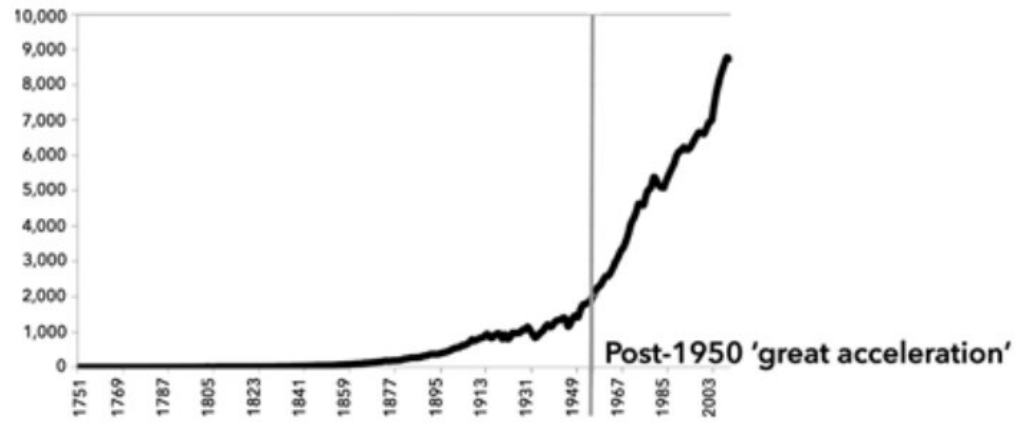
Yet, as boundary events are passed and planetary records are broken, one of the roles of Anthropocene studies, as I see it, is to remind ourselves that the point we have arrived at was *not* inevitable and that the future is similarly yet to be determined. In tracing the Anthropocene through modernist works of fiction, I have demonstrated how Joyce, Woolf and Barnes were already exploring ideas of materiality, planetary systems, species relations, climate change, and extinction that we now understand to be central to understanding the Anthropocene. Excavating these concerns through close readings, archival analysis and historical research has shown how modernist writing helps us understand how we got to where we are. It also demonstrates the usefulness of Anthropocene studies for the new modernist studies, where different historical optics and scales of reference can challenge established literary histories and create new critical constellations. Yet, reading modernist literature not only offers a history of the Anthropocene but also a way of making sense of it in the present. The

²²⁹ See the Introduction for a literature review of the most important works within Anthropocene studies. A future project of high value would be a comprehensive and freely available bibliography of the field.

attempt to *re-write* and *re-present* the figure of the human and the nonhuman that we find in the innovative fiction that I have examined presents us with ways of writing, reading and thinking that remain provocative, challenging, and productive in the twenty-first century. In Joyce's opposition to the pastoral foundations of the Revival's proto-environmental politics and his post-human rendering of Molly as a Gaian Earth Mother, in Barnes's beastly subversion of human exceptionalism and her insistence on the centrality of sexual difference to the way we approach the nonhuman, and in Woolf's presentation of a climatic ontology and her openness to extinction, we find modernist texts already at work theorising the challenges of the Anthropocene. It is clear to me that Anthropocene studies stands to benefit from the insights of these modernist writers, as much as modernist studies stands to benefit from these new critical approaches. Modernism invites a new way of questioning what we call the human, its relation to the nonhuman world, and the ontological and ethical questions that arise therein. For Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, there is a need to examine 'the conceptual grammars' through which we have historically conceptualised the planet and our relation to it (172). In modernism's attempt to create new literary grammars, through innovative linguistic, aesthetic and conceptual frameworks of meaning, we might find the materials for not only historicising the Anthropocene but for theorising its implications and helping to create the futures that have not yet arrived.

Appendix 1

Chart showing global carbon emissions from fossil fuels in millions of tonnes over time. Reproduced from Bonneuil and Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, p.54.



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