'Makings of the self and of the sun': Modernist Poetics of Climate Change

MATTHEW JOHN RHYS GRIFFITHS

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Abstract

This thesis aims to formulate a critical methodology and a poetics that engage with climate change. It critiques the Romantic and social justice premises of literary ecocriticism, arguing that a modernist poetics more capably articulates the complexities exacerbated in anthropogenic climate change. Analysing the form of a range of modernist work, I assess its expression of the human–climate relations at the root of the planet’s present state, and trace this work’s influence on contemporary climate change poetry.

Ecocriticism’s topical approaches to nature and the environment have been constitutively unable to grapple with climate change until the discipline’s recent synthesis of literary theory, and the emergence of a ‘material ecocriticism’ informed by developments in environmental sociology, ethics and philosophy. Modernist aesthetics has an array of concerns in common with this critical thinking on climate change, and the reciprocity of the two prompts my rereading here of key modernist texts. T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* is seen to reveal civilisation’s inability to suppress or surpass its environment; Wallace Stevens’s opus exposes the necessarily fictive quality of our relations with nature; Basil Bunting extends Stevens’s reconsideration of Romanticism with the diminishment of selfhood and breakdown of order in his poetry; while David Jones’s *The Anathemata* employs the scope of modernist poetics to understand the prehistoric climate change that enabled the emergence of civilisation.

By being conscious of modernist traditions, new work – as exemplified here by Jorie Graham’s *Sea Change* – acknowledges the role of human culture in creating the world imaginatively and phenomenally. As contemporary climate change poetry moves away from using culturally familiar elegiac modes, it benefits from a fuller range of resources to articulate the entanglement and hybridity of nature and culture in the twenty-first century.

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Statement of Copyright

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Introduction

Climate changes everything

In 2009, as his term as UK poet laureate ended, Andrew Motion was asked to write a piece that would feature in *The Guardian Review*, among commissions from other writers, 'To support the launch of the 10:10 campaign to reduce carbon emissions' (*Guardian* 26 Sept. 2009). The poem would also be set to music by Peter Maxwell Davies for the University of Cambridge. Motion composed a five-sonnet sequence entitled 'The Sorcerer's Mirror', addressing the theme of climate change.

The first sonnet begins with the narrator explicitly locating himself in time and place: 'Midnight and midsummer in London. / I … stand in my quarter-acre of garden' (Motion 1.1–3). In contrast to the global scale and upheaval with which we might associate climate change, the opening line is still and verbless, fixing a moment in time. As the poem progresses, the narrator acknowledges that he cannot remain in his pastoral vantage point, a small ('quarter-acre') green space in the encroaching metropolis. Although he seeks the solace also sought in Andrew Marvell's 'The Garden', the phrase 'at my back the spacious mulberry tree' (1.9) more clearly alludes to Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress', whose narrator declares: 'At my back, I always hear / Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near' (*Complete Poems* 51; lines 21–2). Motion's allusion sets up a tension between stillness and change. Whether we interpret his phrase 'what passes for its [the earth's] sleep' (1.5) as referring to the busyness of nocturnal London or to the continuation of natural processes while many of the city's inhabitants are in bed, or as a metapoetic recognition that likening night to human sleep is a fictive, anthropomorphic device, it emphasises the provisional quality of that original calm. Yet the narrator strives to remain in the green eye of an urban storm, and effects a separation between himself and nature at the end of the first sonnet: 'the dark earth wakes and I look on' (1.14), he remarks, putting himself in the position of a privileged spectator.

Despite the tension between rest and restlessness in the first sonnet, the poem is grounded in the narratorial backyard. The strategic advantage of creating a lyric persona and an everyday environment is to engage the reader in familiar, shared experience. However, introducing climate change then presents a challenge. Where and how do we experience it in this domestic milieu? Motion progresses outwards from his seclusion by attending to 'the sour music of traffic cruising close' (2.3), a banal juxtaposition of solitude with engine noise, and of the relatively natural garden with the automobile as a totem of pollution. The cars are at least kept at a distance, 'close' but outside the garden. To cover any further ground, the narrator has to be 'swept on a breeze / which was […] pure and simple once', and which 'carries and scatters [him] / over the polar cap' (2.4–5; 7–8). Again, he attempts to put distance between the lyric clarity of this vision and the pollution he witnesses, although the distinction is not now geographical but temporal, and thus nostalgic – the breeze was 'pure and simple *once*' (my italics). A vision of Nature, in its common usage to mean the

wild or green world, is associated with the narrator's sense of self in space in his garden (in the first sonnet), and then at some unspecified point in time when the wind was unpolluted (in the second). Now apparently scattered, his self still commands an integrated voice, and he remains the distanced observer who 'looks on' as he did in the first sonnet. A tone of pastoral retreat and pleasure informs the sequence's view of "green" nature in the garden, and the polar ice: 'every luminous, upside-down meadow stitched / with gorgeous frost-flowers and icicle grass' (2.9–10). By assimilating this imagery to the English literary tradition, Motion makes it doubly familiar, because we already recognise the 'snapped-off sea-ice' (2.8) and the 'rising tides overflowing their slack estuaries and river basins' later in the sequence (4.9) as tropes of climate change, thanks to a quarter-century of news reports and natural history documentaries. Motion's reference to 'the already famously lonely polar bear' (4.12) is half-hearted, then, both as a recognition and an enactment of the compassion fatigue engendered by news media climate imagery.

Motion's vision of an untouched polar region is elaborated in the second sonnet: 'three thousand years have worked through / and sculpted [it] in silence' (2.11–12). The ice here represents a work of art three millennia in the making, and the present state of affairs is putting it in jeopardy. The conceit supposes a preceding continuity in the order of nature to distinguish contemporary climate change. The invocation of a three-thousand-year period, which accounts for a substantial part of the history of human civilisation, gives this vision some weight. However, it has to be scaled to civilisation to do so. In *A Cultural History of Climate* (2010), Wolfgang Behringer notes that 'there has been no permanent ice during 95 per cent of the earth's history. Statistically, warm periods are the characteristic climate of our planet' (20). Motion's 'three thousand years' is a much shorter period of time, corresponding roughly with Behringer's observation that 'The long warm and dry period of the Bronze Age gave way around 800 BC – roughly 2,800 years ago – to the cooler climate of the ("post-warming") *Subatlantic Age*' (58; author's italics). Nevertheless, Motion tacitly valorises the formation of ice by likening it to a work of art ('sculpted') and hinting at its seclusion and remoteness ('silence'). The apparent longevity of arctic ice is given human value; but without that it has no claim on permanence. Motion attempts to shift this human focus, or anthropocentricity, towards the end of the fifth sonnet, where he recognises that it is impossible to enclose domestic space apart from the rest of the world: he moves 'quickly over the threshold' back into the house, but 'one look is enough to show the bare horizon behind' (5.12–13). The door between the human province and the world is open and cannot be completely shut. But this still maintains a distance between himself and the 'bare horizon', which replicates the earlier distance between London and the pole, suggesting that climate change is more accessible at the latter location than the former.

Motion's poem raises some of the key issues surrounding poetic engagements, or attempts at engagement, with climate change. For instance, his laureateship indicates an institutional orthodoxy about the need to approach climate change as a public issue, the commission emphasising the role

of the sequence as an act of bearing witness. In an interview with Richard Eden in the *Telegraph* (2 May 2009), Motion alludes to this function, declaring: 'To me, climate change is so bleeding obvious. Anyone who thinks it's not happening should get outside more'. But in 'The Sorcerer's Mirror' the narrator only advances as far as his back garden; it takes an imaginative projection to the pole to "see" climate change happening. To 'get outside' would only work if we could go to the calving face of the ice itself. This contrast attests to the difficulty of bearing witness to something that is not within the purview of sense experience. The strain of trying to reconcile local and polar is further complicated by Motion's choice of mode. I have already suggested that the sequence begins in a pastoral vein, and draws straightforward contrasts between a mythical natural purity and current trends. His *Telegraph* interview makes the choice of mode explicit: 'I've written a lament about it [climate change] which has the air of a call to arms'. The movement from 'lament' to 'arms' figures a process whereby poetic elegy is designed to inspire a presumed reader or audience politically, and this imposes further interpretative frames on the sequence.

I read 'The Sorcerer's Mirror' here as typical of certain strains of environmentalist discourse, and in particular of climate change poetry. I will be discussing other examples of both kinds as this thesis progresses, with an analysis of selected contemporary poems in the final chapter. As a representative example, though, Motion's sequence allows me to pose some key questions. What, for example, are we lamenting as the climate changes? Can a poem, whether or not it is explicitly about climate change, spur us into political action? Would that assumption suggest that the climate changes only as a result of our conscious, intentional actions, and that by changing our intentions we can prevent further climate change? Does such action depend on personal epiphanies such as Motion's being 'reflected back at [him]self, crouched like a guilty thing' in his French windows (5. 11)? These invite further, broader questions. How is climate change constituted as a political issue, a media topic, or an atmospheric and oceanic phenomenon? Does it consist in the opposition of certain tropes of environmentalist invective like 'the sour music of traffic' and 'the miserable sky-litter / of planes circling in their stack' (2.3; 3.5–6) with others like polar bears and icecaps? Does poetry about climate change belong in the tradition of the pastoral or the elegy? Does it demand a moralistic tone? What do these formal considerations of the poetry suggest about climate change, and our engagement with it? And what alternative models or approaches might there be?

In this thesis, I will critically examine these questions and their implications, with the aim of formulating a poetics of climate change. In so doing, I will work in the field of environmental literary criticism, more commonly referred to as ecocriticism. This discipline has, like 'The Sorcerer's Mirror', also sought to situate itself within a tradition. Just as Motion's sequence is informed by pastoral and elegiac modes, critical and cultural traditions of nature have commonly been the starting point for "green" critics as they establish the relevance of environmental concerns to literary studies. Similarly, where Motion's response to climate change is a putative 'call to arms', ecocriticism does not regard the subject of nature dispassionately but with a proselytising bent; it

has therefore aligned itself with, and borrowed from, the projects of feminist, postcolonial and Marxist criticism, seeking to reclaim marginalised canons of nature and environmental writing, as well as reviving interest in Romantic and Transcendentalist literature.

Yet recourse to the archive, whether literary or critical, will not in itself suffice to galvanise the thinking that is crucial to engaging with contemporary climate change. I contend that climate change represents a novel category of problem, in which realms conventionally inscribed as "human" and "natural" are mutually compromised. A fully developed climate change criticism should attend to the particularities and praxis of literary style – its poetics – to consider how these operate in the effort to represent, and thus prevent or mitigate, dangerous global warming. This criticism can also examine traditions of writing to see what cultural resources or modes might be deployed in the literature of climate change. One quality of this critical method will be the recognition that, given human implication in the emergence of contemporary climate change, we cannot limit the focus of interest to texts that address nature alone – certainly not the nostalgic, pastoral species of "Nature" that is favoured by Motion and early ecocriticism.[1] Indeed, if a climate-inflected approach to literature is to have critical validity, it should also be applicable to works that, paradoxically, are not even concerned with climate change, because it is through far more than our direct engagements with the world that we have an effect on the climate.

When ecocriticism took shape in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was motivated by emerging environmental concerns, but nonetheless chiefly occupied with nature as a topic in literature. Artificial – that is, anthropogenic – climate change did not figure largely in its considerations of Wordsworth or Thoreau, yet the issue was making its presence felt on the political and cultural agendas at the time. The subsequent twenty-five years have only increased our understanding of the character and magnitude of the threat that climate change poses, yet ecocriticism has struggled to get to grips with it. This comparative neglect is evident, for instance, from a search for articles mentioning 'global warming' or 'climate change' in the MLA Bibliography;[2] this returns, respectively, forty-one and eighty-eight results. Citations for the former begin in the mid-1990s, though all but two are from the twenty-first century, and fifteen date from 2010 or later – that is, the time in which this thesis was researched and written. Citations for the latter term begin a little earlier, though fully eighty-three of the entries are from the twenty-first century and fifty-seven of these from 2010 or after. In contrast, a search for the term 'wilderness', a key term totemic in early ecocriticism, offers 1,213 pieces.[3] A similar basic keyword search of articles in the twenty-year archives of *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* (*ISLE*) yields eighty-five citations for 'global warming' and ninety-four for 'climate change'. A search on 'wilderness' gives 656

[1] I will define in greater detail my understanding of nature in my first chapter; however, when I invoke an uninterrogated nostalgic, green vision of the term, I will use the capital-N form, "Nature", as here.

[2] Carried out via http://web.ebscohost.com on 16 July 2013; these have increased from nineteen and twenty-six respectively at the time of a similar initial search, 10 March 2010, making a doubling in references to the first and a more than threefold increase in references to the latter.

[3] Up from 1,014 in March 2010.

citations.[4] That is not necessarily to say that climate change is a low priority in the journal – after all, 'ozone layer' only offers eleven results and 'biodiversity loss' five – and citations are certainly more frequent in twenty-first-century editions. Likewise, results will be skewed by the fact that the phrases 'global warming' and 'climate change' have only been in popular usage for two decades or so, whereas 'wilderness' has a much longer pedigree.[5]

These citations include book reviews, creative work and considerations of other media such as film, so literary criticism represents a more limited selection among them. Still fewer address my particular focus on poetry and climate change. One piece among the *ISLE* citations of 'global warming' is useful in this regard, even if by invoking climate change it specifically rules out considering it. In 'Renaissance Literature and Our Contemporary Attitude toward Global Warming' (2009), Ken Hiltner asks:

> How do we live without burning the fossil fuels that we know are wreaking havoc, not only with the environment (in particular the atmosphere), but with our very life and health, when the energy that they supply is paradoxically essential for that life and health? This is certainly a question that I am in no position to answer (433).

Hiltner recognises that, unlike Motion, we cannot put physical distance between ourselves and climate change, because our daily practices are entangled with it. Like Hiltner, I would acknowledge the difficulty of this paradox, but it is one of the challenges to thought that climate change presents. This thesis will attempt to articulate a fuller range of problems than Hiltner does, and propose some potential responses.

In the first chapter, I will survey the emergence and directions of first- and second-wave ecocriticism, demonstrating where these limit our ability to think about climate change, but also pursuing the potential that they exhibit. This survey will more fully illustrate the tendency for ecocriticism to neglect climate change, as well as the more recent increase in interest. That interest is marked by the emergence of a putative "material ecocriticism", which seeks to position intentional human agency within the much larger network of forces responsible for shaping our world, as well as by a greater ecocritical willingness to engage with literary theory. I will also be informed in my analysis by environmental philosophy, science studies, risk sociology and other relevant fields of study. The chapter will close with a comparison of two prose pieces on climate change, exemplifying different strands of thought.

In my second chapter, I will consider modernist poetry as an alternative subject of ecocritical attention, it having been largely neglected in the field in favour of texts that make nature or environmental concerns their topic. My thesis is that modernist poetics engages with the kinds of

[4] Via http://oxfordjournals.org accessed 16 July 2013; this is up from sixty-five, fifty-four and 564 respectively at the time of the last search on 12 August 2010.

[5] The OED's first citation for 'global warming' is 1952, and for 'climate change', as a prospect in the present rather than prehistorically, is 1957. Citations for 'wilderness' go back to the thirteenth century (www.oed.com, last accessed 25 February 2013).

complexity and difficulty that persist and are exacerbated in contemporary climate change. As such, I will concentrate on modernist work as a model of formal innovation, reading it as an interrogation of ecocritical premises, rather than in terms of its already extensively discussed cultural history. Modernist poetry offers scope to implement many of the theoretical assertions of material ecocriticism, for instance, which in turn illuminate as yet unconsidered aspects of the work. Through my examination of modernist literary aesthetics, I will set out an alternative ecopoetics for our changing climate, and use this to reread a key canonical text of modernism, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. In three subsequent chapters, I will develop this through reconsideration of work by other poets of the modernist era, Wallace Stevens, Basil Bunting and David Jones, to extend my critique and to offer new critical reflections on their writing. A sixth and final chapter will return to the contemporary poetry of climate change, considering a selection of examples in both lyrical and neo-modernist modes. My conclusion will then propose a poetics of climate change based on this analysis. My research aims to situate the practice of poetry materially, intellectually and aesthetically within the context of the global climate, while making a critical contribution to both ecocriticism and modernist studies. I shall articulate the value of poetry as a method for encountering and experiencing the world, a way of knowing that can offer fresh insights into the phenomena and discourses of climate change.

A note on terminology

I have already mentioned a distinction between "nature" and "Nature", and I will expand on my definitions (p.14, n.1, above) during the course of the thesis.[6] Throughout, I largely employ the term "climate change" to signify the network of phenomena that are of concern. Those phenomena are both human – cultural, economic, industrial, agricultural – and biophysical – atmospheric, oceanic, solar, botanical and so on. I therefore refer repeatedly to the "phenomena" rather than "phenomenon" of climate change. I also endeavour for consistency in using the term "climate change", and in contrast only refer to "global warming" where meaning demands the distinction between increasing average terrestrial temperatures and other effects of the changing climate – polar ice loss, species migration or extinction, seasonal shift and so on. This is in accordance with a distinction that Lorraine Whitmarsh explains in her 2009 survey of public understanding of the two terms:

> Since the 1980s, the term 'global warming' has been commonly used to describe the impact on climate of increased levels of greenhouse gases linked to human activities. While the 'warming' metaphor may have been effective in capturing the public's imagination about this global risk, it obscures the complex and potentially devastating range of effects resulting from what is more commonly referred to amongst scientists as the 'enhanced greenhouse effect' or 'climate change' (403).[7]

[6] Terms such as these under general discussion are signalled by double quotation marks, to differentiate them from direct quotations in single quotation marks.
[7] Whitmarsh cites John Houghton's *Global Warming: The Complete Briefing* for the 'enhanced greenhouse effect'.

Nevertheless, given the necessity of regular references to "climate change", I may use "global warming" as a synonym in places to ease the burden of repetition on the reader.

Whitmarsh's mention of 'increased levels of greenhouse gases linked to human activities' also prompts me to declare my understanding that contemporary climate change is, to a greater or lesser extent, a result of human-generated emissions. Such an understanding is not uncontroversial, but is overwhelmingly dominant among the scientific community. In the study 'Quantifying the Consensus on Anthropogenic Global Warming in the Scientific Literature' (2013), Cook et al. examine 11,944 abstracts of articles on global climate change or global warming over a period of two decades, and report that 'Among abstracts expressing a position on AGW [anthropogenic global warming], 97.1% endorsed the consensus position that humans are causing global warming'. The analysis was refined by inviting authors of neutral papers to rate their positions, and the authors conclude 'that the number of papers rejecting the consensus on AGW is a vanishingly small proportion of the published research' (Cook et al. 1).

In this thesis, I share Dipesh Chakrabarty's position in 'The Climate of History' (2009) that, not being scientists, we can still 'make a fundamental assumption about the science of climate change', that it is 'right in its broad outlines' (200). I proceed on the basis that contemporary climate change has been and will continue to be anthropogenic. However, with the understanding that climate has changed on numerous occasions throughout the earth's existence, I intend my discussion to have some wider relevance, in addition to its contemporary urgency.

Houghton writes that the 'increased amount of carbon dioxide is leading to global warming of the Earth's surface because of its enhanced greenhouse effect' (29).

Chapter 1

Green sees things in waves: Cyclic ecocriticism and climate disruption

If we consider the changing climate as something happening solely in an entity called "the environment", which exists around rather than entangled with human culture, then we overlook the continual complexities of our relationship with climate. Whether or not we subscribe to the view that contemporary climate change is human-induced, our existence *qua* culture is contingent on the climate, and always has been. This means that an attempt to pigeonhole climate change as an "environmental" issue is impossible: the fact that the discourse of climate change is still current a quarter of a century after it entered the public consciousness reflects that the phenomena cannot be successfully categorised and legislated. The geographer Mike Hulme recognises this in *Why We Disagree About Climate Change* (2009) when he says that climate change 'has moved from being predominantly a physical phenomenon to being simultaneously a social phenomenon' (xxv). To assess the complexity of these socio-physical phenomena for culture, my first chapter will review key critical approaches to what is variously called "the environment", "ecology" or "nature", and see how a topical definition of the "environment" might predispose these approaches to consider climate change in a particular, and often reductive, fashion.

As the field of environmental literary criticism, or ecocriticism, develops over the past few decades, it more or less consciously models itself on other politically informed critiques such as feminism or postcolonialism. However, the traditional characterisation of "nature" in the first wave of ecocriticism, and the more explicit alignment of environmentalism with the social justice agenda in the second,[1] foster a vision of human relations with the world that hampers the potential for literary engagement with climate change. After reflecting on these, I will consider indications of emergent theory that reads *from* rather than *towards* climate change. I will conclude the chapter with an analysis of some typical accounts of climate change from the literature. In this way, I intend to articulate the key problems that climate change presents for conventional understandings of "nature" and even "the environment", and in particular for literary critical approaches. This will prepare us for subsequent chapters' exploration of modernist poetics as an alternative way of engaging with this complexity, in a nuanced and more sophisticated fashion.

Back to nature: First-wave ecocriticism

Although the term 'ecocriticism' is coined in 1978 by William Rueckert in the title of his essay 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism', his focus is on 'applying ecological concepts to the reading, teaching, and writing about literature' (107) and the discipline does not assume its more familiar status as a critical field until the last decade of the twentieth century, with

[1] Lawrence Buell defines this first/second wave distinction in 2005's *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (17; 21ff).

books such as Jonathan Bate's *Romantic Ecology* and *The Song of the Earth* (1991 and 2000) in the UK and Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) in the USA. This is some time after the emergence of politically informed readings of literature such as Marxist or feminist criticism, and some time, too, after the beginnings of the modern environmental movement itself in the 1960s and 1970s, as Cheryll Glotfelty indicates in 1996:

> While related humanities disciplines, like history, philosophy, law, sociology, and religion have been 'greening' since the 1970s, literary studies have apparently remained untinted by environmental concerns. And while social movements, like the civil rights and women's liberation movements of the sixties and seventies, have transformed literary studies, it would appear that the environmental movement of the same era has had little impact ('Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis' xvi).

As a result, once environmental issues are back on the agenda in the late 1980s and early 1990s,[2] green-thinking scholars of literature feel they have some catching up to do. Glotfelty argues that the recovery of Rueckert's term 'ecocriticism' for the movement is essential in this effort.

In *The Environmental Imagination*, Lawrence Buell imagines the work of environmental criticism not just as a parallel to but a radical development of the examination of cultural difference through literature, as postcolonial or feminist critics have undertaken. In comparison to these, he claims, 'by far the single most significant aspect of cultural difference with which we shall have to reckon pertains neither to ethnicity nor to gender but to anthropocentrism' (20). By 'anthropocentrism', Buell refers to the practice of making humans the focal point of writing and thought, and thus placing the nonhuman in a secondary role.[3] The other movements to which Buell alludes have made an impact by both reconsidering the canon from their distinctive viewpoints and recovering the work of marginalised writers for literary study, an endeavour that thus seems to inspire Buell 'to take stock of the resources within our traditions of thought that might help address' the anthropocentrism he perceives, to 'arrive at a more ecocentric state of thinking than western culture now sustains' (21). In this, however, there is a double movement: into the stock of our 'traditions of thought', in the past, to 'arrive' at a point in a more ecocentric future.

Buell is by no means unique in positioning environmental understanding in a longer cultural heritage. In *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction* (2002), J. Scott Bryson defines the titular genre as 'a subset of nature poetry that, while adhering to certain conventions of romanticism, also advances beyond that tradition and takes on distinctly contemporary problems and issues' (5).[4] John Elder

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[2] Hulme refers to the 'convergence of events, politics, institutional innovations, and the intervention of prominent public and charismatic individuals' on climate change in 1988 (64), for instance; while 1992 saw the UN's Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

[3] In *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (2011), Timothy Clark further distinguishes between this tendency, implicitly 'strong' anthropocentrism, and a 'stance […] attempting to identify with all life or a whole ecosystem, without giving such privilege to just one species', which is nevertheless 'a stance taken by human beings and is hence "anthropocentric" in a weak sense' (3).

[4] Bryson does not enumerate what these conventions are specifically, but he remarks 'Although in many ways ecopoems fall in line with such canonical nature lyrics as "Contemplations," "Intimations of Immortality," and "Ode to a Nightingale," they just as clearly take visible steps beyond that tradition' (3). In his reading, ecopoetry is a reforming rather than a radical genre, emerging from, rather than in reaction to, previous conceptions of nature.

also annexes current work to a tradition of thinking about nature in *Imagining the Earth* (second edition, 1996), maintaining that 'The earth […] awakens culture to its context and counterbalance. Today's poetry of nature is the vehicle by which the cultural tradition at once surrenders and resolves itself' (209) – that is to say, surrenders its anthropocentrism at the same time as entering the longer history of writing about nature. Note that for Bryson contemporary work is only a 'subset' of a tradition that it 'advances', while Elder's definition of tradition is acknowledgedly partial, in both senses of that word: 'I have not attempted to explore this process through any comprehensive survey of current American poetry. Instead, I have chosen to focus on several writers who have been important to my own vision of nature and culture' (1). Both represent conservative revision of literary canons rather than critical engagement with the socio-physical phenomena of environment and climate.

Buell attempts a more systematic, critical approach, however, proposing four criteria for what he dubs 'environmental literature':

> 1. *The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history* [...]
> 2. *The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest* [...]
> 3. *Human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation* [...]
> 4. *Some sense of the environment as a process rather than a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text* [...]
>
> (*Environmental* 7–8; author's italics)

This certainly identifies critical focal points outside conventional notions of the aesthetic, and outlines a set of cultural concerns distinct from those of other politically engaged accounts of literature. However, Buell immediately recognises that 'By these criteria, few works fail to qualify at least marginally, but few qualify unequivocally and consistently' (8), and decides that Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) and other environmental nonfiction best fulfils his requirements.

Buell's problem with defining 'environmental literature', Elder's avowedly personal attempt to do so (or rather, avoid doing so), and Bryson's subsuming 'ecopoetry' to the nature poetry tradition reflect a key question: that is, what pertains to "the environment"? A bigger question that shadows this, thanks to its implication in our understanding of the environment, is that of "nature" and how to define it. The concept of nature is vital to both Elder's and Bryson's positions, for instance. It is not without reason that Raymond Williams calls nature 'perhaps the most complex word in the language' in *Keywords*, 'since **nature** is a word which carries, over a very long period, many of the major variations of human thought – often, in any particular use, only implicitly yet with powerful effect on the character of the argument' (219, 224; author's emphasis).

What we talk about when we talk about "nature"

One key work that attempts to describe these 'major variations of human thought' is Kate Soper's *What is Nature?* (1995), and her distinction between usages of the word can help clarify what

different writers have in mind when they invoke the term. Soper differentiates 'the "metaphysical", the "realist" and the "lay" (or "surface") ideas of nature', elaborating them as follows:

1. Employed as a metaphysical concept […] 'nature' is the concept through which humanity thinks its difference and its specificity. […]
2. Employed as a realist concept, 'nature' refers to the structures, processes and causal powers that are constantly operative within the physical world […]
3. Employed as a 'lay' or 'surface' concept, […] 'nature' is used in reference to ordinarily observable features of the world: […] This is the nature of immediate experience and aesthetic appreciation; the nature we have destroyed and polluted and are asked to conserve and preserve (155–6).

Although Soper's first and third definitions will come into play, the second, 'realist concept' of process is the governing interpretation for this thesis, because climate change shows nature to be neither separable from us, as in her first definition, nor consisting entirely in what is 'observable', as in her third. In Soper's words, this 'realist concept' represents a nature 'indifferent to our choices, [that] will persist in the midst of environmental destruction, and will outlast the death of all planetary life' (159–60).

In contrast to this indifference stands Elder's 'vision of human culture in harmony with the rest of the natural order' (1), which thanks to its distinction between the 'human' and 'the rest' suggests Soper's first, metaphysical, definition of nature. While the phrase 'the rest of the natural order' attempts to take account of anthropocentrism by implying that human culture is only one part of that order, it betrays a deeper level of anthropocentrism by imagining that the conditions on which human culture is contingent are '*the* natural order' (my italics), when in fact, they merely represent the conditions that have obtained for our current interglacial episode, from about 10,000 or 13,000 years ago (13 kya).[5] But in spite of this contingency, both Elder and Buell still frame nature in terms indebted to traditional notions of uncultivated sublime and pastoral retreat. For Elder, 'There is a redemption offered to human cycles within the order of natural cycles, an equilibrium as precise and comprehensive as an ecosystem' (82); more specifically and less fancifully, 'seasonality is also [a] bedrock' for Buell, and 'in some sense an obstinate objective given' (242).

It thus suffices for Buell's fourth criterion, of 'process', to be thought of in the conventional sense of cyclical for both critics, although Buell is himself aware that this can have a normative value: 'Because seasonal succession […] has not (yet) been so affected more than marginally [by climate change], to take it as a central point of reference is to risk perpetuating an old-fashioned picture of nature as a homeostasis that humanity can ignore but not change' (281). Thinking this way attempts to direct us back to a 'natural order', reading change as part of regular ongoing

[5] A timespan roughly consistent with Jared Diamond, who in *Guns, Germs, and Steel* notes that 'around 11,000 B.C […] corresponds approximately to the beginnings of village life in a few parts of the world, the first undisputed peopling of the Americas, the end of the Pleistocene Era and last Ice Age, and the start of what geologists term the Recent Era' (35). As a result of these conditions, Tim Flannery in *The Weather Makers* explains that 'agriculture commenced […] around 10,500 years ago in the Fertile Crescent' in what is the present-day Middle East (63). Behringer observes 'Only during the Holocene', beginning around 10 kya, 'did the environment we now think of as "natural" make its first appearance', and 'The global warming' that then occurred 'is associated with a fundamental shift to culture with more diverse and sophisticated features than before' (42–3).

process rather than acknowledging it as a potential rupture. The literary corollary of this is to see work 'adhering to conventions of romanticism' as Bryson does, when that work might need to challenge rather than adhere to or even 'advance' such principles. In the light of this conception of nature, Buell's attempt to prescribe what constitutes 'environmental literature' is – however broad – exclusionary. He has already criticised the 'acts of compartmentalization' by which resource-hungry western civilisation is 'sustained' (4), yet his focus on nonfiction nature writing itself represents an act of literary enclosure because it orients ecocriticism solely towards texts that are topically or thematically environmental, relating to this particular vision of Nature.

This self-confirmatory gesture, of defining the environment through environmental literature, means that the nature considered by Buell and Elder, while active and dynamic according to a pattern, does not have the scope or depth of Soper's second definition of nature. The practices of both critics are in fact closer to Soper's third, 'lay' or 'surface' concept of nature we experience personally. In *Imagining the Earth*, Elder includes chapters on his own 'excursions' as starting points for his literary reflections, because 'A natural culture is […] a localized culture, in which art and tradition develop from a deep familiarity with the beings and cycles of a given place' (37–8). Buell also attests that 'environmental conscience' is 'quickened by a combination of lococentrism and local knowledge' (209), and this idea of emplacement is key to both his critical metric and compositional practice. Asking us to imagine him looking up from the writing of the book at 'the grove of second-growth white pines that sway at this moment of writing [...] forty feet from my computer screen' he seeks to affirm the existence of a world beyond the text, in contrast to 'The forest of American scholarship', which 'is a forest where treeness matters but the identities and material properties of the trees are inconsequential' (10). His gesture beyond the page becomes totemic in ecocriticism for the idea of nature as a simple object of reference, though his trees' materiality fixes that nature in particular entities rather than the 'process' of his fourth criterion. Some theoretical grappling has therefore been required to take Buell's co-ordinates of writer and world and make them methodologically workable as ecocriticism.

Place, personhood and politics

Buell and Elder work from personal experiences of nature in particular locations. While Buell goes on to acknowledge that 'art removes itself from nature', he stresses that 'from another point of view the emphasis on disjunction between text and world seems overblown. To most lay readers, nothing seems more obvious than the proposition that literature of a descriptive cast […] portrays "reality", even if imperfectly' (84). By invocation of the 'lay' reader, Buell works within Soper's third definition, that of immediate experience. He does license a certain creativity beyond this, but he is careful to charge it with being functional: 'One has to invent, to extrapolate, to fabricate. Not in order to create an alternative reality but to see what without the aid of the imagination isn't likely to be seen at all' (102). Nevertheless, the imagination is here a projection of the senses, 'to see'. It

corresponds with philosopher David Abram's assertion that 'imagination is not a separate mental faculty (as we so often assume) but is rather the way the senses themselves have of throwing themselves beyond what is immediately given' (*The Spell of the Sensuous* 58). Buell's vision remains contingent on an experiencing self who communicates nature's significance to readers, even when that "experience" has to be imagined.

In an attempt to move beyond this paradigm, Buell identifies an 'aesthetics of relinquishment' in nonfiction nature writing, 'the effect [of which] is most fundamentally to raise the question of the validity of the self as the primary focalizing device for both writer and reader' (179). He already notes that 'This prospect can […] be unsettling; the degree zero existence of Wallace Stevens's snow man', for instance (144). Nevertheless, despite the seeming necessity of this 'unsettling' quality to the interrogation of selfhood, Buell determines that the aesthetics of relinquishment are a generic feature peculiar to nature writing, rather than a criterion for ecocriticism that we might read in any other mode, such as modernist poetry. In his remark that the drafts of *Walden* show 'Thoreau undergoing a partly planned, partly fortuitous, always somewhat conflicted odyssey of reorientation such as I myself have begun to undergo in recent years, such as it seems American culture has been undergoing, such as I am asking the reader to undergo' (23), Buell makes his own self, both as a reader and as a political subject, into a locus from writer to reader, exemplary of what he sees as a shift in US society.

Buell's motif of looking up from the text during composition at the world is also present in Jonathan Bate's *Romantic Ecology* (1991), though a comparison with Buell's view from his window is instructive. The 'leading stories on the evening television news' are before Bate, or at least in his mind's eye, as he writes, and these cover events in the USSR and newly-unified Germany, as well as research 'that there are links between freak weather conditions and global warming' (*Romantic* 1). Bate's anecdote combines observation with politics and the mechanisms by which we bring nature into culture, via broadcast media and public debate. Bate also draws the warming globe into his literary-critical method, because he sees that its potential disruption of seasonal procession could complicate future readings of the Romantics: 'One effect of global warming will be (is already?) a powerful increase in the severity of winds in northern Europe [...] Keats's ode "To Autumn" is predicated upon the certainty of the following spring's return; the poem will look very different if there is soon an autumn when "gathering swallows twitter in the skies" for the last time' (2).[6] Bate opens up the possibility of considering a text in undetermined futures – indeed, in undetermined presents, given that his hesitancy about whether the wind is already changing signals the fact that we cannot gain ready perspective on an environmental shift we might already inhabit.

The turn from personal to environmental politics is more fully explored in the anecdote with which Bate begins his later essay 'Living with the Weather'.[7] Bate's account is again more markedly political than Buell's, with the recollection that he heard then Labour Party leader Michael Foot

[6] Citing line 33 of Keats's poem; *Major Works* 324–5.

[7] This is later reworked as 'Major Weather', Chapter 4 of Bate's book *The Song of the Earth* (2000).

reciting Byron's poem 'Darkness' at a party conference.[8] Foot's appropriation of the poem as a warning about nuclear holocaust prompts Bate to consider politically informed criticism during the Cold War. As Buell seeks to move critical debate on from considerations of gender and ethnicity to those of the environment, Bate takes Marxist historicist readings of Romanticism as a starting point for reconsidering 'the legacy of romanticism in our age of eco-crisis' ('Living' 435). However, unlike Buell, Bate is not seeking to define a particular kind of literature as environmental; rather, he reconsiders the field of Romanticism in the light of contemporary concerns. This immediately engages his reading of 'Darkness' with environmental crisis. He makes the distinction that, whereas 'the scholar's elucidation of sources' (432) highlights allusion and influence in a text, and a politically oriented critic recovers the 'human agency' surrounding the poem (437), the environmental critic distinctively draws our attention to the atmospheric context of the volcano Tambora's eruption in 1816. Airborne particulates from the volcano contributed to the dreary Swiss summer that inspired 'Darkness', in addition to the succession of bad harvests that prompted Keats to celebrate the return to a successful crop in 1819 with 'To Autumn', Bate writes. In this respect, he hints at a working ecocritical methodology: he is not looking for texts with the environment in them, he is looking at environments with texts in them.

This reading both plays up its ecological focus, and also, in a scholarly valuable way, recovers the natural environment of these poems, giving them a context beyond the sociocultural. Bate thus restores agency to nonhuman forces that have been closed down in both literary and political analysis, because traditionally 'The constancy of nature was something against which to measure the vicissitudes of culture' (439), as it remains for Elder. The critical tendency to take nature as read and concentrate instead on cultural, human agency inevitably overlooks crucial contexts, particularly those which evince that 'nature is not stable' (439), such as Tambora's eruption. Nevertheless, this approach doesn't entirely validate Bate's claim that 'Global Warming Criticism is about to be born' (436),[9] because it addresses historical environmental conditions, rather than the present-day implications of 'global warming'. Nevertheless, Bate is explicitly attempting what Buell turns away from when the latter writes: 'the psychic health of an individual in a relatively self-contained subculture, and the health of that subculture as a whole, can be altered more easily than the rate of global CO_2 emissions' (*Environmental* 295). Buell's remark recentres the work of his brand of ecocriticism in the self, disavowing the possibility of engaging with phenomena on a different scale.

Defining our engagement with the environment through conventional literary categories such as the authorial or lyric self, however, presents a further political quandary on different scales. First-wave ecocritics, that is, those who take their reading of nature from Transcendentalist and Romantic texts, consciously or not inflect their environmentalism with a kind of rugged individualism by dint of the traditions they identify. The remoteness and specificity of Walden

[8] Byron's poem can be found on pp.272–3 of his *Major Works*.

[9] Bate omits reference to this in *The Song of the Earth*; I have drawn on the essay rather than the book here because of this assertion about 'Global Warming Criticism'.

Pond is for Buell representative of the wilderness, but even though this purports to stand outside civilisation, Thoreau's human presence there underscores the ideological implication of that self-removal. As William Cronon elaborates, 'The Trouble with Wilderness' is that it's already tied up with national myths and is seen as 'the quintessential location for experiencing what it meant to be an American' (76). He maintains that 'the concept of wilderness' is already 'loaded with some of the deepest core values of the culture that created and idealized it' (73). Canonising texts that perpetuate the idea of wilderness just serves to perpetuate a polar opposition of culture and nature.

Bill McKibben's remark that 'The greenhouse effect is the first environmental problem we can't escape by moving to the woods' (*The End of Nature* 188) offers a proleptic critique of Thoreau's lionisation by Buell. In more analytical vein, Hulme speaks of the need for new forms of politics to respond to climate change because 'If the atmosphere truly offers no boundaries to the circulation of greenhouse gases around the planet then a commensurate global system of climate governance must also break down the national and sectarian barriers of traditional forms of governance' (290). Ecocriticism cannot break down these boundaries if it originates in an unchallenged vision of untrammelled Nature.

Bate suggests, however, that it is a pre-condition of our culture that we make such a distinction between Nature and culture. He draws on the work of sociologist Bruno Latour to argue that 'The modern Constitution was above all premised on a strict separation between culture and nature' ('Living' 439). For Latour, our 'constitution' is 'The common text that defines this understanding and this separation', but on such a foundation *We Have Never Been Modern*, in the title of his 1993 book (*WHNBM* 14). This is because the separation of nature and politics is what paradoxically necessitates the creation of 'hybrids' between the two categories: 'All of culture and all of nature get churned up again every day' (2), as we can see in anthropogenic climate change's blurring of conventional notions of distinct natural and human agency. Much of Latour's work, to which I will return throughout this thesis, is concerned with the fallacious separation of science and politics, as means of describing and controlling nature and society respectively. Instead, he argues that the two are interdependent and that their relationship creates 'quasi-objects' (51ff), neither essentialist nor constructivist entities.

Latour maintains in a subsequent work, *Politics of Nature*, that 'People have been much too quick to believe that it sufficed to recycle the old concepts of nature and politics unchanged, in order to establish the rights and manners of a political ecology', when instead these terms want 'a thoroughgoing rethinking' (*Politics* 2). Where politics behaves as though Nature is fundamentally a source of truths, and society then uses its observation or derivation of these truths as the basis for its decisions, that basis is false. Latour advocates that we instead break down and redistribute scientific, social and political functions as a 'collective' so that we might conceive of the world in a manner fit to deal with anthropogenic environmental change. To acknowledge that change as anthropogenic not only undermines the supposed independent, value-neutral certainties of Science

as an institution but also explains why our world is now characterised by such uncertainties. As a result, Latour's proposed collective is constitutionally subject to constant revision. He contends that 'Politics has to get back to work *without* the transcendence of nature' (56; author's italics), where Elder for instance wants to read poetry such as Wordsworth's for precisely these 'transcendent intimations' (113). Inasmuch as ecocriticism seeks to be political, it needs to be critical about its conception of 'eco', and it would do better to consider what 'we are left with' after we disavow this transcendence, the 'multiple associations of humans and nonhumans, waiting for their unity to be provided by work carried out by the collective' (*Politics* 46). This provides the intellectual heft to enable us to enact Buell's critical requirement for texts to exhibit a 'sense of [humans] being one among many actors in a much vaster and complexer habitat', and 'to imagine nonhuman agents as [our] bona fide partners' (178; 179).

Repurposing the politics of nature: Second-wave ecocriticism

In second-wave ecocriticism, the environmental and the cultural, the latter characterised by identity politics and social justice, come into closer relation. Writing ten years after *The Environmental Imagination*, Buell explains that 'For first-wave ecocriticism, "environment" effectively meant "natural environment"', whereas 'Second-wave ecocriticism has tended to question organicist models of conceiving both environment and environmentalism' and so the field's 'traditional commitment to the nature protection ethic must be revised to accommodate the claims of environmental justice' (*The Future of Environmental Criticism* [2005] 21–2). Patrick D. Murphy makes a similar critical distinction between nature writing and environmental writing: environmental writing unlike nature writing 'does not stop at describing the natural history of an area, but instead, or in addition, discusses the ways in which [...] forms of human intervention have altered the land and the environment' (*Farther Afield* 5).

In surveying the writing of environmental crisis, monographs such as Murphy's *Farther Afield* (2000) and Buell's own *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001) not only make this transition from nature writing to environmental writing, they are of necessity considering a much wider body of work than the Western canon. They thus make good on Buell's disclaimer in *The Environmental Imagination* that 'A more radical critic would want to caution to a greater extent than I do against relying for intellectual support on the likes of Thoreau and other disaffected westerners' (22). Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace's *Beyond Nature Writing* (2001) has the subtitled aim of *Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, reflecting a growing 'concern with representing diverse cultural viewpoints on nature and the environment' (3). But given that in 1996 Glotfelty identifies ecocriticism as 'predominantly a white movement. It will become a multi-ethnic movement when stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of social justice, and when a diversity of voices are encouraged to contribute to the discussion' (xxv), second-wave ecocriticism is simply completing an endeavour proposed in the first.

This shift into a more political and cultural context could simply recapitulate the movement of literary criticism over the course of the twentieth century, from close assessment of a text's aesthetic merits to more and variously contextualised readings, in the transition from Buell's mimetic standards to the requirements of the reading culture. In so doing, the second wave still adheres to the revision and recuperation paradigm pioneered in other politically informed modes of reading, where characteristically twentieth-century concerns are used to interrogate the assumptions of literary criticism and establish alternative canons. Indeed, Glotfelty explicitly suggests feminist literary criticism as a model for three stages of ecocriticism. Specifically, these are to 'study how nature is represented in literature'; to 'recuperate the hitherto neglected genre of nature writing' and to identify 'fiction and poetry writers whose work manifests an ecological awareness'; and a 'theoretical phase, which is far[-]reaching and complex' (xxiii–xxiv) – the latter not much in evidence in the first or second waves. Timothy Clark summarises the second wave's developments as follows: 'a previously dominant *realist* paradigm, that is, reading a text in relation to the ethical and cognitive challenge of its rendering of the natural world, is being displaced by a *culturalist* one, that is, reading a text's stances in terms of the various kinds of cultural identity projected or at issue' (*The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* 93; author's italics).

In *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Buell seems to regard this expanded vision of ecocriticism as sufficient in itself, concluding that 'to succeed in changing the subject or in changing the archive is every bit as important in the evolution of critical inquiry as a revolution in critical theory as such' and 'It will have been achievement enough if environmentality becomes seen as indispensable to how one reads literature' (130–1). Murphy in contrast asks 'why should people imagine that [...] current ways of organizing academic study are accurate or even adequate to the range of literary phenomena […]?' (63). Syllabus-bound literary criticism limits engagement with environmental crisis by charging ecocriticism with reading texts that confirm its interest in environmental crisis – the 'Toxic Discourse' Buell describes in 2001's *Writing for an Endangered World* (30ff) – rather than examining the significant implications of anthropogenic environmental change for literary theory and practice. Considering how culture deals with climate change, and considering how climate change deals with culture, are distinct intellectual activities.

Why nature is not an other

The tendency for looking at the 'toxic discourse' of disempowered groups in some cases results in a problematic equivalence between the nonhuman world and marginalised human "others". Buell implies as much when he points out that 'it is self-evidently more problematic for an ecocritic to presume to speak for "nature" than for (say) a black critic to speak for black experience' (*Future* 8), defining the ecocritical project through its difficulty. However far we personify it, nature is not an ostracised "other" within society; neither can we readily adopt the same approaches or goals as have lent critical legitimacy to the concerns of "othered" groups. Indeed, Clark remarks that 'The most

controversial political effect of climate change may be its challenge to basic dominant assumptions about the nature and seeming self-evident value of "democracy" as the most enlightened way to conduct human affairs', and as such, we face 'questions about the dominant, liberal/progressive cultural politics of much mainstream professional literary criticism' ('Scale' 98, 100). We cannot proceed by assimilating ecocriticism to a prevailing culturalist tradition, so we must contrast literary environmentalism with other kinds of radical critique.

Prejudice relating to gender, race, sexuality or class is culturally determined, and therefore the recovery of writing representing such individuals or groups or their interests is itself the beginning of a culturally promulgated change in prevailing attitudes. In contrast, redressing the under-representation of the environment in literary canons in the same way will only begin a similarly intrasocial process. Moreover, the narrative of environmental neglect is already well known from other media, and the recovery of a literary archive confirming as much is simply to secure the stable door after the horse has bolted. As feminism and other socio-political literary-critical agendas recover marginalised writers and texts, they engage in effective, political work. When environmentalists and ecocritics do the same, they remind us that current environmental change comes from long-held attitudes, but they do not undo the emissions that those attitudes have enabled. Changing our attitudes towards oppressed social groups, however prevailing orthodoxies have characterised them, is entirely within the circle of the human – the anthropocentric or the sociocentric. Subsequent scholarship that seeks to redress historic marginalisation can never undo past injustice; neither is the work of such cultural critique by any means complete. However, the scope of this work as a political project is co-extensive with the potential range of its influence – that is to say, its aims and its reach are both within human culture.

By following this model, ecocriticism imposes a cultural scope on itself, when its ambition actually reaches beyond the human world. Even if through a political model of literary criticism we seek to promote or alter the sociocultural status and reception of a marginalised population, we cannot do so straightforwardly, although we at least have better ways of observing and managing our progress towards those goals. This is far less possible with the environment – especially when the emergence of anthropogenic climate change reveals that our exploitation of natural resources has resulted in something quite alien, if not inimical, to our conscious intentions. The sociologist Ulrich Beck makes clear that ignorance is no defence in such a context: 'the "side effects", which were wilfully ignored or were unknowable at the moment of decision, assume the guise of environmental crises that transcend the limits of space and time' (*World at Risk* 19).

The idea of "tradition" might become more radical if we instead think of the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere as a neglected tradition in itself, which would mean that climate change is usurping the role of the politicised literary scholar in bringing this to our attention.[10] This is because contemporary 'Global risks are the embodiment of the errors of the

[10] I have proposed as much in the article 'Climate Change and the Individual Talent' (2013).

whole industrial era', as Beck writes (100). This involves a transfer of agency from cultural intention to its unintended consequences. We can in this context contrast the way that Bate requires 'the language itself […] to do ecological work' (*The Song of the Earth* 200), where Hulme maintains that 'we need to reveal the creative, psychological, ethical and spiritual *work that climate change is doing for us*' (326; my italics). Bate focuses on the text, Hulme on the environmental phenomena and their presence in culture. By thinking of carbon emissions as a tradition, we can flip the tacit ecocritical assumption that it suffices to think of nature as culture's other, as in Soper's first definition of 'nature', and instead entertain the idea of culture as nature's other. Nature then takes on the position of enforcing an environmental hegemony rather than being the other to a cultural hegemony. Its principles underlie our culture and, as the emergence of climate change reminds us, they 'will persist in the midst of environmental destruction, and will outlast the death of all planetary life' (Soper 159–60).

A useful illustration of this is Kent C. Ryden's exploration of Aldo Leopold's metaphor of nature as text in *A Sand County Almanac*. Ryden elaborates the sleight of mind that becomes necessary when working through analogies between the ecocritical project and recovered minority writing. Leopold 'casts nature and natural systems in the role of author while placing humans in the position of incompetent readers' and Ryden thus ingeniously suggests that 'Leopold's textual metaphor effectively place[s] nature in an elite position and relegate[s] humans to the ranks of society's disenfranchised and dispossessed' ('"How Could a Weed be a Book?"' 3, 5). Ryden suggests that the straightforward identification of nature with an oppressed social group is impossible, and that we have to invert our thinking and work in terms of an artificial metaphor – the book – to come to a better understanding of the nonhuman:

> Leopold's textual metaphor enables him to construct an ironic version of the world in which his readers actually live, one in which humans will only gain full membership—a membership set on nature's terms—if they improve their reading skills so they can make out what the natural world wants to communicate to them (6).

Bear in mind that it is in the terms of reading – or a reading – that Bill McKibben describes the identification of climate change itself: 'To find what climatologists call the "warming signal" through th[e] static of naturally cold and hot years'. Humanity has thus marginalised itself in the hegemony of natural processes, hence the 'huge effort' that it takes to obtain such a reading (McKibben 20). The need to "read" nature is confirmed by Latour, who maintains that it is the role of the sciences to provide 'a fabulously complex and extremely fragile *speech prosthesis*' for nonhuman entities (*Politics* 67; author's italics), which lends political weight to a project for thinking *from* the environment rather than just thematising it into pre-thought cultural–political categories.

Styles, space and scale

Rather than being satisfied with diversification as an extension of ecocriticism's canon in the

second wave, Murphy and Armbruster and Wallace give it some more methodological ambition. Murphy asserts that a 'reader has a right to expect that a general critical orientation would be applicable, at least to some extent, to every literary work' (16), hence we might make productive ecocritical insights, and insights about ecocriticism, when reading texts that resist a given vision of nature. This provides good grounds for an ecocritical examination of modernism and its interrogation of Romantic and Transcendentalist modes of nature, for instance. Armbruster and Wallace also set out to 'demonstrate the relevance of our [ecocritical] approach' by collecting work that shows it 'can be usefully applied to texts outside of nature writing', to 'authors who seem less concerned with nature than with culture' (3). Murphy's choice of reading in *Farther Afield* deliberately contrasts with the white, male and chiefly nonfictional Western tradition considered by Buell in *The Environmental Imagination*, because he believes a wider scope can help 'exemplify how departures from Enlightenment realism can intensify the themes found in environmental literature,' and that, for instance, 'the defamiliarizing practices of postmodern representation can cause readers to attend more carefully to the natural world around them' (181).

While Murphy limits here his horizon to 'the natural world around' us, the non-representational techniques he outlines can also be employed to defamiliarise the non-natural world, highlighting culture's solipsism by connecting it with its impacts on the environment, which we usually choose not to perceive. Buell himself recognises literature's capabilities in this regard in *Writing for an Endangered World* when he argues for an 'environmental unconscious', which is simultaneously 'the limiting condition of predictable, chronic perceptual underactivation in bringing to awareness, and then to articulation, of all that is to be noticed and expressed' and 'a residual capacity […] to awake to fuller comprehension of physical environment and one's interdependence with it' (22). This advances his idea of 'the environmental imagination' somewhat, but still works from the mimetic paradigm of what can 'be noticed and expressed'. Murphy on the other hand bids us to 'Think about the weakness and simplicity of a conception of reality based exclusively on observable phenomena [...] There are all kinds of things, processes, and actions that nobody has ever really seen' (63) that nevertheless have an impact on us.

Second-wave ecocritiques begin to respond to this problem by thinking beyond the local. For instance, Buell proposes five different models for 'place-connectedness' in Chapter 2 of *Writing for an Endangered World* (64ff), which include concentric zones centred on the self; archipelagos of disparate place; places as historic process; our accumulation of significant places through time; and, through imagination. In *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, he goes on to maintain 'a mature environmental aesthetics – or ethics, or politics – must take into account the interpenetration of metropolis and outback, of anthropocentric as well as biocentric concerns' (22–3). He then reflects on the tension between local and global: 'There is no single answer to the question of whether the more responsible position […] is to find a place to which you're willing to commit yourself or to forage around through libraries, labs, and continents with your antennae alert' (*Future* 69).

In *Field Notes from a Catastrophe: A Frontline Report on Climate Change* (2007) Elizabeth Kolbert adopts both of Buell's proposed strategies by visiting affected areas, such as Alaska and the Netherlands, and laboratories where she interviews scientists about their discoveries and projections. She nevertheless acknowledges 'Such is the impact of global warming that I could have gone to hundreds if not thousands of other places […] to document its effects. These alternate choices would have resulted in an account very different in its details, but not in its conclusions' (2–3). This contingency of representation reflects what Hulme calls 'the diversity of linguistic repertoires of climate change that can co-exist in a society at the same time', something he considers valuable because each of these 'reveals something different about the multiple and perhaps overlapping constituencies that tend to use them' (232).

Such a recognition properly challenges our expectations about texts' ability to cohere around a unifying narrative or voice, however, because Kolbert's account is still that of an experiencing self as much as the nature writing tradition that Buell celebrates in *The Environmental Imagination*. The need for multiple responses is affirmed by Hulme's mythography of climate change. This is a productive corollary to the work of the second-wave ecocritics in that it demonstrates the range of work we make climate change do for us culturally, by using it as an opportunity for 'Lamenting Eden', 'Presaging Apocalypse', 'Constructing Babel' or 'Celebrating Jubilee' (Hulme 340ff). Unlike Buell's or Murphy's surveys, however, Hulme's mythography does not focus from the text outward, but uses climate change to analyse the existing narratives with which we frame it. It is not so much to say that we can approach climate change through Romantic or pastoral modes, or even postcolonial, feminist or postmodern approaches; more that the character of climate change necessitates *multiple* modes of writing, often in tension with one another. The literary-critical implications of this are outlined by Ursula Heise in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008): 'climate change poses a challenge for narrative and lyrical forms that have conventionally focused above all on individuals, families, or nations, since it requires the articulation of connections between events at vastly different scales' (205).

The second wave is where we begin to see an attempt to reconcile these discrepant scales. Murphy gives a thumbnail philosophical sketch that upscales from the human to the environmental and offers a starting point for transacting between the two: the 'extension of agency from the human to the nonhuman,' he writes, 'reflects the historical progression of the widening circle of living beings that come under the purview of moral considerability within Western thought' (87). But this might simply be an ethical recasting of Buell's concentric model of place (*Writing* 64–5), at the centre of which is the experiencing self. And can we as easily extend 'moral considerability' to atmospheric, oceanic and terrestrial phenomena, as Murphy does to 'living beings'? Bear in mind Buell's caution that 'It is hard enough to extend oneself across one moral frontier,' and reflect on marginalised human beings, 'let alone [the] two' required to consider nonhuman entities (*Writing* 234).

Once artificially generated greenhouse gases are present in the atmosphere in such quantities that they influence the climate, then our responsibility for the climate comes into play as a moral consideration, however. Simply the possibility that we may be responsible for weather patterns or polar melt implicates us morally in these things, and while these phenomena are not moral agents themselves, there is no clean nature/culture distinction that can be drawn, according to Latour, and our moral agency is attached to them. Bill McKibben insists that 'By changing the weather, we make every spot on earth man-made and artificial […] Nature's independence *is* its meaning; without it there is nothing but us' (54; author's italics). His end of nature is the end of humanity's metaphysical other, further confirmation that it cannot be mapped on to existing notions of marginalised human beings. The difficulty remains that the level of nature at which this change occurs, according with Soper's second definition, is not immediately apparent. We have to consider nature across its scales to appreciate it, somehow holding the thought of the abstract climate together with sense experience of the immediate environment.

In attributing agency to the climate, I am following Latour's understanding of actor-network theory that '*any thing* that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor' (*Reassembling the Social* 71; author's italics). Nancy Tuana considers this interplay of agency in her reading of Hurricane Katrina, though she cautions that

> This does not mean that we cannot attempt to determine the extent to which human factors increased the intensity of a hurricane or some other weather-related phenomena. Indeed, issues of distributive justice may require that such a distinction be made in order to determine how to apportion responsibility across nations for harm from human-induced climate change ('Viscous Porosity' 193).

Nevertheless, this endorses our inability to ascribe responsibility for climate change in a conventional sense solely to civilisation or nonhuman forces. Once we begin such categorical breakdowns, it reaffirms Heise's injunction to think again about traditional subjects of literary investigation.

Material metiers: A third wave on the horizon?

An emergent field identifying itself as material ecocriticism is attempting to reimagine the categories of literary critique in accordance with this understanding of multiple agencies, and is thus valuable to my argument. By acknowledging that 'The concrete sense of these views is also expressed in Latour's actor-network theory', Serpil Oppermann explicitly understands the congruencies between the sociologist's approach and this nascent critical field ('Theorizing Material Ecocriticism: A Diptych' 466). The so-called "material turn" in critical theory aims to establish humans' position in a field of various influences that cannot be controlled and can only half-successfully be managed. Inasmuch as this turn marks, in Stacey Alaimo's words, 'a recognition not just that everything is interconnected but that humans are the very stuff of the material, emergent world' (*Bodily Natures*

20), it might seem first-wave, simply reminding us of a nature we have neglected or forgotten. But the thrust of *Bodily Natures* (2010) is that it is not by consciousness-raising encounters with natural history or the wilderness that we recognise our implication in the material world, but rather by our susceptibility to environmentally propagated toxins, a recognition that 'blurs the commonsensical outlines of the human body' (118). Alaimo and other material ecocritics thus take first-wave ecocritics' attempt to restore us to nature and give it some critical sophistication, with reference to Latour's mapping of actor networks and Beck's sociology of risk.

Despite her announced focus on bodies as sites of human and environmental interaction, Alaimo disavows the anthropocentricity of her project, claiming that it instead undoes our self-certainty by showing our susceptibility to forces beyond our intention and control. However, her concentration on *Bodily Natures* means that she sometimes reads as providing a more theoretically nuanced account of Buell's 'toxic discourse' – her key texts are by and large topically concerned with diseases and conditions brought about by exposure to unsafe environments. Alaimo does point out that the bodily effects are not necessarily sensory, and 'the often invisibly hazardous landscapes of risk society [...] require scientific mediation' (17) for us to be made aware of them, as our changing climate also does. But material agency on these terms tends to result in physical deterioration or chronic conditions that are ultimately and painfully sensible to us in a way that climate change is not, without counting the second-order effects of increased extreme weather and disease vectors that are difficult to predict.

Nevertheless, Alaimo concludes her critical readings with the valuable observation that 'agency is usually considered within the province of rational—and thus exclusively human—deliberation', and this 'evacuation of agency from nature underwrites the transformation of the world into a passive repository of resources for human use. Alternative conceptions', she suggests, would allow us to 'accentuate the lively, active, emergent, agential aspects of nature [to] foster ethical/epistemological stances that generate concern, care, wonder, respect, caution (or precaution), epistemological humility, kinship, difference, and deviance' (143). The allowance of agency to material forces, in spite of its traditional alignment with human will, is summarised by Serenella Iovino, who attests that 'Humans share [a] horizon with countless other actors, whose agency—regardless of being endowed with degrees of intentionality—forms the fabric of events and causal chains' (Iovino and Oppermann 451), such as the causal chains through which a hybridised culture–nature changes the climate.

This understanding has two consequences for Iovino: 'the first is that an ontological vision based on the superiority of human agency over the nonhuman "world of things" becomes problematic. The second is that we have to redraw the boundaries of the "self"' (457). To read anthropogenic climate change in these terms, we can observe that it represents our failure to master the consequences of a carbonised economy. We need also to understand that just because we haven't intended to change the climate doesn't mean that it isn't changing. Indeed, the latter fallacy

prompts one of Alaimo's most pertinent remarks on climate change. Thanks to a particular strain of conceptual resistance to anthropogenic climate change, namely

> the astonishing right-wing denial of global warming, which casts it as a matter of personal "belief[", i]t seems we have been granted the right to choose whether or not we "believe in" global warming, as if (quasi-religious) beliefs or personal opinions could insulate us from the emergent processes of material/political realities (*Bodily* 16).

The network of agencies actually entangled is typical of the subjects considered by material ecocriticism in Serpil Oppermann's analysis. She writes: 'multiple interacting systems, such as climate change entailing geopolitical and economic practices, [...] produc[e] unpredictable changes' (Iovino and Oppermann 461). Material ecocriticism is not climate change criticism, but its breakdown of conventional categorisation does productive work for my project. I shall therefore be returning to materially ecocritical principles in my readings of modernist poetry later in the thesis.

Global warming, local language: Writing the unwriteable

Material ecocriticism demonstrates that traditional literary categories are problematically placed to engage with the complexities of climate change, because we cannot consider the climate as a phenomenon separate from us to be mimetically represented in language. This occasions Alaimo's observation that

> we need to mark the limits of our own ability to render the material world with language. Such a sense of limits does not pose nature as exterior to human language, but instead acts to ensure an awareness that the process of making meaning is an ongoing one, a process that includes nonhuman nature as a participant rather than as an object of inquiry (*Bodily* 42).

The question of what we talk about when we talk about climate change is vexed precisely because it defies representation by any of the conventional methods. Climate change can then be seen as a problem that emerges, in part, because there is no tradition of writing or thinking about it: 'the horizon of climate change arrives as a cognitive blow without representation or metrics,' Tom Cohen points out (*Telemorphosis* xi). It is not something we experience like a walk in the woods, or the rubbish we find there. This is one of the key problematics in the discourse of climate change, because as Hulme points out, 'global climate change […] is a good example of un-situated risk. The source of the risk is distant and intangible – no-one can see climate changing or feel it happening – and the causes of the risk are diffuse and hard to situate' (196). Distribution of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is not something visible to the human eye – or to the lyrical 'I' – and is therefore not factored into the lay conception of nature.

The presence of anthropogenic greenhouse gases has therefore to be scientifically demonstrated. Climatologists Kendal McGuffie and Ann Henderson-Sellers indicate that climate change 'over the last few decades can only be detected by careful analysis of instrument records', with the

concomitant observation that 'Any human response will depend on such a perception, whether consciously or subconsciously' (*A Climate Modelling Primer* 13). This reinforces the necessity of making a leap of the imagination to connect with the concept of climate change: it recalls Murphy's injunction to 'think about the weakness and simplicity of a conception of reality based exclusively on observable phenomena' (63). But does it suffice to import this scientific understanding wholesale into one or more appropriate literary modes? Buell thinks 'Literature functions as science's less systematic but more versatile complement' (*Environmental* 94), but in the context of climate change the potential of such an interpretation is limited by Hulme's observation that:

> it is not sufficient to argue that more or clearer information about climate change from scientists will lead to greater public engagement with the issue. Neither can it be argued that more scientific *certainty* about future climate change, or better representations of scientific *uncertainty*, will necessarily lead to greater public agreement about what to do in response (215; author's italics).

Rather than seeing science and literature as complementary, Elder regards them as born from the same impulse and attentiveness, so 'scientific measurement transcends itself, leading through particulars to luminous unity' (176). Buell's privileging of scientific authority and Elder's vision of unity present a science that threatens to short-circuit literary endeavour if scientific accuracy becomes the main criterion with which we read – just as it threatens political initiative for Latour, who cautions that green activists 'have come up with nothing better than a nature already composed, already totalized, already instituted to neutralize politics' (*Politics* 3). Hulme points out 'There are barriers other than lack of scientific knowledge to changing the status of climate change in the minds of citizens – psychological, emotional and behavioural barriers' (215).

This is because there is what David Abram describes as a 'continual clash between our scientific convictions and our spontaneous experience' (42). It may be impossible to "experience" climate change at this personal level; Hulme notes 'Climate cannot be experienced directly through our senses' but 'is a constructed idea that takes these sensory encounters and builds them into something more abstract' (3–4). It thus seems appealing to attach global climate change to instances of experienced weather. But such an approach is problematic. McKibben for instance cites scientist James Hansen's remarks to US senators that 'It is not possible to blame a specific drought on the greenhouse effect,' which McKibben glosses by pointing out that 'even if the American summer of 1988 had been cool and damp as it was in London […] Hansen would have said the same thing' about global warming as he said anyway (22–3). It was nonetheless the coincidence of his testimony with the hot summer experienced on the Eastern seaboard of the USA that made the notion of climate change take root in our cultural understanding.

This point about the unrepresentability of climate change is crucial, because to embody it metonymically in weather events is to suggest that these discrete events somehow stand for it. While the weather may seem an ideal *parole* in which to communicate the *langue* of climate, the

association of climate change with short-term weather patterns also opens up to sceptics the opportunity to point to individual cold spells or short-term variation as evidence against climate change.[11] Climate change risks being signified by a handful of terms and 'the persistent use of visual icons' as Hulme puts it (13): drought, sea-level rise, polar bears, unseasonal weather, Kyoto, Copenhagen, "business as usual". Meteorological examples carry tempting rhetorical weight, as at the opening of *Romantic Ecology* when Bate links 'freak weather conditions and global warming' (1).

The use of freak weather for 'staging' climate change, to use Beck's term for representing global risk (*World at Risk* 10ff), is necessary precisely because of climate change's radical non-presence. However, if we are prepared to read freak weather in a text in a way that is specifically not a scientific account of a particular event – that is, indicatively rather than mimetically – it may reflect the increasing frequency, or increasing frequency of perception, of such events. We are used to considering the truth status of literature as not absolute but exemplary, so there is a value in literary modes for engaging with climate change simply because they do not polemically fasten on to the particular any more than an indicative value. Bate's engagement with then-current scientific thinking and McKibben's presentation of James Hansen's more problematic understanding about the relationship between global warming and individual weather events highlights that ecocriticism of climate change must be adaptable and dynamic enough to accommodate such developments. Richard Kerridge contends that this is a key responsibility for ecocritics, who 'must accept the possibility that changes in scientific understanding tomorrow may necessitate changes in the literary-critical judgements that have just been made' ('Ecocriticism' 6). This corresponds with Latour's idea of continual reconsideration of candidate phenomena, both human and nonhuman, in the 'progressive composition' of his collective (*Politics* 147). What might an ecocriticism of climate change look like, then?

Changing the critical climate

Rather than attesting to a unified version of nature, the rapid developments in scientific and popular understandings of climate change, along with its global quality and the uncertainties with which it confronts us, should already make us wary of tying literary texts too closely to specific representation. Our readings must be adaptable, as Bate's account of Keats's ode is, regarding literature as much a series of dynamic processes as the environment is. Yet they must remain qualitatively true, in the manner that modernist poet David Jones describes in a footnote within his work *The Anathemata* (1952): 'The findings of the physical sciences are necessarily mutable and change with fresh evidence or fresh interpretation of the same evidence. […] But the poet, of whatever century, is concerned only with how he can use a current notion to express a permanent mythus' (82). In *The Anathemata*, Jones uses contemporary science and anthropology to 'express a

[11] For example, Philip Ball's *Observer* review of Christopher Booker's *The Real Global Warming Disaster* points out that: 'Booker commits the cardinal sin, for which climate scientists have often castigated alarmists, of making a swallow into a summer (or, here, winter) by using the cold snap of 2008 as a reason to doubt the warming trend'.

permanent mythus' for Catholicism (as I will discuss in my fifth chapter); in our present context, however, I would argue that it is on this basis that many poems about climate change have fallen down, by treating the 'current notion' of climate change, as in 'The Sorcerer's Mirror', rather than what the phenomena reveal about past political and industrial practice. I will analyse further such poems of topical climate change in my final chapter.

The novelty of climate change can be evidenced in more recent critiques of first and second-wave ecocriticism. Adam Trexler and Adeline Johns-Putra suggest in 2011 that 'the contours of ecocriticism' in these earlier iterations 'go some way to explaining why it has been relatively slow to engage with climate change' ('Climate Change in Literature and Literary Criticism' 192). By contrast, Timothy Morton in *Ecology without Nature* (2007) seeks to deconstruct the idealised and ideologised vision of nature typified by John Elder, suggesting that such a nature was 'wheeled out to adjudicate between what is fleeting and what is substantial and permanent'; this kind of 'Nature smoothes over uneven history, making its struggles and sufferings illegible' (*EwN* 21). Morton's work here, and later in *The Ecological Thought* (2010), puts into critical practice Bill McKibben's diagnosis of nature's end. Tom Cohen likewise argues that climate change cannot be contained by the discourse of cultural politics in the introduction to *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change* (2011) when he contends 'That the twentieth-century preoccupation with human on human justice is interrupted, and a new network of catastrophics arrives not accessible to archival memory or social history alone' (xxii). Morton elaborates, 'The time should come when we ask of any text, "What does this say about the environment?" In the current situation we have already decided which texts we will be asking' (*EwN* 5). If criticism is to be informed by climate change, it must be as pervasive and connective as the phenomena of climate change themselves: 'We can't rigidly specify anything as irrelevant', Morton reminds us in *The Ecological Thought* (30), hence his range of reading from the hills of the Romantics' Lake District to those of Hollywood.

Denaturing ecocriticism

It will not suffice simply to elevate our awareness of the immediate environment and take notice of the changes wrought by the changing climate, as per Buell's understanding of the 'environmental unconscious', then, because this is to treat the climate simply as something environing or surrounding us. Morton's own alignment of environment and unconscious problematises literature's very ability to do so on Buell's model: 'Nobody likes it when you mention the unconscious, […] because when you mention it, it becomes *conscious*. In the same way, when you mention the environment, you bring it into the foreground. In other words, it stops being the environment' (*EwN* 1; author's italics). Morton thereby faults the practice of studying thematically environmental works for putting the environment front and centre. In the context of climate change, we can't rely on studying those works that topicalise it, because of its non-situated, hybrid socio-physical quality. Morton goes on to point out, 'This brand of criticism […] restricts the

radical openness the ecological thought implies, employing a pre-packaged container labelled "Nature.'" (*Thought* 11).

Morton programmatically deconstructs the term 'Nature', maintaining that it 'stands at the end of a potentially infinite series of other terms that collapse into it, otherwise known as a metonymic list: fish, grass, mountain air, chimpanzees, love, soda water, freedom of choice, heterosexuality, free markets … Nature' (*EwN* 14; author's ellipsis). This arc from organisms to values describes the conceptual bagginess of 'Nature' and the difficulty of imposing a definitive boundary between nature and culture, given the disingenuous ease with which ideological norms such as 'heterosexuality' and 'free markets' hybridise 'Nature' to justify themselves.[12] If we were to substitute 'anthropogenic climate change' for 'Nature' as the master term, Morton's vector from biological to ideological is more readily crossed in purely material terms, because 'heterosexuality' and 'free markets' have a crucial impact on the environment thanks to their contribution to (over)population and to resource exploitation and wastage, respectively. The processes of the changing climate to which we are party manifest our own inability to maintain the dichotomy between nature and culture, necessary to but distinct from the production of 'hybrids of nature and culture' in Latour's terminology (*WHNBM* 10–12).

Latour's claim that *We Have Never Been Modern* is useful here because it suggests that 'When the word "modern", "modernization", or "modernity" appears, we are defining, by contrast, an archaic and stable past' (10). Hence, we can identify "Nature's" creation as an artefact of contemporary civilisation: industrial progress accelerates exponentially, necessitating a stable, often Romantic, nature in which we can take solace because as Soper points out 'a certain idea of "nature" becomes more desirable, and the desire for it more manipulable, as the reality it conceptualizes is diminished and degraded' (196). This suggests a further value in reading modernist work, because it occurs at a moment in history while these processes are still occurring, rather than integrated and concealed in cultural networks during the course of postwar capitalism's ascendancy. A preference for fixed, mimetic presentations of nature is by contrast 'freighted with the ideology of stability and order,' as Hulme puts it (26), as it becomes in the tradition received by Elder and, more critically, by Lawrence Buell. Contrast this with the growing awareness which Buell's brother Frederick identifies in *From Apocalypse to Way of Life* (2004), that 'Instability, disequilibrium, climate change and risk were not just fundamental to human history and human nature […] They were fundamental to organisms and ecosystems everywhere' (190).

Time, climate and crisis

The tendency towards nostalgia for a tradition of nature, as Elder and Buell exhibit, is famously imagined by Raymond Williams as an 'escalator' that keeps going further into the past (*The Country*

[12] Compare this with Cronon's analysis of the term 'wilderness': 'Although wilderness may today seem to be just one environmental concern among many, it in fact serves as the foundation for a long list of other such concerns that on their face seem quite remote from it. That is why its influence is so pervasive and, potentially, so insidious' (73). Like Morton, he sees his term as normatising a range of other terms in the field.

and the City 9). Such a tendency progresses only in the sense that each successive generation envisages the date of the break with the rural past as being more and more recent, perpetually a generation or two before the present. But suppose we imagine that the rupture represented by Latour's idea of the modern, which he sees as being instituted at the beginning of the Enlightenment in the seventeenth century, is also made repeatedly in one form or another back through history, until civilisation's putative beginning 10–13 kya. This flips the idea of nostalgia to suggest that we have always been defining ourselves against nature, as in Soper's first interpretation of the term. It is therefore only from a human point of view, that is, within the lifetime of civilisation, that nature seems to have a 'substantial and permanent' order (Morton *EwN* 21); not when we consider the terrestrial changes that have taken place over the four or more billion years for which the earth has existed. Our sense of ourselves is implicated in the myth of order, because we project that sense on to the world. Behringer writes that 'The fable of climate balance was already disproved in the first IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] report, in 1990. Whether in the past million years, the past 12,000 years or the past thousand years, we find constant variation between cold and warm periods' (2). He goes on to emphasise culture's contingency on climate: 'In the perspective of cultural history the Holocene [beginning 10kya] really does constitute a unity, for its novel forms of human culture developed into the civilization that we know today from our own experience' (39).

If there are any grounds for envisaging a cyclical and harmonious nature, then it is simply because it is only in the relatively stable interglacial that we have enjoyed what Tim Flannery calls a 'long summer' (63) and have the leisure to reflect on the world that supports us. Robert Markley refers to this as 'Anthropogenic Time', because the contrasting, longer view is 'A time that transcends and beggars human experience' and yet which 'can be conceived only differentially, paradoxically, in its relation to phenomenological perceptions of time and experience' (8–9). To talk of natural cycles or natural stability is as self-confirmatory as it is to read environmental crisis in the texts of environmental crisis. Even to talk of crisis is to talk of a traditional conception of crisis: 'the idea of a normative climate', writes Martin McQuillan, is 'derived from the idea that a change in climatic conditions would constitute a crisis for the human race' (202). Lawrence Buell criticises the practice of reading crisis into a tradition in his chapter on apocalypse, writing 'The historicization of the eschatological trivializes it, in a sense'. Yet he subsequently observes: 'The concept of annihilative apocalypse itself is as old as Lucretius' (*Environmental* 298–9). This corresponds with McQuillan's notion that 'to identify an event as a crisis is always to ontologize it and submit it to the model of the crisis that would explain it and domesticate it', and 'The naming of a crisis in the present works to mask that history and to neutralize it, giving it form and therefore a program and calculability' (201). In the transition Frederick Buell describes *From Apocalypse to Way of Life*, he faces this problem, having to describe 'a more, not a less, sobering picture of environmental crisis-in-progress', asserting 'Environmental crisis is, in short, a process within which individual and

society today dwell; it has become part of the repertoire of normalities in reference to which people construct their daily lives' (35, 76).

Critically, this entails what Morton calls 'a rigorous and remorseless theoretical radicalism that opens our minds to where we are, about the fact that we're here' (*Thought* 104). To be satisfied even with thinking of it as a 'crisis' strains our understanding because, on the one hand, 'In giving the event of climate change a form and a certain calculability one has begun to neutralize the effects of its unknowable future [...] To name it as a crisis is to subject it to the temporality of "the crisis," namely that it will one day come to an end and a state of normativity will be restored' (McQuillan 201);[13] and on the other,

> The singularity of climate change as a crisis might be that it is not subject to the temporality of the crisis and that it might be a crisis without resolution and so demonstrate itself not to be a crisis at all but a constant state. In this sense crisis becomes a permanent condition or at least the resolution of this crisis is the construction of a new idea of the normative (202).

Still, 'climate change becomes part of the latest chapter in the history of the idea of crisis and continues to be appropriated by it and subsumed to the model it undermines' (202); hence its co-option by the various discourses that Hulme outlines.

Hulme suggests we are prone to 'a romantic ideology of climate [that] reads it as something fragile and precious, something needing to be "saved"' (151), and this in effect scales it down to become an entity to be managed, even if that duty of care is as onerous as protecting a threatened landscape or reversing the decline in an endangered species. We overreach ourselves by imagining that climate change can be handled and resolved in the manner of other crises. Hulme points out very early on 'Neither is climate change a problem waiting for a solution, any more than the clashes of political ideologies or the disputes between religious beliefs are' (xxviii), a comparison that shows how entangled it is in our lives as well as suggesting its quality as a Latourian hybrid. Bronislaw Szerszynski argues in 'The Post-Ecologist Condition' (2007) that it forces us to reconsider our entire conception of crisis:

> the solution to this crisis is not to be found in a simple restoration of political language's reference to a reality outside language [...] It was the cul-de-sac of modernity's 'correspondence' theory of truth – the idea that language and the world are separate, and that language can be judged by how it more or less corresponds to the world – that led to the crisis of representation in the first place (338).

Climate change evidences this crisis of representation, but that does not mean that it can be simply

[13] In this passage, McQuillan is working from Jacques Derrida's notion in 'Economies of the Crisis' that 'By determining [something] as a crisis, one tames it, domesticates it, neutralizes it—in short, one *economizes* it. One appropriates the Thing, the unthinkable becomes the unknown to be known, one begins to give it form, one begins to inform, master, calculate, program. One cancels out a future' (Derrida 71; author's italics). However, the novelty of climate change is again apparent in the way that it is not simply that the term 'crisis' fails to describe or allow the complexity of what is happening, but that the changing climate itself paradoxically materialises this failure because crisis becomes permanent condition.

re-conceptualised into non-existence. Our cultural construction of it has enabled it to have a material, global impact, the hidden tradition of greenhouse gas emissions now making its presence felt, as Beck suggests.

The particular difficulty with scaling the phenomena of climate change into human narrative is that we try to imagine them susceptible to instrumental management but neglect the processes through which they play out. This recalls Iovino's observation that 'an ontological vision based on the superiority of human agency over the nonhuman "world of things" becomes problematic' today (Iovino and Oppermann 457). The mechanistic understandings that underpin our interventions in nature are constitutively simplistic in that they disavow the role played by unintentional forces responding to human inputs to the ecosystem. For this reason, we could with Alaimo applaud texts that serve to 'cast mastery itself as a rather romantic and individualistic delusion, given […] the nexus of legal, economic, medical, and scientific forces that make it impossible to separate out a coherent "I" that could gain mastery over one's body or over nature' (51).

Alaimo's nexus is still more complicated if we factor in historical–material forces as well. There is no straightforwardly attributable, cause-and-effect relation between intention and climate change, because even if we cease emitting greenhouse gases immediately, 'we are committed to a warming of several degrees' by our previous emissions (McKibben 134). McKibben writes this more than two decades ago, and subsequent emissions mean that 'what is being done presently to the atmosphere promises to produce quite palpable effects during the lifetimes of today's children', in Frederick Buell's words (101). A further complication is that we are not having simply to take account of a delayed cumulative change, either, because the earth's atmosphere can respond at a much faster rate to our emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases than it has done. With increasing anthropogenic intervention, there is an increased likelihood of positive feedback cycles, whereby warmer conditions prompt greater concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, accelerating warming and so on. To offer one instance among many,[14] Frederick Buell notes that 'As the world warms, there is the possibility of vast releases of methane as the permafrost melts and methane is released from the mud of the continental shelves [...] Once feedback loops like the above cut in, global warming can suddenly and catastrophically increase' (103).

The possibility of passing the tipping points that might instigate such processes and occasion abrupt climate change 'promises to confound the system of accountability that hinges on the linear or proportional relationship between cause and effect' in Nigel Clark's words ('Volatile Worlds, Vulnerable Bodies' 43). Writing that also depends on both rational cause and effect and on anthropocentric scale will be confounded by these qualities. Its critical implications are outlined by Timothy Clark when he suggests climate change will necessitate our having 'to read and reread the

[14] Kolbert also mentions this in *Field Notes from a Catastrophe* (17), going on to refer to two more such vicious cycles: 'The more open water that's exposed [by ice melt], the more solar energy goes into heating the ocean' (31), and 'the acceleration of the Greenland ice sheet['s movement] suggests yet another feedback mechanism' (54).

same text through a series of increasingly broad spatial and temporal scales' ('Scale' 101). More importantly, there is no way of reconciling the views at each scale, of bringing local or national perspectives into harmony with the global, in the way critics such as Elder have sought to restore a mythic order or harmony, for instance. Climate change brings with it 'derangements of scale' ('Scale' 97).

The individual rational actor in this context, the experiencing self so central to first-wave accounts of nature, is powerless in a context where, Frederick Buell describes, 'People are not simply free to choose to stop affecting their environments as they do. Even as they try to act, they are shaped by a wide variety of societal, economic, cultural, and/or ideological structures larger than themselves' (150). The destabilising effect of this is attested to by Morton, who says that 'Pointing out the snow in your neighbourhood suddenly becomes a mystifying, fetishistic operation in an era of global warming. Something seemingly real and cold and wet is less real, and pointing to it is less realistic, than something we can't directly sense. […] Reality seems to have a hole in it' (*Thought* 116–17). In this context, the environmental commitment of Lawrence Buell and Bate is seen to be contained by the same politics that produces climate change. Buell's aesthetics of relinquishment can help us imagine beyond the body, but cannot help us acknowledge our situatedness by and within the forces his brother describes. Timothy Clark maintains that it is people's physical existence, their entanglement in systems of procreation, property and transport, that will be 'of more real consequence, however minuscule, than their political opinions ever will'; our intentionality is foxed by the 'scale effects' which 'have given human beings [collectively] the status of a geological force' ('Scale', 105). It changes our climate of reading.

Reading for climate change, reading from a changing climate

The critical implications of the environment's co-option into a political category of that name are spelled out by Szerszynski: 'despite over three decades of policy attention and civil society action, global, national and international indicators show little evidence of any fundamental shift towards more "sustainable" trajectories' (338). He suggests that although environmental groups have been successful in using 'the jarring juxtaposition of contradictory elements' – between corporate green rhetoric and practice, for instance – this has merely been 'a "corrective" irony [...] it positions the ironist as an outside observer of the irony on the moral high ground looking down, rather than implicated in it' (345, 347). The positions presupposed by such tactics are polar opposites, of moral agents acting on behalf of the environment and resisting the activities of corporate or political elites, much in the manner that second-wave ecocriticism aligns environmentalism with other social justice agendas. Szerszynski finds that 'Such a positing of the ethical actor seems quite inadequate' in the contemporary world (347–8).

The irony that Szerszynski identifies has already been variously discussed. Its socioeconomic dimension is described by Soper when she writes

> If we are all of us locked into systems of work, modes of consumption, and forms of transport which make our individual acts daily involuntary agents of pollution, waste and ozone deficiency [...] this is in part because so many continue to give their mandate to a mode of production geared first to the production of profit and only very secondarily to making good its negative by-products for nature and human welfare (267).

We are both the consumers and producers of environmental crisis, as Hiltner identifies (433). Ecocriticism is not always blind to such complexity: Murphy praises work that shows 'the degree to which common people attending to simple lives are almost inextricably enmeshed in the machine of commodity production, consumption, and environmental destruction' (187). Nevertheless, even accounts such as these resort to mobilising existing socio-political forms of critique, namely the analysis of 'systems of work, modes of consumption' or 'the machine of commodity production', to work outwards from the human into the environmental, rather than use our environmental relations to re-theorise our cultural position. Szerszynski complicates things by suggesting 'there are no separate groups of perpetrators and victims', as we might contrastingly have said about instances of social and economic injustice, however (348).

As environmentalists, our response to this situation should be one that accounts for the fact that at some point 'Irony became not just rhetorical *form* but philosophical *content*', as Szerszynski maintains (348; author's italics). Understanding this kind of irony means we have to do away with any stable notion of society in which corrective irony might operate – just as climate change, whether anthropogenic or not, dismantles long-held certainties about the permanence of our enabling environmental context. It is in this context of situational irony, brought about by crisis-in-progress, that we must abandon the mimetic paradigm proposed by Lawrence Buell. The state that Szerszynski identifies also undoes the ease with which we can accept the experience of the authorial self as the source of truth and political values. That question of trust is one central to the climate change debate, because culture depends on complex science for evidence of climate change, at odds with our personal experience, and Kerridge proposes that 'part of the business of ecocriticism is to define how that taking-on-trust can be done scrupulously' (5). The ironic disjunction between our personal experience and the phenomena investigated by science is operative across Timothy Clark's deranged scales. Hulme gives one instance when he reflects that 'the affective experience of an exceptionally cold summer's day may weaken people's reflective belief in the reality that the world is warming and that, rather than untoward cold, it is in fact the risk of increased heatwaves that needs to be guarded against' (200).

Textual reproduction of immediate experience serves to mislead us when reality has 'a hole in it' (Morton *Thought* 117), and Morton has already exploited this awareness creatively when parodying Buell's compositional–critical practice:

> As I write this, I am sitting on the seashore. The gentle sound of waves lapping against my deck

> chair coincides with the sound of my fingers typing away at the laptop. […] No—that was pure fiction, just a tease. As I write this, a western scrub jay is chattering outside my window, harmonizing with the quiet scratch of my pen on this piece of paper. […] That was also just fiction. What's really happening as I write this: a digital camera is resting silently on a copy of an anthology of Romantic poetry […] (*EwN* 29).

Morton's playfulness with place gestures at the possibilities inherent in creative response to the environment; while a text materially depends on the physical act of composition, it does not in this case matter which, if any, of Morton's scenarios is true. It is indicative rather than mimetic. Note, too, the way that his co-ordinates include those we might conventionally mark as "natural", "cultural" and "technological", enacting the Latourian hybridity that surrounds us and connects us to that which is not immediate. The uncertainties surrounding climate change require that we entertain a similar range of interpretative possibilities for each text, and it is this scope, rather than any given account, that will be crucial to climate-inflected criticism.

Phenomenologist David Wood extrapolates this point, complicating it rather than lampooning it as Morton does, to suggest everything that has to be represented by what stands before us. Fortuitously for the sake of comparison with Buell, Wood draws on the example of a seen tree:

> Suppose I look out the window—what do I see? A tree. There it is. It is there in front of me, as visible as I could want. [… But] the life of the tree, the living tree, the tree of which we glimpse only a limb here, a trunk there, or views from various angles, this temporally extended persisting, growing tree, is invisible (*The Step Back* 152).

This does more than Lawrence Buell does to offer '*some sense of the environment as a process rather than a constant or a given*' (*Environmental* 8; author's italics), by considering the tree not as an object fixed in time but an organism growing through time. It is Wood's contention that 'What phenomenology does' – and mine that what poetry can do, in a creative response to Wood's theory – 'is to activate and reactivate the complex articulations and relations of things, restoring through description, through dramatization, a participatory engagement (bodily, imaginative, etc.) with things' (153). This is more than simply elevating the world from the environmental unconscious as Buell would have us do, although that is part of it. It is paying attention to relations that take us beyond the immediate as well.

Latour highlights the difficulty of examining these relations: 'objects appear associable with one another and with social ties only *momentarily*' (*Reassembling* 80; author's italics). But like Buell and Wood, he reaffirms the role of the imagination in doing so: the fifth of his five methods of exposing agency in actor-network-theory is to use 'the resource of fiction[, which] can bring—through the use of counterfactual history, thought experiments, and "scientifiction"—the solid objects of today into the fluid states where their connections with humans may make sense' (82). This weighs in on the side of creative, literary engagement with climate change rather than mimetic, instrumental readings, in particular if we think of poetry as a self-conscious fiction, of the kind

Wallace Stevens imagines. Indeed, Latour maintains that 'sociologists have a lot to learn from artists' (82). I have already argued for the validity of literary criticism as a way of reading climate change, but it is also a way of writing it. Having established some basic criteria for reading (from) climate change, it is time to consider the writing of it.

Texts without tradition

The problems of using conventional modes as a literary way of approaching climate change can be illustrated by reading a text that adopts a nonfictional mode, exhibiting tendencies recognised in first- and second-wave ecocriticism. Paul Kingsnorth's *Orion Magazine* piece 'Confessions of a Recovering Environmentalist' (2012) is an account of the author's formative experiences of nature, then of environmentalism, and his increasing dissatisfaction with that movement. He takes a Thoreauvian response both to climate change and his environmentalist friends' advocacy of renewable energy, in particular wind turbines. The form of the piece rehearses Buell's and Bate's anecdotes of their first environmental stirrings, and also demonstrates a powerful and persuasive attachment to a version of nature comprising 'wild places and the other-than-human world'.

Kingsnorth is aware of the cultural mediation of this vision, inasmuch as he discusses the colonial practice of 'Forcing tribal people from their ancestral lands, which had been newly designated as national parks, for example, in order to create a fictional "untouched nature"'. This awareness gestures at second-wave ecocriticism and a white, Western hegemony asserting the value of a Eurocentric "Nature". However, Kingsnorth only employs this critique with historically and geographically remote situations, and is not prepared, reflexively, to examine how his argument is based on such a fiction. He celebrates 'The mountains and moors, the wild uplands' of Britain; but following his criticism of colonial practice, these landscapes too must come under question: given the extent of prehistoric forestation in Britain, how can we claim the moor and uplands are not, too, the product of human clearances?[15] Here, Kingsnorth indulges in something which Lawrence Buell is alive to in our experience of place, 'to fantasize that a pristine-looking landscape seen for the first time is so in fact' (*Writing* 68), a fallacy that fails to show an awareness of 'anthropogenic time'. This problematises Kingsnorth's sniffy remark that 'Most of us wouldn't even know where to find' the wild world. He supposes that it is uncomplicatedly there although most of us cannot be bothered to find it. However, his slight has another reading in the context of Szerszynski's state of general irony; we can't locate the wild world not because of our ignorance or laziness, but because it never existed in the state Kingsnorth imagines for it, free of human mediation.

He demonstrates similarly problematic doublethink about the agendas we bring to climate change. He rightly critiques the notion of sustainability as being informed by 'the expansive, colonizing, progressive human narrative' – the same 'confident belief in the human ability to control Nature' that Hulme characterises as 'constructing Babel' (351, 348). However, Kingsnorth

[15] More generally, Behringer observes 'In the Holocene *Homo sapiens sapiens* began to make massive incursions into nature, turning it into a cultural landscape' (39).

is unable to use such critiques reflexively and examine the irony of his absolutist position. He cites the arguments of his environmentalist friends – 'Didn't I know that climate change would do far more damage to upland landscapes than turbines?' – but rather than offer a reasoned answer to them or to the reader, his strategy is instead to mock his opponents by adopting their jargon: 'Their talk was of parts per million of carbon, peer-reviewed papers, sustainable technologies, renewable supergrids, green growth, and the fifteenth conference of the parties'. Certainly, the 'blinding obsession with carbon' he writes about is indicative of the attempt to instrumentalise and manage our atmosphere, but Kingsnorth does not consider that, for all the rhetoric of sustainability, it has had little effect on the actual state of the climate.[16] Rather than dispute turbines' necessity or effectiveness, and consider the wider context on which climate change demands we reflect, he emotes against their unpleasant presence in his immediate environment: 'the wild uplands, are to be staked out like vampires in the sun, their chests pierced with rows of five-hundred-foot wind turbines and associated access roads, masts, pylons, and wires'. This nimbyism only engages with the environment at the level of landscape, as cherished in first-wave ecocriticism.

Kingsnorth's own 'frustrated detachment' from conventional politics is the nub of the problem: he claims to be angry while simultaneously being at one remove from it, and in so doing he deploys a notion of Nature 'already composed, already totalized, already instituted to neutralize politics', as it does in Latour's analysis (*Politics* 3). This can be seen in Kingsnorth's reference to 'the world's wildest, most beautiful, and most untouched landscapes' – what does it mean for a landscape to be 'most untouched', when human presence created that landscape in the first place? In the absence of a reflexively critical quality, the narrative makes more sense as the memoir of an author who is falling out of love with society than as a cogent argument against the politics of 'sustainability'; the titular 'Confessions' governs the tone and mode. 'It took a while before I started to notice what was happening,' Kingsnorth writes, 'but when I did it was all around me. The ecocentrism—in simple language, the love of place, the humility, the sense of belonging, the *feelings*—was absent from most of the "environmentalist" talk I heard around me' (author's italics). The snobbery tacit in the earlier remark about 'not knowing where to find' the wild returns in his denouncement of 'environmentalists with no attachment to any actual environment', as though a commitment to the earth at the global level could always be trumped by topophilia. Kingsnorth is not only unreflexive about his notion of nature, he is prescriptive. This represents an extreme creative enactment of the principles of first-wave ecocriticism.

While Kingsnorth is prepared to qualify his caricatures – 'I generalize, of course', he recognises, and he admits 'I don't have any answers' – the rhetorical strategy he employs means he is forever turning away, leaving him with nowhere else to go than the notion of Nature to which he clings at the last. 'I am leaving on a pilgrimage to find what I left behind in the jungles and by the cold

[16] Certainly not compared to, say, the effect of the post-2007 recession on carbon emissions; the UK's independent Committee on Climate Change, for instance, reports that 'greenhouse gas emissions fell 8.6% from 2008 to 2009 with reductions of 9.7% in CO_2 and 1.9% in non-CO_2 emissions. But the reduction was largely due to the recession and other exogenous factors' (*Meeting Carbon Budgets* 3).

campfires and in the parts of my head and my heart that I have been skirting around because I have been busy fragmenting the world in order to save it; busy believing it is mine to save.' This is not to problematise the concept of salvation, as Hulme does, but to convey the author's sulky sense of dispossession. Kingsnorth thus persists with his faith in untouched Nature, the unanswered question of climate change's effect on the landscape hanging ominously over it. The figure of the Romantic exceptionalist, always turning away from the crowd, is poorly matched to the problem, and his retreat into a landscape that isn't what he imagines it to be is a retreat into solipsism.

In contrast, writing that resists reduction to a particular genre, that is not straightforwardly critical or creative, fictional or nonfictional, gives itself the opportunity to rethink rather than reinforce conventional reader–writer relations. Sheila Nickerson's 'Earth on Fire', from *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 5.1 (1998), is classified in the journal as an 'essay' (rather than a 'scholarly article'), and comprises a broader mixture of tones and modes than Kingsnorth's polemic 'Confessions'. The essay opens with the combative assertion that 'The debate on global warming is no longer a debate' (67), but Nickerson then moves associatively through a range of reports of crimes against women, nuclear proliferation, deforestation, disease epidemics, authorial anecdotes and poetic speculation, which across her twenty pages stack up paratactically to implicate a common cause. Her section on Venus, for instance, traces that planet's mythical and astronomical associations, before suggesting 'We are drawn to her, Earth's sibling, but she is only a cauldron, and perhaps a beacon: a family portrait of what we might become with age, an inferno trapped by carbon dioxide' (73). Nickerson's prose transgresses categories such as science, folklore and current affairs to show how all are invoked by the notion of an 'Earth on Fire'.

Sometimes, certainly, Nickerson reads as polemical – 'We are strangling earth' – and other times the poetry runs away with her and she is plain unscientific – 'the galaxies within our universe reach out and the universes beyond our universe' (85, 82). That these tones of voice pull in different directions does away with the problematic assertion of autobiographical authenticity and personal authority that comes through in Kingsnorth's account, however. It also abandons the journalistic structure of Kolbert's *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*, which is divided into sections on 'Nature' and 'Man', and which attributes and personalises each of its scientific interviewees as in the following example: 'Donald Perovich has studied sea ice for thirty years […] He is a tall man with black hair, very black eyebrows, and an earnest manner', Kolbert writes (29). Nickerson instead offers a disorienting and abrupt survey of opinion:

> Some say the heating of the oceans will lead to greater evaporation and snowfall, precipitating a new ice age; the heavy snowfall on Mount Washington in the spring of 1997, they say, is clear proof. Some say the 11,500 year cycle is up; the poles are shifting. The enormous increase in tornadoes and freakish winds is a sign. Some cite the calendar of the ancient Mayans and say their study of sunspots and solar magnetism clearly points to global catastrophe (68).

This offers a concise yet powerful example of the diversity of discourses attached to climate change

– meteorological, geological and mythological – that Hulme has analysed.

'Earth on Fire' also demonstrates the difficulties of assuming the nature we experience offers a stable truth. The wilderness into which Kingsnorth rhetorically retreats is shown by climate change to be profoundly contingent: 'the famous Portage Glacier is in catastrophic retreat,' Nickerson writes, 'a stage glaciologists had not expected it to reach for another twenty years. Once Alaska's most visited site, it now cannot be seen from the visitor center built in 1979 for optimal viewing' (67). If the forces of nature do not conform to lay experience as at Portage Glacier, they can nevertheless be managed to construct a simulacrum of Nature. Clearcuts – a process in which 'hillsides were stripped and wood fires burned' –

> for the most part, are made off the route of the cruise ships that bring half a million tourists to Southeast Alaska each summer. Those tourists, full of dreams of the last American wilderness, travel the Inside Passage only a hillside away from revelation. Carefully protected, they go home for the most part with their dreams intact (81).

Nickerson's expression of the misleading quality of appearance occurs in a resonant metaphorical context in 'Earth on Fire', where language cannot be simply denotative. She interpolates poetic modes into the essay's documentary and anecdotal discourses. A phrase such as 'The weird weather of punishment has intensified', despite a rather high-handed moralism in its deployment of 'punishment', demonstrates a poetic that connects different scales. The vehicle and tenor of the metaphor 'weather', operative together, associate global and personal catastrophe by making anti-women violence subject not to individual agency but to prevailing fronts – not excusing the perpetrators but implicating wider systems in it, a meteorology of misogyny. Weather is not simply the freakish instantiation of global warming, however, as it is problematically for Bate; it is coloured by the context of 'Earth on Fire' to suggest something more troubling about the treatment of women. Nickerson's associative flit through social and environmental problems defies us to separate and solve them, because they are characterised by a Latourian hybridity.

Through such association Nickerson also moves beyond the screen of trees seen by tourists in the Alaskan wilderness, to assert: 'The tree, the crucifix, the stake, the pyre, and the match are one' (87); she takes the living wood of the tree and fashions it into earthly generators of fire, so that the various linguistic manifestations of the one substance are broken down into biological, symbolic and instrumental connotations, only for their identity to be re-assimilated. As an example of creative writing, it finds in favour of David Wood's tension between observed tree and life-cycle, rather than being satisfied by a Buellean glance from the window.[17] 'If my tree is dying,' Wood writes, 'I notice. But the earth slowly dying is not obvious, not something I can see at a glance out of my window. […] The glance is ripe for education' (167).

[17] In Chapter 5, I will go on to show that such a diachronic vision of wood fulfils a similar role in David Jones's *Anathemata*. We can also note that Nickerson's phrase seems to owe something to Stevens's 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird': 'A man and a woman / Are one. / A man and a woman and a blackbird / Are one' (IV; *Collected Poetry & Prose* 75).

Wood also points out that 'Time […] is often invisible', and Nickerson is sensitive to the different contexts in which time works. She is alive to the possibility that environmentalism can be co-opted by nostalgia, as it is in Kingsnorth, and distinguishes the two: 'It is not just a question of fireflies remembered with nostalgia from childhood: those wonderful nights of chasing and bottling stardust. Life forms are disappearing rapidly, along with their ecosystems' (74). This means that when she adopts the localism of first-wave ecocriticism, she sets it in the essay's global context, and the coincidence of anthropogenic time with climatic time is understood: 'Every time I go to look at the Mendenhall Glacier near my home in Juneau, I am amazed to see how far it has retreated since I moved into its neighborhood a quarter of a century ago' (67).

Nickerson's polemic is, it is true, prone to its first and second-wave fallacies: 'earth is no longer capable of maintaining equilibrium. Like the woman in India who spends much of her day carrying firewood and water, earth is exhausted, beyond her carrying capacity. She can no longer keep her balance' (70). In spite of her disclaimers, this presents a nostalgia for nature in harmony, and attempts to make an easy equivalence between the oppression of women and the destruction of the planet: 'If we do not value our women—and we do not—we cannot value earth; and if not earth, then not women' (85). Nevertheless, these remarks take their place amid the abrupt associations and disjunctions of the essay as a whole, which formally fail to reconcile – indeed, formally choose to resist reconciliation between – the essay's differing scales. 'Earth on Fire' demonstrates the derangements that climate change entails, as Timothy Clark describes.

A mode for writing climate change

Through this introductory survey of ecocriticism and the writing of climate change, I would argue that modes premised on integrity, reconciliation and the harmony of nature are not suited to articulating and negotiating the cultural complexities of climate change. Climate change cannot be annexed to historical nature writing, neither to the canonical literature of nature, as the first wave attempted; while the second wave's more open alignment with social justice agendas still runs the risk of considering only the human effects of climate change, not its novel qualities and causal complexities. Where Kingsnorth's response is ultimately satisfied with the turn into imagined wilderness rather than a confrontation with the problem, he is indicative of proto-Romantic readings of climate change; but Nickerson's essay shows the potential for more fragmentary, abrupt and associative writing – which, as I have intimated, is suggestive of the forms of modernism that I will go on to examine in my next chapter. I propose that, largely free from typical associations with nature, modernism does not become a tradition to which to annexe the writing of climate change, but an adaptable, developing model that does not perpetuate nostalgic dreams. Neither does it forgo the chance to see nature's complexities and its extensive implications for the state and future of our planet.

Chapter 2

Rereading Green Studies: From modernism to climate criticism

The contention that modernist modes of writing are better equipped for the literary articulation of climate change has some, albeit limited, precedent. Richard Kerridge suggests some of the techniques that modernism makes available to contemporary climate change literature, with

> the proposition that contemporary neo-Modernist writing has specific equipment for reaching into this subject, as writing that keeps to the personal voice and the conventionally poetic has not [...] neo-Modernism, and the cut-up method in particular, can bring into poetic space kinds of discourse not normally available to the personal lyric ('Climate Change and Contemporary Modernist Poetry' 133).

This touches on one of the key distinctions which I will be addressing in this chapter: between formal response to a perceived fragmentation of modern experience, and a 'personal lyric' premised on stable conceptions of selfhood. Poet and ecologist Mario Petrucci elaborates on the necessity for a different mode to articulate the contemporary global environment, arguing that if our 'processes of perception and representation [...] are marred and distorted by being trammelled into certain stock ways of expressing oneself and understanding oneself,' then we run the risk of missing 'all the things one has to understand, know, experiment with (along with those we *can't* know, or at best merely glimpse) in order to be completely human, to be fully related to everything that happens to us' (personal interview; emphasis his). He continues: 'after modernism, we've got very considerable resources, templates and exemplars of how to work more fluidly with language, to reach the deeper truths of how it functions and expresses our relationship with ourselves, our relationship with creation and perception'.

Lawrence Buell argues that, when we are seeking 'a thoroughgoing redefinition of the self in environmental terms',

> It might seem that modernism had made such a redefinition easy. For the[se] adjustments in persona, prosody, and image […] have certainly to a large extent been enabled by such interdependent modernist cultural revolutions as the breakdown of trust in an autonomous self, the deterioration of faith in a symbolically significant universe, and a rejection of bound poetic forms. Under such circumstances, one might suppose that nothing would come easier to a late twentieth-century consciousness than imagining human selves as unstable constellations of matter occupying one among innumerable niches in an interactive biota (*Environmental* 167).

Yet Buell concludes 'such is not the case'. Despite the theoretical scope afforded to literature after the modernists, he points out, not without justification, that 'It is [still] hard not to care more about individuals than about people, hard not to care more about people than about the natural environment' (167). For this reason he suggests that our perceptions of nature will inevitably involve the human, whether as an experiencing subject or a personified nature, if they are going to

interest us. Buell is not wrong in identifying the difficulty of modernist forms, but in turning away from them, and their possibilities, he aligns himself with the return to realistic or lyric conceptions of the self in later twentieth-century writing, whose conventions pose problems for Andrew Motion's engagement with climate change in 'The Sorcerer's Mirror'. This resistance to non-realist aesthetics, however, leads Buell and other ecocritics to assert particular versions of environmentality, as I analysed in my first chapter, that are not able to accommodate or articulate the complexity of climate change.

My objective in this chapter, therefore, is to elaborate on Kerridge's and Petrucci's observations to offer an alternative, modernist reading of environment in general, and climate in particular. I will identify and analyse the tendencies and techniques of modernist aesthetics, particularly the high modernism exemplified by T. S. Eliot, and the early twentieth-century concerns in response to which these aesthetics emerged. Through time, the concerns of the modernists mutate into those that are the subject of critical attention today in relation to climate change, and I will assess the correspondence between the two contexts. Using environmental philosophy and political ecology to read modernist verse, I will also use the poetry reflexively to read the critical discourse and inform the formulation of climate change criticism. This I will deploy in the development of a twenty-first-century poetics of climate change, considering the suitability of modernist modes for expressing and engaging with the complexity of its phenomena. My readings of particular work in the modernist tradition, beginning with T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in this chapter and moving on to consider Wallace Stevens, Basil Bunting and David Jones in those that follow, all aim to develop a new understanding of the poetry itself and my own critical apparatus, at the same time as exploring a poetics for climate change.

Ecocritical modernism?

Working in a field largely deriving its topics of study from nonfiction nature writing and notions of the Romantic or Transcendental, ecocritics have rarely attempted to address canonical modernist work in the past. As John Holmes points out, 'Where Pound and Williams have dominated criticism of modernist poetry and science, supported by Yeats, Eliot, Moore and Wallace Stevens, the ecocritical tradition has largely ignored these poets in favour of a counter-tradition headed by Hardy, Jeffers and Frost' ('Introduction', *Science in Modern Poetry* 6–7). Those ecocritics who have addressed canonical modernism have tended to do so without troubling their critical approaches. By way of example, we might consider Charlotte Zoë Walker's 'The Book "Laid Upon the Landscape": Virginia Woolf and Nature' (2001) and Carol H. Cantrell's '"The Locus of Compossibility": Virginia Woolf, Modernism, and Place' (1998, rep. 2003). Their having Woolf in common as a subject is fortuitous, but also suggests they seek texts already amenable to their ecofeminist positions, rather than less tractable work that would challenge and develop their critique.

Walker is blatant in her assertion that 'it is not inappropriate to consider her [Woolf] an ecofeminist foremother' (144). This attempts to assimilate the novelist to the critic's cause rather than to investigate that presumed relation critically, as, in a similar fashion, Bryson or Elder capitalise on nature poetry and nature writing traditions respectively (see Chapter 1, pp.20–1 of this thesis). Walker is concerned with how 'Woolf revives in a modernist context an old trope, that of the natural world as a text to be read' (143). In so doing, she offers some incidentally pertinent observations, arguing that 'from a postmodern perspective, we might say that she expresses the intertextuality of nature and literature' (143), or remarking that, in an essay entitled 'Thunder at Wembley', 'Woolf juxtaposes against nature the management, architecture, and economics of this exhibit honouring British imperialism' (155).[1] But with her uninterrogated deployment of sweeping terms such as 'modernist', 'postmodern' and 'intertextuality' in the first of these quotations, Walker shows she is fulfilling her planned co-option of Woolf to an uncomplicated ecocritical agenda, rather than building these observations into a cogent analysis. She is simply alerting us to the previously unrecognised ecocritical relevance of modernism as a fresh 'archive', to borrow Lawrence Buell's terms from *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (130).

In 'The Locus of Compossibility', Cantrell is more careful to preface her ecocritical account of *The Voyage Out* and *Between the Acts* with a discussion of the theoretical problems this analysis poses. She suggests that modernism 'would seem to be hostile territory for a student of literature and the natural environment', because its aesthetics have 'taught us to privilege the formal and the abstract over the referential', while its exponents 'are famously expatriates, wanderers, exiles [...] rather than [rooted] in local and national traditions' (33). Even in this analysis of apparent opposition, we can see why modernist poetics might be a useful resource, precisely because, as I have argued, climate change goes beyond the field of the 'referential', and requires the globally networked analysis we can glean from 'expatriates, wanderers, exiles', rather than those defined by close or rooted relations to particular places. Modernism's very oppositional quality is valuable, as anthropogenic climate change is likewise resistant to received ideas of nature.

Cantrell argues that modernists were specifically reflecting on similar changes in the understanding of nature in the early twentieth century. They 'had experienced a revolutionary change in "the given," including the "the given" we call nature'. She goes on, 'it seemed not only possible but necessary to create or invent new ways of seeing, new ways of registering the perceptual shock of change, new ways of being readers and viewers, and to respond with a new urgency to questions about the consequences of human creativity' (33–4). These remarks remain largely within the first wave of ecocriticism by taking the topic of (an unspecified) change in the natural world, and tentatively reading that as a subset of the wider changes with which modernist writers were engaged. Tellingly, in a culturally oriented account of modernism's concerns, Tim Armstrong provides a long list of changes in the early twentieth century that includes, *inter alia*, 'the

[1] These correspond with discussions in my first chapter on treating nature as a text and managerial approaches to landscape, respectively (pp.30 & 41).

enfranchisement of women; the Russian Revolution; the re-arrangement of Europe and the establishment of the League of Nations. […] Einstein's demolition of the Newtonian world-view; the aeroplane, cinema, television; the *Titanic*', as well as the First World War (*Modernism* 1). The absence of anything we might typically categorise as "environmental" or "natural" on this list, notwithstanding the implications of Einstein's work, suggests that nature, particularly in its early ecocritical characterisation, is at most a peripheral concern for canonical modernism, and that a historical reading of it will be strained by this.

On the other hand, Cantrell claims that

> Key elements of modernism—the attack on dualistic thinking, the foregrounding of backgrounds, the exploration of the relation of language to alterity, and the self-referential nature of symbol-making—are vital areas of inquiry for those of us who are interested in the relationship between literature and the natural environment (34).

With these remarks, she surveys aspects of modernist aesthetics, rather than themes, with ecocritical potential. Nonetheless, her case depends on modernism and ecocriticism as they are already perceived, rather than exploring productive tensions between the two fields. If 'modernist texts' aim at 'jarring' readers 'out of routine habits of perception, and specifically out of the habit of thinking of place as "landscape," "out there," "objective," and thus without relation to the self' (37), they retread the work of Buell and Bate in striving to provoke our environmental consciousness. They might instead pick up on the questions modernism poses with regard to the presence of the human within, and its relation to, nature.

Cantrell doubly situates her argument in the modernist moment and among its contemporary resonances by contrasting the rhetoric of intended meaning with unintended consequence. She maintains that

> Particularly in this [i.e. the twentieth] century, we have learned to enforce meaning and unity on large parts of the world by turning them into abstract spaces [...] Yet even an extreme rationalist relationship with an environment is a relationship, though it is not seen as such, and it proceeds from and leads to further relationships, many of them unintended. [...] Modern[ist] writers saw that the disastrous world they came to inhabit was the result of choices made at very deep levels of creativity—including the level of perception—and their work gives us the chance to explore some of the unexamined ways in which we are making and unmaking the world at every moment (39–40).

Elaborating on the juxtaposition of nature and management that Walker reads in 'Thunder at Wembley', Cantrell uses terms such as 'unintended' and 'unexamined', opposing them to 'enforce[d] meaning and unity', that recall Beck's sociology of risk. As the analysis of material ecocriticism such as Alaimo, Iovino and Oppermann showed in my first chapter, the nonhuman processes of the world resist, with agency but without intentionality, the attempt at mastery also identified by Cantrell. Like Latour, modernist writers also recognise the inherent contradictions of

modernity, and present counter-narratives to those of progress and development.

This relates to my ongoing argument that modernity's shadow realm of complexity is implicated in the emergence of anthropogenic climate change and many other phenomena dubbed "environmental crisis", because by simplifying the world to a singular chain of cause and effect we neglect the multiple impacts our actions have on it. Modernist formal innovation often seeks to express or enact these contradictions and paradoxes, and thus remains valuable, if not essential, to the present moment. To summarise the strategies gestured at by Walker and Cantrell, modernist aesthetics include ironies of representation and a resistance to received ideas of "Nature"; transnational or global scales; hybridisation of natural change with cultural and social (anthropogenic) change and the breakdown of dualisms; a new problematics of environmental selfhood; language's vexed attempt to engage with the world and, reflexively, with its own materialism; and the expression of a troublesome environmental unconscious, which has been unsuccessfully repressed by narratives of civilised progress. I now turn to these strategies, as discussed by the critics of modernism, and expand on the relevance of each to ecocritical articulation of climate change.

The modes of modernism

Modernist irony: Language-slip and climates of reading

As I have discussed, the manifestation of anthropogenic climate change represents a tradition that shadows progress or development – Cantrell's recognition of 'meaning and unity' being 'enforced' on the world – after the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution in particular. I cannot, and do not, argue that modernist writers topicalise climate change per se, in the way Cantrell strains to suggest that they do with nature as part and parcel of wider concerns. Rather, I propose that modernist poetics offers ways of perceiving, and conceiving of, change. As such I should emphasise that, while I am interested in the ecological history of modernism, this is secondary in the thesis to a consideration of the resources of modernist poetics in articulating an ongoing, dynamic relationship with the world. This relationship necessarily alters the context in which we now read modernist works.

In *The Early T. S. Eliot and Western Philosophy* (1999), M. A. R. Habib sees a recognition of changing contexts in T. S. Eliot's understanding that

> The poet individuates by deploying the materiality of language, treating words as sharing the same individual material status as other objects in the world rather than as universal meanings or atemporal signs of objects. As such, a poetic construct will possess duration as well as unpredictability (56).

Eliot himself asserts in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919) that, when 'the new work arrives' in the tradition, 'the relations, proportions, values of each work of art towards the whole are readjusted' (38). The crucial difference in historical terms between Eliot's formulation and my

use of it is that Eliot is concerned with the projection of an 'ideal order' that 'the really new' work maintains, whereas my first chapter indicated that similar ideas of order in relation to nature are profoundly contingent on the current interglacial episode. Climate change's presence as a novel product of human activity radically disrupts any sense of order we project.

Recognising that a gap between imposed order and emergent disorder is always already there and widens over time, we are also in a position to critique the persistent belief in Nature in Transcendental or Romantic terms. Lawrence Buell suggests that many in the West still conceive of a sublime, peaceful Nature because of 'the inertial effect of the time lag between material conditions and cultural adjustment' (*Environmental* 14). But in the work of the modernists, this discrepancy is central. For instance, Peter Nicholls sees a range of modernisms emerging from a tradition he describes as follows:

> In rejecting 'nature', Baudelaire and his avant-garde contemporaries were not simply rejecting a poetic taste for trees and rivers; more fundamentally, they were denying the connection between poetic vision and social transformation which had underpinned the political optimism of an earlier Romanticism (*Modernisms* 10).

If 'Nature, once more, is the prime deceiver' (Nicholls 22) for the modernists, it not only fails to underwrite Romantic humanism or transcendent unity, but also cannot guarantee accounts of itself as ordered or beneficent. The gap between language and phenomenon is where irony operates. Nicholls has already pointed out that 'The quarrel with mimesis [...] is often taken to define a pivotal moment of modernism's inception' (13). It is this recognition of the slide between reference and referent that underscores the value of modernist poetics to this thesis, because the climate in which we perceive and conceive of nature does not necessarily correspond to those perceptions and conceptions.

This kind of irony makes language typical of human activity. While it purports to express one thing, it can effect another, and the potential for disjunction is greater according to the scale over which it operates, as per Timothy Clark's 'derangement'. It is in poetry's self-consciousness about the discrepancy between semantics and situation that we find a mode in which to address the ironies climate change presents, particularly when, as in modernism, the preoccupation with relational irony is centralised. Paradoxically, the realisation by a writer that the text is askew from the world at the point of composition informs the act of composition, and renders the text sensitive to and interrogative of the context, the reading climate, in which it is received. The destabilisation of context through irony is what the text then communicates, rather than a definitive "message".

Modernist globalism: Twentieth-century scale

Modernist writing also articulates an awareness of these differentials in the ways that it offers access to scales larger than the human and the local. In *Modernism, Narrative and Humanism* (2002), Paul

Sheehan points out the significance of this issue when he maintains that 'Scale prepares the ground for anthropocentrism' (6), and he goes on to assert that narrative 'is *human-shaped* […] to maintain the crucial human/inhuman distinction' (9; author's italics). This is an indictment of traditional narrative forms for their complicity in perpetuating the dualism between humanity and nature, sidelining the presence and agency of nonhuman forces with an anthropocentric world view.

Sheehan continues 'It is this very process, of course, that comes under increasing strain with modernist reworking' (13), remarking that 'The modernist novel liberates narrative's latent performative power by introducing formal irregularities […] Brokendown narrative is insidiously disquieting in ways that troubling story-content cannot match' (15–16). Recalling Cantrell's observation that one of the qualities of modernist writing is 'the attack on dualistic thinking' (34), Sheehan's identification of brokendown structure begins to open the human to the influence of nonhuman forces, a creative anticipation of material ecocriticism's project of tracing entangled agencies. Because modernism asks us to examine our modes as much as our subjects of representation, those modes can make nonhuman agency more 'disquieting' than if it were presented as the 'troubling content' contained by mimetic prose accounts, such as the nonfiction nature writing advocated by Lawrence Buell. Both Sheehan and Cantrell are concerned with novelistic form, and while I do not think it unreasonable to extend their observations about formal or categorical breakdown to modernist verse in the vein of *The Waste Land*, we should bear in mind that what is being broken down in the poem is not straightforwardly 'narrative' on Sheehan's terms, but structures that connote the self, nationhood and society. Eliot's work, for example, juxtaposes a range of voices from across the world and throughout human history.

To understand what is innovative about modernist approaches to the global, I shall briefly review how nineteenth-century writers articulated awareness of the increasing relevance of the world beyond the local. Romantic poetry presents a connection between human and natural histories, as Bate has demonstrated. In 'Seen Through the Loopholes', David Simpson follows Bate in this regard by suggesting that in the pre-Romantic and Romantic era 'Britain's local situation suddenly came to seem dependent on faraway events, in weather as in war. [...] Weather, like war and disease, was no respecter of national borders; distant war might come closer to home' (14). Simpson's likening of weather to 'war and disease' suggests that nature could be drawn upon to provide figures for historical events, yet no causal relationship is drawn between cultural practice and meteorological phenomena. Even with disease, where social and environmental causes might overlap, such causation is not explicated in Simpson's simile. In fact, it is only by the stability of reference, to whatever we understand by 'weather', 'war' or 'disease', that Simpson can draw such parallels, which mutually illuminate distinct phenomena. Timothy Morton's analysis of Wordsworth's technique in *The Ecological Thought* deploys a similar approach, but gives it a subtle twist. '[W]ar is environmental—it seeps into everything' he notes (*Thought* 49), just as war has the reach of weather in Simpson's analysis. But Morton drives home his point with a subsequent

question: 'Isn't this why ecological art must learn from the art of wartime? In a global environmental emergency, there is no safe place. Ordinary things [...] become pregnant with larger significance' (49). Morton takes Simpson's insight and flips it, such that what becomes important to ecocriticism is not Wordsworth's reflections on nature but his recognition of the way transnational forces affect 'ordinary' life. Morton then makes this recognition pertain technically to 'global environmental emergency'. To paraphrase Sheehan, it is a breakdown of scale rather than troubling (lyric) content that remains most disquieting here.

One response to this recognition of the global in our surroundings is to expand the poetic horizon to represent the scale that comes to bear on individuals in the nineteenth century. Literary geographer Hsuan L. Hsu characterises American Transcendentalist poetics in this way: 'The calling of the democratic poet, Whitman suggests, is scale enlargement – the assimilation of older or smaller civilizations into an emerging community of planetary proportions', which the poet attempts through formal innovation because, 'like steam power, tunnels, bridges, railroads, and telegraph cables, Whitman's paratactic style aspires to encircle and fuse together different territories' (*Geography and the Production of Space in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* 135, 138). Hsu elaborates:

> Whitman's poetry attempts to bridge the distance between individuals and the expansive spaces that condition their daily lives. Yet, instead of considering how we cognitively grasp our relationships across an emerging global network of technologies, migrations and capital circulation, Whitman is primarily concerned with how we affectively experience those relationships in the first place. How can poetry represent an abstract geographical totality – his vision of a democratized globe – as a compelling site of identification? How can it mediate between individual experiences of embodiment and suprasensory global networks of causation? Can a poet's idiosyncratic idiom unify not just the nation but the entire world? (138)

In these terms, Hsu seems to characterise nineteenth-century concerns as very similar to the climate problematics that engage me. Yet there are crucial differences. Whitman considers the way we 'affectively experience' global forces, which retains a human-scaled focus, and these, 'technologies, migrations and capital circulation,' are limited to the sphere of the cultural, rather than blurring the boundary between human and nonhuman agency. Moreover, the question of what 'a poet's idiosyncratic idiom' can 'unify' suggests that such a unity might be possible, or at least worthy the attempt. Hsu contends that 'Whitman developed a poetics intended to instil emotional identification at the global scale […] paradoxically, by deploying feelings of despair and disconnection to convey a desire for global interconnectedness' (138). He continues that these are 'feelings that are at once subjective and sharable' (142), making the poet's expression of experience typical of the reader's, in the lyric tradition.

Rather than work through doubt in the aspiration towards unity as Whitman does, modernism seems in contrast almost constitutively to depend on reproducing and exacerbating that doubt, doing what Cantrell identified when she talked of 'jarring' readers 'out of routine habits of perception' (37). In this, modernism follows a different strain of nineteenth-century literature,

which Hsu sees exemplified in the work of Henry James: 'Instead of stressing how otherness is contained or repressed', the author 'highlight[s] how otherness appears in the first place, simultaneously monstrous and intimate. [… D]istortions of narrative perspective juxtapose individualist models of subjectivity with expansive, shared spaces' (93). To see how this conjunction of the monstrous and intimate, the individualist and the expansive, come into conjunction, we can consider how two of the key questions of Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1917; *The Complete Poems and Plays* 13–17) are both formulated in the same way: 'Do I dare / Disturb the universe?' and 'Do I dare to eat a peach?' (14, 16). The inability to keep these scales apart is characteristic of individual responses to climate change, where on a broader scale 'a person registers […] less in terms of familiar social coordinates […] than as a physical entity, representing so much consumption of resources and expenditure of waste (not the personality, but the "footprint")' in Timothy Clark's words ('Scale' 105). Eliot's poetics recognises the peculiar juxtapositions that modernity, in the form of globalisation, brings about, and rather than responding to these with the expansive soul of Whitman, he does so through Prufrock's ontological uncertainty. The decision to eat a peach may very well 'disturb the universe' when read today, if we factor in the water, soil and pesticides used to grow it and the carbon emissions associated with its shipment from the USA, for instance. This is a relation that we might describe in Clark's terms as 'absurd but intelligible' ('Scale' 97).

There is, then, an intensification and a bringing in to proximity of the remote in modernism, rather than an attempt, however despairing, to embrace it. Wordsworth is witness to the bereavement that an overseas war causes back home, reaching across the Channel like a weather front in Simpson's terms. War's impact is not just domesticated but internalised, however, in the figure of Septimus Smith in *Mrs Dalloway*, who is typical in facing this intensification of immediate experience because he is 'permanently crushed beneath an avalanche of sensation' (Sheehan 129).[2] Increasing uncertainty of scale brings the previously remote influence into immediate proximity and makes connections between or across different levels look increasingly plausible. It shatters not only national boundaries but those of the self. But while war occasions the most intense reaction, even the smallest of incidents risks deranging our sense of scale in modernity. In 'The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words' (1942), Wallace Stevens writes: 'We are close together in every way. We lie in bed and listen to a broadcast from Cairo, and so on. There is no distance. We are intimate with people we have never seen and, unhappily, they are intimate with us' (*Collected Poetry & Prose* 653). Stevens's 'unhappily' colours the rest of his remark with a tone of wary terror – the sanctum of the bedroom is penetrated by news from Egypt and there can no longer be any secure privacy or peace.

There is an analogy here with our present inability to process an 'avalanche' of evidence for

[2] The distance between war and domestic experience also troubled Siegfried Sassoon, who in 'Blighters' deploys the image of 'a Tank come down the stalls, / Lurching to rag-time tunes' (*The War Poems* 68, lines 5–6) to suggest that it would take such proximity for the British population to be fully conscious of what was taking place on the continent. But notice that Sassoon's poem achieves its effect through imagery rather than interiority, through troubling content rather than brokendown structure, even though the 'Lurching to rag-time tunes' itself suggests a poor match between subject and style.

climate change. John Lanchester writes:

> I don't think I can be the only person who finds in myself a strong degree of psychological resistance to the whole subject of climate change. I just don't want to think about it. […] Global warming is even harder to ignore [than the nuclear threat was], not so much because it is increasingly omnipresent in the media but because the evidence for it is starting to be manifest in daily life ('Warmer, Warmer' 3).[3]

The crucial distinction between Lanchester and Septimus Smith is that the latter has internalised his wartime experiences as shell shock, whereas climate change, perceived solely as a problem that surrounds us rather than occupying our inner life, is one to which we might offer 'psychological resistance'. What strategies does modernist poetics offer to resist that resistance, to prevent the closure of the self?

Modernist identity: The unsustainable self

Patrick D. Murphy formulates the problem thus: 'the binary antonyms of self and other are fundamentally insufficient to represent the range of relational distinctions among entities existing in the world' (96). Stacey Alaimo is more urgent when she stacks up the opposing forces that shape our contemporary sense of self: 'Humanism, capitalist individualism, transcendent religions, and utilitarian conceptions of nature have labored to deny the rather biophysical, yet also commonsensical[,] realization that we are permeable, emergent beings, reliant upon the others within and outside our porous borders' (*Bodily* 156). Our paradigm must thus move on from these conceptions, and show that Lawrence Buell's abortive attempt at 'imagining human selves as unstable constellations of matter occupying one among innumerable niches in an interactive biota' (*Environmental* 167) is not only worthwhile but essential to a poetics of climate change.

Modernism was already grappling with a related identity crisis a century ago. Sanford Schwartz suggests that the recognition by nineteenth-century philosophy that 'there are as many "essences" as there are points of view through which to order experience' (*The Matrix of Modernism* 18) is an important influence on modernist aesthetics, with the effect that 'Prufrock' 'may be so constructed that we apprehend the persona neither as a subject nor as an object but as a half-object' (197). This contrasts with Whitman's Romantic attempt to extend his lyric embrace around the world. The uncertain status of personhood in modernism corresponds to Latour's conception of 'quasi-objects', hybrids of objective and subjective entities: 'Quasi-objects are much more social, much more fabricated, much more collective than the "hard" parts of nature, but they are in no way the arbitrary receptacles of a full-fledged society' (*WHNBM* 55), he declares.

While Latour's analysis is occasioned by, among other things, conditions of environmental uncertainty – 'The ozone hole is too social and too narrated to be truly natural', he comments for instance (6) – Alaimo builds on his work with an explicitly ecocritical agenda, recasting the idea of

[3] I acknowledge Kerridge ('Climate Change' 131) for reminding me of the pertinence of Lanchester's remark.

the 'quasi-object' as the idea of 'trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world' (2). She comments that, in relation to the effects of environmental hazards on the human body, 'trans-corporeal subjects must […] relinquish mastery as they find themselves inextricably part of the flux and flow of the world that others would presume to master' (17). While they did not treat topically of such hazards, modernist writers also sought strategies for negotiating between the poles of 'flux and flow' and 'mastery' that Alaimo identifies are characteristic of our present moment.

Scholars of the modernist self, which is in search of its identity without the aid of traditional scale as Sheehan and Schwartz have noted, also suggest that it is partly constituted by the threat perceived in external experience. For Nicholls, the 'modernist aesthetic' of Eliot and Pound was designed to provide 'outlines and borders' with which the self can 'protect [itself] against the "chaos" of subjectivity' (192). Maud Ellmann uses similar terms, so 'the subject defines the limits of his body through the violent expulsion of its own excess' (*The Poetics of Impersonality* 94). But by moving the discussion from the interior self to the physical body, she invokes biological process, implicitly setting the individual in its environment. Alaimo then situates an observation about the self like Ellmann's in a fuller environmental context, writing, 'Forgetting that bodily waste must go somewhere allows us to imagine ourselves as rarefied rational beings distinct from nature's muck and muddle' (*Bodily* 8). But Ellmann is nevertheless alive to the erosion of distinction between self and environment when she suggests 'The body and the city melt together' in Eliot, 'no longer themselves but not yet other' (99). This represents another continuity across or transgression of boundaries of scale, but also enacts Alaimo's 'trans-corporeality'. The environment is neither anthropomorphised nor other, but present through and beyond the semi-permeable membrane of the self. The borders that Nicholls reads in the 'modernist aesthetic', then, do not connote an authoritative self but the struggle to establish one by resisting increasing social pressures.

By revealing the tensions and contradictions in the self, the disjunctions of modernism are a powerful way of grappling with issues fundamental to ecocritique, resisting the ease of both lyric polemic – "we are victims" – and lament – "we are perpetrators". Prufrock could typify the figure of the wailing environmentalist, then, disempowered by his own knowledge as Lanchester is. Prufrock is both seeing subject and seen object when he says 'I have known the eyes already, known them all — / The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,' and this double bind is the cause of his inaction: 'when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin, / When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall, / Then how should I begin […]?' (Eliot *Complete* 14),[4] a question that recurs in the circular motion of hesitation some ten lines later. In Frank Lentricchia's words, by this 'refusal to act – where like Prufrock we counsel ourselves into paralysis […] – we sin against community directly because we deny that we exist together, that we work upon each other' (*Modernist Quartet* 46).

[4] Incidentally, the formulation of the question on this occasion, 'how should I begin / To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?' (14–15), makes smoking typical of the persona's habits, itself a mutual pollution of body and local environment and a trans-corporeal transgression of the supposed frontiers of the self.

Prufrock thus 'inhabits' what Schwartz calls 'the modern inferno where mere knowledge of one's condition does nothing to relieve it. The persona as perceiving subject is totally estranged from his own external actions' (201). It is this tension that a modernist ecocriticism should find a way of redeploying productively.

The self's implication in the world also reflects a breakdown in the world's presumed order. As Armstrong puts it,

> Identity can only be formed from a struggle, and what emerges from that struggle is contradictory and unstable, since it believes it cannot be both 'true to itself', its immutable identity, and at one with the constantly changing world. The result of this unresolved contradiction is that the subject identifies with the contingent and changeable – with modernity – and projects the unchangeable onto a 'beyond' – which can never be achieved (*Modernism* 9).

Sheehan's understanding of the modernist novel elaborates how such altered conceptions of the nonhuman world pollute the idea of human self and agency: 'The stability of individual experience was dependent upon the stability of its world' (123), and so he finds in Virginia Woolf's novels 'unrelenting demonstrations of instability, lack of fixity, and metamorphic change […] dissolution of many of the traditional distinctions between human and nonhuman (animal and plant) existence' (127). Septimus Smith is thus representative of a modernity where it is impossible to evade our concerns, just as Szerszynski affords no remote, unaffected spot in which the ironist can stand ('Post-Ecologist' 347; see Chapter 1, p.43 of this thesis). Or, Morton writes, 'We start by thinking we can "save" something called "the world" "over there", but end up realizing that we ourselves are implicated' (*EwN* 187).

Modernist fragmentation: Hybridity and hesitation

With the transgression of traditional boundaries of scale, self and perspective, modernist techniques create inevitable tensions within a work. Writers of the period attempt to find ways to elucidate these connections and tensions, and their approaches are correspondingly useful in establishing the relationship between human agency and climate change. Reflecting on the relationship between self and the world, Nicholls finds that Wallace 'Stevens regards the continuity between them as guaranteed by the imagination', suggesting the poet's 'objective is to find in poetry some sort of equilibrium between these interacting pressures' (214). The exercising of imagination in this process is not an abstract matter, because as David Abram has shown it is central to connection between different perspectives (see Chapter 1, p.24 of this thesis). It enables us as readers to make those intellectual leaps between the different scales I propose to be necessary to properly comprehend the environment in crisis. Indeed Sheila Nickerson's 'Earth on Fire', also discussed in my previous chapter (pp.48–50), employs such a technique. Modernist poetry is stylistically, technically configured to deal with just such relations, articulating them and the problematic context in which they occur. As Peter Howarth points out, 'the experience of actually reading a lot of modernist

poetry is more like an immersion, where there is no longer a clear distance between what you are seeing and the position you are invited to see it from' (*The Cambridge Introduction to Modernist Poetry* 5).

Nicholls describes the emergence of modernism in relation to the environment, but rather than interpreting place and situation as grounding, as Buell, Elder or Bate do, he regards the encroaching urban environment of modernity as a nexus or vortex of destabilising forces. '[T]he rapidly expanding metropolis of the new era appeared increasingly unintelligible and contradictory', Nicholls argues, and offers a choice of responses: 'Writers could either retreat from it into pastoral fantasy [...] or they could plunge into the urban chaos' (16–17). Nicholls constructs that decision baldly: as I have discussed, a nineteenth-century writer such as Whitman attempts to respond to the metropolis with a Romantic breadth of spirit that celebrates diversity rather than 'plunging into chaos' per se. But it is in the recognition of the 'contradictory' forces that modernism distinguishes itself. Nicholls regards 'an irony buried in the very frame of things' (22), and it is this recognition that must come to bear in the writing of climate change. How can Whitman's aside that 'I am large, I contain multitudes' in 'Song of Myself' (*The Complete Poems* 123) make sense in a context where, across Timothy Clark's deranged scales, those multitudes contain forces that could hamper or prevent the generosity that impels the poet's sentiment? Even Whitman's acknowledgement 'Very well then I contradict myself' still depends on the certain tone of an individual voice.

Whitman's irony is in the voice, whereas for the modernists it is 'buried in the very frame of things' on Nicholls's analysis. This compares with Szerszynski's observation that irony has ceased to be rhetorical device and has instead become philosophical mode, where 'there are no separate groups of perpetrators and victims', and 'unlike conventional situational irony, there is no distanced observer, aloof from the folly and blindness they perceive being played out in front of them' ('Post-Ecologist' 348). Szerszynski writes that such irony 'finds expression in the very *form* of the modern novel, with its exploration of the multiple, incommensurable points of view that constitute any human situation' (340; author's italics). It is his goal 'that environmentalist practice should acknowledge the debt it owes to aesthetic modernism, and more wholeheartedly align itself with that cultural current'. Given that this would 'value and proliferate "impure" and vernacular mixings of nature and culture, new shared meanings and practices, new ways of dwelling with non-humans' (350–51), manifesting the quasi-objects to which Latour attests, we can extend Szerszynski's diagnosis beyond 'the modern novel' to think of it as descriptive of modernist literature more generally. Eliot's poems, for example, mix different kinds of discourse – *inter alia* literary, mythological, meteorological – and will provide different perspectives on the relation between the self-consciously human sphere and the forces at Soper's second order of nature that come to bear on it. Or, to adopt Alaimo's terms, Eliot's poem inhabits 'trans-corporeal space, in which the human body can never be disentangled from the material world, a world of biological creatures, ecosystems, and xenobiotic, humanly made substances' (*Bodily* 115).

Modernist poetry is characterised by formal hesitations and discontinuities. Howarth remarks:

'Without syntax to restrict the fragments' meaning to their immediate context [...] they can now connect to each other in multiple and unexpected ways' (6). This offers a technique for reading the peculiar connectivities that awareness of global climate change brings. Individual actions occur in an ironic, often indeterminable relation with the environmental context 'implicating seemingly trivial or small actions with enormous stakes while intellectual boundaries and lines of demarcation fold in upon each other' in the words of Timothy Clark ('Scale' 98). Howarth's readings emphasise that 'the banalities of ordinary material are given artistic charge by being poetically framed by structures in which no item or sound is ever subordinated into mere detail' (25); in the present context, I suggest that it is the emergence of climate change that offers this charge to our 'seemingly trivial or small actions', and modernist modes present a means of attending to such detail. Anthony Mellors's account of *Late Modernist Poetics* (2005) describes the attempt to make sense of this tension between scales by looking to the possibility of an organising myth that operates in modernist verse:

> Myth always remains at the horizon of meaning, the point at which historical facts *should* cohere. But this will to coherence is at odds with poetry that gets its energy from the symbolic irresolution of violently contrasting elements. [...] Whatever its symbolic origins, private or public, its *objective* condition is to remain fragmentary, unstable and unresolved; energy derives from the act of reading (the reader's desire to piece together fragments) as much as from the paratactic nature of the text itself – otherwise the poem would be nothing more than a message (33; author's italics).

Mellors's analysis places us as readers in the position of trying to reconcile text with myth 'at the horizon of meaning'. In terms of climate change, we are in the habit of isolating what Clark calls our 'seemingly trivial or small actions' – but in the relational context suggested by modernist poetics, we must ask whether we can invoke "Nature", in the transcendent form I outlined in my first chapter, as an organising myth, or whether those actions, with 'the cumulative impact of their insignificance' ('Scale' 97), debunk the possibility of that myth.

Mellors pursues this point in a discussion of Pound's *Cantos*, writing that 'The lack of coherence at the exoteric level leads to the expectation that the text must cohere in another, esoteric way'. He concludes that because 'finally Pound himself could not claim with any confidence that his major work coheres[, this] shows the effect of authority to be a mirage' (67). The text's status as patterned or chaotic, coherent or fragmented is thus indeterminate. It is only settled at each reading by the reader's capacity to impose, or have faith in an author's imposition of, unity. Armstrong sees the relationship in economic terms as an interplay between coteries and those they ostracise, where 'the tantalizing dual status of the modernist text' is 'explicable if one has the key; resistant and even empty' if one does not (60). In addition to emphasising the context of reading rather than the authority of the poet as determinative of meaning, these formulations can also describe the relationship between the nature we experience in person, as per Soper's third definition, and our interpretation of it. Is our experience testament to forces sublimely other to humanity, as in her initial, philosophical definition of nature, or is it the result of biophysical processes, to which all

entities and systems on the planet are subject? There is tension between transcendence on one hand and contingency on the other. Considering modernists' response to this tension, Nicholls contends that 'the sense of the "fleeting" and "contingent" is perhaps the definitive mark of the early grasp of the modern' (6). However, his choice of terms, 'definitive mark' and 'grasp', suggests that the tension persists and is inherent in the attempt to stabilise such contingency in texts. The way that modernist poetics is able to enact this indeterminacy, and remain contingent on our climate of reading, will be seen in my analysis of *The Waste Land* that follows, and in particular through consideration of whether or not the poem evidences order, disorder, or some other quality of organisation.

Modernist time: The presence of the past

Modernist works remain contingent on a changing context by internalising the possibility of their relationship with the future, and in so doing also present a distinctive sense of time. Armstrong writes that 'the *dynamization* of temporality is one of the defining features of modernism: past, present and future exist in a relationship of crisis' (*Modernism* 9; author's italics). For example, reading Eliot's 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales' (1920; *Complete* 56–7), Lentricchia argues that the poem exhibits an 'understanding [of] the present as an expression of the past, not so much diminished as it is luridly continuous, gross realist texture undergirded by mythic narrative. Allusion is the acknowledgement of the presence of the past; allusion says cultures are haunted' (261). The poem describes its titular figure as 'Apeneck Sweeney' before moving further away from humans' primate heritage by associating him with 'zebra' and 'giraffe'. A similar movement can be seen in the transition from 'The silent man in mocha brown' to 'The silent vertebrate in brown' in the fifth and sixth stanzas, rendering this figure doubly inarticulate by referring to him only in terms of his biological subphylum. The poem eschews the notion that human evolution is congruent with the progress of civilisation: 'hothouse grapes', cultivated and grown by human ingenuity where they would not grow naturally, are eaten with the 'murderous paws' of a woman likened to a beast.

The different temporal modes of evolution and civilisation superimposed by Eliot are comparable to the discrepant scales of time invoked by climate change. While the development of life and shifts in the climate have not necessarily occurred at the same rate or on the same scale over the course of the earth's existence, to think of either we cannot be content with reducing time to individual experience. Human evolution requires us to think of ourselves as the product of millions of years of change, while anthropogenic climate change requires us to entertain the idea that two hundred years of industrial tradition, intensifying the activity of perhaps a dozen previous millennia, could have a cumulative and sudden effect within the next generation or two. Evolutionary and climatic change will coincide at that point, because the effects of human activity across what is, geologically speaking, a very short span of time will persist for many millennia and be largely responsible for a sixth planetary extinction event. Frederick Buell writes: 'what human

society, at present, is extinguishing at so unprecedentedly dizzying a rate can be repaired only in time frames at least several times longer than the evolutionary span of the human species' (107). We are poorly equipped to think about such changes if we only consider immediate or intentional effects. While we should acknowledge that Eliot, 'in his cultural pessimism; in his depiction of race and "recessive" types like Sweeney' was drawing on his 'expos[ure] to eugenics in his Harvard lectures and in his reviewing' (Armstrong *Modernism* 75), we can still acknowledge that his hybridising of evolutionary time with the present moment produces distortions that are satirical because of their derangement of temporal scales, and that this is an effect consonant with a poetics of climate change.

Paradoxically, this awareness of discrepant timeframes makes Eliot's poem a better reading of human entanglement in natural process than contemporary writing that explicitly engages with climate change as a crisis of the present moment, such as 'The Sorcerer's Mirror'. A modernist poetics of climate change offers the possibility of being more charged for being unaware of, or oblique to, this context. Serenella Iovino points out that 'The assertion that matter is filled with agency is what the new materialisms oppose to *a vision of agency as connected with intentionality and therefore to human (or divine) intelligence*' (Iovino and Oppermann 453; my italics). In other words, an intention to write about "the environment" is not the only criterion for environmental writing. That intention itself will have unintended effects or interpretations outside the topic, while writing that does not intend to can nonetheless play into the field of the environmental. Writing before climate change is recognised, modernists' intentionality is not freighted with the ideological baggage of "climate change" as we today understand it, and their insight into human–environmental relations exposes tendencies, processes and relations in a world warming up to be ours. This approach capitalises on the way Cantrell identifies in modernist 'work […] the chance to explore some of the unexamined ways in which we are making and unmaking the world at every moment' (40). The generative openness of modernist aesthetics can articulate the uncertainty of a world in which human activity has divergent effects at the personal, cultural, socio-political, economic and global ecological scales.

The abstraction of water: The changing climate of *The Waste Land*

T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922; *Complete* 59–80) juxtaposes fragmented agencies and places the cultural in the context of the natural. As such, I suggest it can be read as an exemplar of the kinds of associations we need to reveal if we are going to comprehend the scale of anthropogenic climate change. As Latour remarks in *Politics of Nature*, 'it will […] be necessary to *represent* the associations of humans and nonhumans through an explicit procedure' (*Politics* 41; author's italics). I do not mean to propose that reading poetry supplants the scientific data, modelling and research that Latour refers to, but that it stages and allows us to consider the phenomena in ways that science and politics cannot. Indeed, Alaimo writes: 'If poetry and science are both "languages," […]

they struggle to make the invisible visible, the unknown known, the material sensible' (*Bodily* 53). Patricia Waugh frames a discussion of the increasingly complex scientific context of the modernist era in *Beyond Mind and Matter* in similar terms, by suggesting that 'relations between formal abstraction and particularity emerged as central to the various experiments, verbal and visual, which characterised many of the arts during the early decades of the last century' (6).

In addressing this relation, *The Waste Land* pertains in the era of climate change, because it helps disclose the hybrid cultural and material agency entangled in the phenomena's emergence. The abstract forces which civilisation brings to bear come into presence in the poem through strategies of fragmentation and juxtaposition. For instance, *The Waste Land* attends to both humanity and its emissions: world and waste are compounded in its very title. Ellmann argues that 'Waste is what a culture casts away in order to determine what is not itself' (93–4), and Eliot's juxtaposition of the two discloses that relation. Crucially, the poem is unable to sustain the boundaries between culture and what is not culture, offering us the traces of relationships between humanity and its environment and complicating the impact that each has on the other. The re-presencing of 'waste' with 'land' exemplifies Heather Sullivan's 'dirt theory', which identifies how 'Modernity's […] efforts to conceal "dirt" in its many forms have encouraged urban residents to believe that dirty nature is something far away and disconnected from themselves and their bodies' ('Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism' 526). We can thus recontextualise Eliot's offer to 'show you fear in a handful of dust' (line 30) in light of the horror provoked by bodily contact with dirt. That dirt represents both the wilderness and the dead, the spatially and temporally excluded and repressed.

Contemporary climate change manifests the history of industrial waste – carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases – that resists its own categorisation as waste to have a determinative impact on the terrestrial environment. *The Waste Land* offers a literary analogue of this process, showing how problematic is the attempt to account for everything according to (intentional) human agency, because what culture discards remains stubbornly present and influential in the poem. It is a demonstration *avant la lettre* of Ulrich Beck's conception of 'reflexive modernization', characterised by 'more uncontrollable […] global interrelations in a world that is increasingly merging into a single planetary unit' (121). The poem helps us to negotiate this complexity because it exposes networks of agency that shape the world, and the tensions between them. It serves as an example of the 'very elaborate […] artificial situations' that Latour says 'have to be devised to reveal [human] actions and performations' in their full context (*Reassembling the Social* 79). But Latour contrasts the exposure of human agency with that of 'objects, [which] no matter how important, efficient, central, or necessary they may be, tend to recede into the background very fast, interrupting the stream of data' (79–80). He therefore proposes five criteria for an actor-network-theory that would account for objects' activity and agency (80–2). These criteria can be productively used to read *The Waste Land*, because they show that a poem most often considered in terms of its cultural significance nevertheless contains the traces of nonhuman agency in its "interrupted data". Latour's

methodological apparatus also overlaps with the modernist concerns that I have outlined above, namely, irony, scale, identity, fragmentation and time.

At different levels, *The Waste Land* demonstrates or reflects all five criteria for actor-network-theory. Specifically, the poem is (stylistically) innovative; it is remote from us in time (it predates the scientific hypothesis of anthropogenic climate change and popular understanding of global warming by some decades) but open to unintended consequences; it is in a state of breakdown (when compared with conventional narrative and verse structures); it interprets its moment of creation (each allusion is simultaneously a particular reading of that allusion); and it exhibits a kind of 'scientifiction' in its use of mythology. For Latour, these criteria are separate points of access to objects' agency rather than cumulative, but each can be used to leverage a different interpretation of the poem. Elemental earth, air, fire and water are predominant in these interpretations, with changes in the state of water being particularly telling. Eliot allows us to trace these elemental connections and agency by foregrounding them in the poem rather than letting them 'recede into the background' (*Reassembling* 80). Working towards a network of interpretations, I shall consider each of Latour's criteria in turn, drawing my subheadings from his categories but breaking down the order he gives them.

'Rendered ignorant by distance': The 'dull roots' of environmental collapse

Latour's criterion is that objects studied by archaeologists or ethnologists 'stop being taken for granted when they are approached by users rendered ignorant and clumsy by *distance*' (*Reassembling* 80; author's italics) to shed light on the society that produced them. In this respect, I argue that *The Waste Land* as an object is a take on a world distant in time, in the midst of industrial and cultural processes that will create today's climate. The poem cannot try to press a case for or against anthropogenic global warming, topical 'climate change', because it is ignorant of it. Yet the process of reading the poem in relation to climate change can be supported by Latour's politics of nature: he maintains that 'quasi objects […] can no longer be detached from the unexpected consequences they may trigger in the very long run, very far away, in an incommensurable world' (*Politics* 24).

Processes of industrialisation and urbanisation were well in hand by the time *The Waste Land* was written, and in the sense that our contemporary climate represents the 'unexpected consequences' of these, we can identify in Eliot's era some trace of civilisation's ecological impact. The poem is typical of the modernist moment that first exposed these traces, in a way very different to writing that is contemporaneous with the industrial revolution (as seen for example in the transition from Whitman's cosmopolitan Romanticism to the alienation of Septimus Smith and J. Alfred Prufrock). Precisely because it was written before the identification of anthropogenic climate change, *The Waste Land* can offer a chronologically remote and disinterested cultural perspective on the phenomena. We now read *The Waste Land* in a context of climate change, but what might it mean to read climate change in the context of *The Waste Land*?

Robert Pogue Harrison originally made the connection I describe between Eliot and environmental crisis in *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (1992): 'The wasteland grows within and without and with no essential distinction between them, so much so that we might now say that a poem like *The Waste Land* is in some ways a harbinger of the greenhouse effect' (149). Harrison's phrasing seems to conflate the 'greenhouse effect' – now more broadly considered as the mechanism by which the atmosphere has retained heat throughout the earth's existence – with human-induced global warming. Nevertheless, his observation offers the opportunity to turn discussion of the poem away from consideration of its imagery of 'Rock and no water' and 'cracked earth' (lines 332, 369) solely in terms of cultural or emotional sterility. Indeed, by problematising our conceptions of a defined Nature, climate change necessarily demands that we refrain from closing down our readings, especially if doing so excludes their environmental implications.

It is therefore worth considering, even as an aside, one possible meteorological influence on *The Waste Land*, because it hints at the poem's critically neglected environmentality. Eliot began to compose the poem in 1921, a year that saw a 'summer of drought – no rain fell for six months' as Peter Ackroyd attests in his 1985 biography of Eliot (113). While not volcanic in its impact on the poem, this parallels Jonathan Bate's uncovering of the relation between Tambora's eruption and Byron's composition of 'Darkness' (see Chapter 1, p.25 of this thesis). As a biographer, it is in Ackroyd's interest to make such connections between text and environment, 'Just as the fog of "Prufrock" is the St Louis fog' of Eliot's childhood (Ackroyd 39). But I would argue that the value of these details lies in their suggestion of environments that came to bear on composition, without being reducible *to* those environments. In the case of *The Waste Land*, Eliot takes a particular, contemporary instance of drought, which he identifies as 'a fine hot rainless spring' in *The Dial*'s 'London Letter' of July 1921 (*The Annotated Waste Land* 183), and abstracts it into the mythologising mechanism of his poem.

The poet's personal experience thus becomes associated with the poem's geographically remote deserts, as Caroline Patey signals when she considers Eliot's reading in Australian anthropology: 'Ayers Rock and the salt bed of Lake Eyre […] offer the stony and dusty mountains of *The Waste Land* an unexpected objective correlative'. It also recalls a wilderness distant in time, Patey continues, if we consider 'the supposedly biblical nature of the desert to which readers could be misled by the [poem's] notes' ('Whose Tradition?' 168). By recognising the symbolic resonance with which Eliot contextualises his personal experience, we share Marjorie Perloff's observation that 'Eliot's Unreal City is, first and foremost, a very real fog-bound London', while being 'under no illusion that such explication constitutes criticism' by itself (*The Poetics of Indeterminacy* 11, 13). Whether or not, 'despite its temporal and spatial dislocations and its collage form, a perfectly coherent symbolic structure' is in evidence in *The Waste Land* as Perloff then argues (13) is a question I shall return to. Suffice it to say that the transglobal associations of the landscape in the poem mean that the allusions are never just personal and lyric, but resonant across times and scales

in a way that a doggedly realist account is less likely to achieve.[5] The poem is open to associative readings, not a like-for-like representation.

At a technical level, Denis Donoghue posits that Eliot's poems seek 'a language for his feelings at the earliest stage of their emergence', a language for 'unofficial impulses active at a stage long before their official reception as thoughts, emotions, ideas' (*Words Alone* 134–5). By seeking access to the unconscious, the poem's language is open to an 'official reception' of its inchoate associations with each new reading. I am not claiming, then, that Eliot was in the practice of writing encoded prophecies about environmental collapse, but that *The Waste Land* attests to a disjunction between urban civilisation and the hinterland of the environment from which it separates itself. Eliot would thus provide a creative counterpart to Latour's theorisation in *Politics of Nature*, because the disjunction the poet identifies has developed into our present ecological emergency.

This is achieved in *The Waste Land* by an attention to what civilisation attempts to disregard as externalities; so we see that 'The river sweats / Oil and tar' (lines 267–8), the side effects of its history of shipping, which Lentricchia reads as 'a startling figure of the perversions of nature, human and otherwise' (269). Perhaps more pertinently, the poem's being written in a time when pollution was more apparent in the urban environments of the western world than it is now also figures the processes of industrial emission that a century of legislation, what Sullivan calls 'Modernity's many anti-dirt campaigns' (526), have rendered less visible, if no less potent. To register waste's presence in this way gives it 'not just a symbolic place but also [entails] a conscious and concrete embrace of dirt, which cannot be avoided since we live and breathe it daily' (Sullivan 517), making it an objective correlative for the invisible, insensible emission of greenhouse gases. My adoption of Eliot's term 'objective correlative' from his essay on *Hamlet* is indicative of the way I am using modernist poetics here, reversing its vector. Rather than being 'a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked' ('Hamlet' 48; author's italics), the correlative can instead point away from human interiority to all that cannot 'terminate in sensory experience' but which is still dependent on our imaginative engagement to understand it: that is, anthropogenic environmental change.

Eliot's queasy personification of the river is further 'recognition not just that everything is interconnected but that humans are the very stuff of the material, emergent world', in Alaimo's words (*Bodily* 20). More specifically, we might consider Iovino's reading of the marine environment in this light: 'Material ecocriticism considers the ocean as a porous body, a congealing of agencies and representations, of capital flows, life forms, "quasiobjects," and […] of geopolitical forces, such as migration fluxes, or environmental phenomena, such as pollution and climate changes' (Iovino and Oppermann 457). In Eliot's lines, we can see the physical presence of pollution – 'oil and tar' – 'congealing' in the river, the 'capital flows' and 'geopolitical forces' that have delivered these

[5] Although such resonances are characteristic of literary texts, this quality is amplified by what I have earlier identified is modernism's self-reflexive textuality and fictionality (see pp.55–6 of this thesis).

substances there, and the 'porous body' as which they are represented. The poem's attention to what would normally be excluded as undesirable products of human activity also manifests Morton's concept of 'dark ecology', in that 'it refuses to digest the object into an ideal form' (*EwN* 195). It also exemplifies David Wood's idea of a contemporary 'end of externality': 'externality is no longer available […] Nature is becoming part of history in the sense that we are making irreversible impacts on the very processes that sustain its course' (173). Poetic example antedates environmental philosophy.

'Accidents, breakdowns, and strikes': Confusing the idea of order

Asking whether or how far Eliot was sensitive to environmental rather than cultural crisis is in this case irrelevant because, taking Wood's line that we cannot assert a simple division between internal and external, cultural sterility is necessarily implicated in environmental crisis. The latter is the extension of the former, as Harrison claims. With this transgression of boundaries, the objects of the poem are as symbolic as they are referential, breaking down the sense of order that humans would impose on them. For instance, Donoghue reads Eliot's 'A rat crept softly through the vegetation' (line 187) as having 'only as much to do with animal life as is required to incite a certain feeling in the presumed speaker at that moment' (122–3). Donoghue explains that he is 'not maintaining that the word "rat" […] has ceased to observe all relation to a rodent, but that the word is a double agent; it accepts the friction between reality and language but it does not give full allegiance to either party' (129–30). This resembles Schwartz's reading of Prufrock as somewhere between subject and object, a 'half-object' (197), or Perloff's reading of the poet's London as both real and symbolic.

An added consideration with the rat is the close association between rodent and human in the urban landscape. Donoghue claims 'For Eliot […] there is no question of a Wordsworthian liaison between man and nature' (125) at this moment; but there is a relation nonetheless, because the rat inhabits humanity's shadow. In his study of the animal's cultural significance *Rat* (2006), Jonathan Burt comments that 'The rat cannot be separated from human achievement, yet it also stands as a symptom of human destructiveness. […] the rat adapts with humans to the ever more complicated structures and networks that are produced by modernization' (15). The commensality of human and rat is aggravated by the prospect of more widespread species destruction, depletion of natural habitats and climate change. In the essay 'Planet of Weeds', the 'near-term future' foreseen by author David Quammen is one

> in which Earth's landscape is threadbare, leached of diversity, heavy with humans and "enriched" in weedy species. That's an ugly vision, but I find it vivid. Wildlife will consist of the pigeons and the coyotes and the white-tails, the black rats (*Rattus rattus*) and the brown rats (*Rattus norvegicus*) and a few other species of worldly rodent (67).

Frederick Buell comments sardonically on Quammen's lines that, 'To put it another way, the world

will be, according to Quammen, more completely us and our pets and our pests' (108). As climate change exacerbates and renders explicit our implication in processes beyond our control, it will also multiply the visibility of animals we desire to keep separate and remote. Recurring as a figure in the work of the other poets I consider, the rat becomes a visible reminder of the hybridity of artificial and natural environments.

The ambivalence between bodily referent and textual reference that Donoghue reads in the rat can be read under Latour's criterion of 'accidents, breakdowns and strikes', when he observes 'how quickly objects flip-flop their mode of existence' (*Reassembling* 81). This holds true on a wider scale in *The Waste Land* when it comes to the status of water as an image. Howarth suggests that one of the poem's 'chains of association' is 'Water as [symbolising] both death and life' (69). For instance, in 'A Game of Chess', Eliot juxtaposes 'The hot water at ten. / And if it rains, a closed car at four' (lines 135–6), making an immediate distinction between water as a domestic utility and as precipitation. While we utilise one kind of water for washing, we also cut ourselves off from the weather. Water is a multifaceted substance rather than (simply) a domestic commodity: Eliot's juxtaposition highlights this irony, providing an instance of modernist refusal to limit an image to one signification alone. Hovering between immediate presence and a gesture at the abstract, the poem's cityscape, its deserts, its rat and its water remind us that our lifeworlds form part of larger causal chains than obtain in our immediate experience, in the same fashion that eating a peach may disturb the universe and a bunch of grapes entails a hothouse.

Elder responds to the presence of water in *The Waste Land* in one of his more telling remarks on Eliot. The critic considers the way that the poem makes elemental significance abut human solipsism: "'The wind under the door" [line 118] is a disturbing, threatening reminder of the world outside. Just as the man and woman in this section of the poem cannot communicate with each other, their response to the natural elements is one of isolation and avoidance: "And if it rains, a closed car at four'" (Elder 15, citing *Waste* line 135). In the longer context of the poem, dryness is also what will characterise the wasteland revealed in 'What the Thunder Said' where there 'is no water but only rock / Rock and no water and the sandy road' (lines 331–2). Yet the 'closed car' reminds us that it is also civilised practice to keep ourselves dry in public, and the culminating wasteland is ultimately the result of that effort. By striving to keep itself dry, humanity is implicated in fostering the arid state that concludes the poem.

This is a connection with which we as a civilisation have found it hard to come to terms. For instance, Rebecca Solnit assesses the intensive engineering endeavours that have been devised to keep US cities such as Phoenix and Las Vegas in running water, to the vast detriment of aquifers and watercourses. She also sources Eliot – in this case, the second line of 'The Dry Salvages' (*Complete* 184) – as a way of thinking about humanity's relationship with its environment. She writes 'T. S. Eliot's Mississippi was a "strong brown god": the Colorado River is more like a ruddy writhing serpent. Or was, since the snake has now been chopped into segments by dams' ('Dry

Lands' 31). Nevertheless, she writes: 'The river, in its climate-change-driven decline, will […] make a mockery of the two great dams and the reservoirs that were once signs of triumph over it and over nature'. Hydrological cycles, once they are disrupted by humans, represent a nonhuman agency that defeats human instrumentality. Indeed, Lawrence Buell cautions 'that the history of human modification of environment should not be taken as implying a comprehensive, irreversible transformation of "nature" into artifact' (*Writing* 5). In *The Waste Land*, the separation of city and exhausted landscape is made structurally rather than infrastructurally, but the poem's juxtaposition of different locations provides a context rich with potential associations and tensions. In allowing the image or terminology of water to run throughout, Eliot puts water-consuming civilisation in the closer context of a parched, mythical landscape than everyday urban experience would recognise. Conversely, water itself cannot be kept free of human influence, as the 'oil and tar' sweated by the river indicate. The 'breakdowns' caused by civilisation make obvious the water cycle that it disrupts.

Discontinuities expose the trace of connections, Latour maintains, and in *The Waste Land* they also draw us into the construction of meaning, engaging us with bigger, more abstract ideas at a scale beyond the human. The onus on us to follow the flows of water through the poem recalls Armstrong's and Mellors's analyses of meaning as a function of readerly insight in modernist work. Discussing Pound's *Cantos*, Mellors elaborates this construction of meaning in a way just as applicable to *The Waste Land*: 'elisions of the text demand completion at every turn, cowing readers into accepting the poverty of their intellectual and imaginative grasp of the poem as a "whole"' (67). Allowing that nearly a century of criticism on *The Waste Land* enables today's readers to approach it in a more democratic position of informedness, and not to be as 'cowed' as they might have been in 1922, it also gives them retrospective scope to make contemporary connections in the text's disjunctions. The twenty-first-century reading context is broader than critical explication of the text, however, and includes our awareness of climate change. So when Eliot's fragmented text prompts us to consider what order might be behind it, our faith in a Nature that could unify it is reduced by our cognisance of the changing environment. Perloff's assertion that London's existence gives symbolic order to the poem means that we are already asked to base our interpretation of the poem on a specific physical environment; our contemporary context then demands that we widen our consideration of that environment to include less immediate, tangible phenomena.

'To bring them back to light by using archives': Dried specimens

Such a reading can be complemented by drawing on Latour's next criterion for actor-network-theory, which is to consider objects in the light of their background 'using archives, documents, memoirs, museum collections, etc.' in order to recreate 'the state of crisis in which machines, devices, and implements were born' (*Reassembling* 81). Taking a cue from 'museum collections', we can consider the context of Eliot's literary sources. The poem pointedly represents an anthropogenic state of 'crisis' because its fragmentary quality is the result of deliberate decisions

by Eliot in response to comments on the poem from his wife and Ezra Pound. This understanding of an artificial crisis is doubly relevant in a context where we have both unintentionally engendered climate change and intentionally characterised its phenomena as a 'crisis', as I discussed in my first chapter (pp.40–1). Note, too, the intentionality and fussy particularity of the crisis that prompts another Prufrockian hesitation: 'Should I, after tea and cakes and ices, / Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?' (*Complete* 15).

To illustrate this creation of crisis from archival context, we can consider Eliot's citation, in his 'Notes' to the opening passage of 'A Game of Chess', of Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra in her barge 'upon the river of Cydnus' from *Antony and Cleopatra* (Eliot *Complete* 77; note to line 77).[6] However, in *The Waste Land*'s version of the scene there is a confluence between Shakespeare's queen and Petronius's Sybil, so that, crucially, the setting is an interior, removed from the water – Eliot's compositional process, too, strives to keep the text dry. One of the few instances of a word with liquid associations in the passage is when 'synthetic perfumes […] *drowned* the sense in odours' (lines 87–89; my italics), in contrast to Shakespeare's 'Purple the sails, and so perfumed that / The winds were love-sick with them' (*Ant.* 2.2.203–4). The artificial atmosphere in Eliot's verse overpowers sense in notably watery terms, associating 'synthetic' substance with that water as 'oil' and 'tar' do in the subsequent section. In contrast, the perfumed air breezes through Shakespeare's lines. Eliot creates a sterile modernity from an allusion to a fertile ancient queen ('He ploughed her, and she cropped'; 2.2.238) in a way that bears out Robert Crawford's claim that this 'reworking of the Enobarbus speech casts doubt on the validity of Shakespeare's interpretation of Cleopatra' (*The Savage and the City* 144).

Various other images are, like Cleopatra's barge, abstracted from an aquatic context in *The Waste Land*: the 'sea-wood [...] Burned green and orange' and in its 'sad light, a carvèd dolphin swam' (lines 94–6). This aesthetically rendered creature swims through light, rather than being an organic cetacean moving through water, and hence is at a further remove from embodied, mammalian presence than the rat at line 33. Eliot symbolically dehydrates his sources to connote their exhaustion, and the poem returns to this theme of anthropogenic sterility throughout, such as the abortion alluded to later in 'A Game of Chess': 'It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said' (line 159). Therefore, while the poem has been read by Louis Menand as 'not *about* spiritual dryness so much as it is about the ways in which spiritual dryness has been *perceived*' (*Discovering Modernism* 89; author's italics), I argue that it is Eliot's own channelling of his sources that makes them definitively into perceptions of dryness when they weren't suggestive of it in their original context. If the poet also reproduces civilisation's act of abstracting water for its own ends, there is again a suggestion that we, *hypocrite lecteurs*, are culpable in the creation of the arid landscape seen in the final section of the poem.

[6] Eliot's reference can be found at 2.2.202 in *Antony and Cleopatra* (Arden Shakespeare: Third Series) 139.

'The use of counterfactual history': Mythic time, clock time and climatic time

'The resource of fiction', writes Latour, 'can bring—through the use of counterfactual history, thought experiments, and "scientifiction"—the solid objects of today into the fluid states where their connections with humans may make sense' (*Reassembling* 82). This approach is potentially the most valuable of actor-network-theory's criteria to this thesis, because it is inherently aligned with literary practice. Eliot's poetics reshapes mythology into a distinctive fiction, one he plays off against modernity; the poem 'always uses the cultural echo to reveal a vacancy within the modern event to which it is ironically applied', says Nicholls (279). While modernity aspires to arrest the change of Latour's 'solid objects' into 'fluid states', myth plays off against this by showing the deeper narratives in which they – and we – are implicated. As we have seen in Solnit's remarks on the Colorado River, the more assertive we are in our impositions on the environment, the greater are the changes we are not able to foresee.

In 'The Fire Sermon', the close appearance of the 'Sweet Thames' and the 'dull canal' (lines 176, 183–84, 189), for instance, juxtaposes a mythic version of a river – a natural watercourse – with the grubby reality of an artificial one. But this goes beyond the contrast of 'hot water' and 'closed car' in 'A Game of Chess', as the image of the canal-fisher acquires a ritual association: 'Musing upon the king my brother's wreck' (line 191) is a reworking of pagan vegetation ceremonies, something Eliot indicates by his reference to Sir J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, 'especially the two volumes *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*', in the 'Notes' to the poem (*Complete* 76). The cyclical, seasonal motif belongs to mythic rather than urban time. Eliot's contrast between modernity and mythology can be read in the light of Latour's repudiation of clock time – political ecology, he declares, 'has to modify the mechanism that generates the difference between the past and the future; it has to suspend the tick-tock that gave the temporality of the moderns its rhythm' (*Politics* 189). This is because the attempt to jettison the past and separate ourselves from nature marks the proliferation of hybrid phenomena, quasi-objects such as climate change, as Latour proposes in *We Have Never Been Modern*. Reading *The Waste Land*, Robert Crawford is particularly attentive to the difference between time schemes, pointing out that 'In cities, where the seasons' impact is dulled, the rituals of fertility seem to lose their meaning, but they continue, processing like scenes in a play' (144), in a sham of their richness. The city actively downplays the cycles in modernity's attempt to achieve historical progression, just as in 'The Burial of the Dead' a layer of 'forgetful snow' and 'sudden frost' prevents the growth of the past into the present (lines 6, 73).

With its effort to establish identity, the "self" of civilisation tries to construct barriers around it that signal its autonomy. In so doing, it imagines itself cut off from the very living environment on which it depends, failing to share Alaimo's 'recognition that the very substance of the self is interconnected with vast biological, economic, and industrial systems that can never be entirely mapped or understood' (*Bodily* 95). But the past cannot be comprehensively buried in *The Waste Land*: 'It is impossible to keep them [dead bones] underground', Ellmann comments (94),

prompting the narrator's question to Stetson at lines 71–2: 'That corpse you planted last year in your garden / Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?' Eliot's likening of the dead to plants anticipates one of the tenets of Morton's dark ecology: 'Nature is what keeps on coming back, an inert horrifying presence and a mechanical repetition. Environmentalism cannot mourn the loss of the environment, for that would be to accept its loss, even to kill it, if only symbolically. The task is not to bury the dead but to join them' (*EwN* 201). Morton goes on, in 'The Dark Ecology of Elegy', to advocate that 'Environmental elegy must,' rather than get over the loss of nature, 'hang out in melancholia and refuse to work through mourning to the illusory other side' (256). In the figure of Tiresias, who has 'walked among the lowest of the dead' (line 246), *The Waste Land* fulfils this function and keeps us among the dead, to remind us of the shaping role of what civilisation tries to exclude.

The modernist mode exposes such a project of demarcation as being fraught with ecological contradictions. It exhibits the pervasive irony of Szerszynski's cultural modernism and expresses an understanding of the dynamic, risky world described by Latour and Beck. *The Waste Land* values and proliferates mixings of nature and culture along Szerszynski's lines ('Post-Ecologist' 351), using the literary technique to challenge civilised practice and preconceptions. The attempt at isolation leads the contemporary, commodifying mindset to dam up the river, just as it separates 'hot water' from rain, domestic utility from environmental impact. The 'wreck' of the king (line 191), inasmuch as it is a physical presence, is then adrift in the Thames, cut off from its source. By contrast, the drowned sailor Phlebas 'passed the stages of his age and youth / Entering the whirlpool' (lines 318–19). His human life ends in the sea, time has dissolved for him and has no linear progression in the way that civilisation strives to have. In the turning of the whirlpool, time is necessarily cyclical. The sea cuts Phlebas off from the grounded narratives that civilisation makes for itself on the landmasses, and it gives us access to mythic time. It seeps into the history of the poem despite civilisation's attempts to suppress or ignore it and civilisation cannot escape from the deeper order of nature. What Phlebas '[f]orgot' after his death, 'the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell / And the profit and loss' (lines 313–14) represent in Iovino's terms another 'congealing' of animal, oceanic and economic processes, a vortex that we willingly forget alive.

On terra firma there is a contrasting attempt to separate and distinguish the past. In his own book *The Waste Land*, Grover Smith uses the suggestive analogy of strata for the poem's organisation of history, arguing that its landscape is 'made of interpenetrating layers of diverse cultural ages' (23), although the 'forgetful snow' (*Waste* line 6) figures humanity's attempt to stop their interpenetration with the present. Smith only refers to cultural ages – that is, the stages of history. Once history is stratified, time ought to take on its human significance as a series of progressing moments, landlocked and kept apart from mythic time. But no such separation is possible, given that water itself is mutable, appearing in the poem as snow, frost, rivers, seas, canals and clouds. At a moment when progress and civilised capitalism are signified by commuters making

their way to jobs in the City, there is still a strong diluvian hint in Eliot's description 'A crowd flowed over London Bridge' (line 62). A bridge designed to cross a river is not up to much if it lets anything 'flow over' it. The strength of the verb can be seen too in the typesetting error that it prompted. Jim McCue notes that the Hogarth Press edition, 'hand-set by Virginia Woolf, [...] contained the assertion that "A crowd flowed under London Bridge" – a ludicrous aquatic vision' ('Editing Eliot' 5). When the narrator then encounters Stetson on the bridge and enquires about the corpse, his final question is 'has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?' (line 73). The cold snap has the potential to freeze the past, preventing its renewal into the present, while locking dangerous water into the form of ice and keeping the dead buried.

Winter is a season that crops up unseasonably often in *The Waste Land*. Marianne Thormählen flags up that 'A brief inspection of seasonal changes throughout the poem emphasises its discontinuity' (*The Waste Land: A Fragmentary Wholeness* 94), while for Habib, 'Eliot's presentation of the seasons as unnaturally disordered is marked with the history of human attempts to understand and control the seasonal cycle: the seasons themselves have comprised a universal point of identical reference, as indices of humanity's definitions of reality' (235). The disorder represented by contemporary climate change is not just testament to the agency of wild nature, but to the entanglement of our attempts to manage it with its contrary reactions. The persistent winter of *The Waste Land* itself signifies the effort to hold water, along with the processes that it signifies and in which it participates, in stasis. This attests to the fear of a 'collapse of boundaries that centrally disturbs the text' in Ellmann's reading of it (94).

Given this stasis, even water in its different states can constitute a form of separation or flood defence. Once we are conscious of this, it refreshes our reading of the opening lines of the poem:

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain (lines 1–4).

Spring, traditionally welcomed as the world's return to life, is here feared because of the 'stirring' caused by the rain it brings, the penetration of shoots from the ground, breaking through from the buried past. Reread in the twenty-first century, Eliot's 'seasonal nihilism' (Thormählen 94 n.119) also offers a way of contrasting the conception of seasonal order with the seasonal disruption for which climate change has been blamed, as Bate notes (*Romantic* 2; see Chapter 1, p.24 of this thesis).

'Innovations in the artisan's workshop': Exposing ecological process

The poem could have ended up colder still, however. To explain why it did not I shall return to Latour's first criterion: that is, 'to study *innovations* in the artisan's workshop' as 'one of the first privileged places where objects can be maintained longer as visible, distributed, accounted mediators' (*Reassembling* 80; author's italics). The published *Facsimile* of *The Waste Land*'s drafts

allows us access to the changes Eliot made in response to Vivien Eliot's and Ezra Pound's comments on the MSS and TSS. One of the processes thus traceable is that, by removing scene-setting passages, Pound ensures that the poem more jarringly juxtaposes its different locales, creating a much more compact global scope and exacerbating tensions between its 'fragments', between 'waste' and 'land'. A location afforded unusual prominence by the irregularity of the resultant structure is the seascape of part IV, 'Death by Water'. The brevity of this section compared with the others in the poem paradoxically draws more attention to each of its lines.

This was not the case during the poem's composition. Eliot's MS contains an account of a sea voyage that ends up in the Arctic:

> And dead ahead we saw, where sky and sea should meet
> A line, a white line, a long white line,
> A wall, a barrier, towards which we drove.
> My God man there's bears on it.
> Not a chance (*Facsimile* 61; lines 75–78).

This location, both a physical and mythical end of the world, was excised by Pound in an act of editorial deglaciation. What remains in the poem as published are only the lines in which the body of 'Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead […] rose and fell' in the currents (lines 312–16). With the disappearance of the icecap, 'Death by Water' has no wider context and Phlebas is surrounded by nothing but the Mediterranean, located between the Carthage at the end of 'The Fire Sermon' and the allusively situated desert of 'What the Thunder Said'. This jump-cut is a further instance of brokendown structure: it is not just the content of a drowned man that 'troubles' us about 'Death by Water', in Sheehan's terms, but the manner in which the poem presents him. Pound's removal of the Arctic context for *The Waste Land* increases the sea's level of importance as an image. Water floods the rest of the poem, releasing the frozen past into its present. The water table that underlies the poem is also hinted at in Grover Smith's critical diction – he observes 'It is difficult to find lines simply stolen, not worked into the myth [...] because everything tends to flow together' (113). Reading water as the defining image of *The Waste Land* does not necessarily give it a structural role: its very changes of state, its fluidity, mean that it permeates the poem rather than organising it.

The poem's breakdown of contextual boundaries can provide a way of understanding it in relation to climate change: because boundary breakdown is temporal as well as spatial and conceptual, the hybrid, material agency of climate change imposes itself on retrospective readings. As Lanchester points out: 'I suspect we're reluctant to think about it [climate change] because we're worried that if we start we will have no choice but to think about nothing else' (3). When we entertain climate change's implications to their full extent, it conditions even our encounters with the literary canon. Texts are then reinterpreted in changing climates of reading, so long as we carry on reading them. Timothy Clark more broadly remarks:

> The futural reading further decentres human agency, underlining the fragility and contingency of effective boundaries between public and private, objects and persons, the 'innocent' and 'guilty,' human history and natural history, the traumatic and the banal, and (with technology) the convenient and the disenfranchising ('Scale' 106).

Such a decentring of human agency is dramatised in the course of *The Waste Land*.

Whether forecast

The tension between cultural and natural forces at work in *The Waste Land* raises the question of whether contemporary civilisation is in a position to successfully impose any organising principle on nature. I have already drawn on critical debate over whether the poem itself exhibits any such principle. Rainey specifically poses the question in the context of the drafts, asking 'Did one passage or fragment antedate the others and preserve the trace of an original program which […] later dissolved?' ('Eliot Among the Typists' 28). Perloff maintains that "'What the Thunder Said," for example, is left virtually untouched by Pound,' and that, crucially, it is 'here Eliot discovered his quest theme and brought it to a swift and dramatic conclusion' (175). This is to take Eliot at his word, though, in the anthropological citations of his notes: Perloff's position thus still demands a mythic author figure around whom to organise the text, much as her reading of the poem's London depends on the city's reality. As I have suggested, the selves of modernism and contemporary climate change command no such authority, while the environments of both are without their cohesive, organising power. In contrast to the teleology Perloff lends the poem, Thormählen points out that 'the fragments [Pound] cancelled contain fewer myth/legend relevancies than the published parts of *The Waste Land*' (68), so even when we scour the drafts for evidence of missing links in the poem's schema, they are not actually present.

The question of whether or not there is or was ever a pattern is an important one to consider in the context of a contemporary, climate-informed reading of *The Waste Land*. If there is a structure to the mythical nature that underlies the poem – in, say, the turn of the seasons – then there are grounds for saying that the 'damp gust / Bringing rain' (lines 393–4) towards the end may offer the 'relief' longed for at the start of the poem (line 23). That relief could take the form of a wet spring following a barren winter, or a mild autumn after a summer drought. But already we have seen Crawford liken the urban seasonal cycle to a dumb show, while Thormählen asserts that 'the poem *begins* with the one explicit instance of regeneration it contains' (94; author's italics), her implication being that a redemptive interpretation cannot be sustained.

In this respect, *The Waste Land* offers a way for a culture to articulate and examine its environmental concerns. It presents an analogue for scientific uncertainty over the extent to which we, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, are locked in to anthropogenic climate change by our historic greenhouse gas emissions and whether warming is taking place gradually or will

happen abruptly.[7] The question is whether the earth's ecosystems will now sustain a state that can support human life, given the impact that humanity has already had on them. Crawford draws on the contested pattern of *The Waste Land* to offer two alternative interpretations of its conclusion, and the point at which they fork is over the poem's tacit framing of this environmental question: can it be read as offering us any chance of redemption, any hope that we will emerge from the wasteland's parched landscape? The first alternative that Crawford proposes is 'if the awaited rain fell at the poem's end, it would only lead back to that beginning, "breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land," with all its attendant suffering'. In this case, Crawford continues, 'The "Shantih" at the poem's end may be simply a way of stopping, [the] "formal ending"' to which Eliot refers in his notes (Crawford 148–9; citing Eliot *Complete* 80). The second interpretation is an 'exhausted collapse' (Crawford 149), condemning us to remain among the red rocks.

I contend that we cannot make an assessment of what *The Waste Land* means today without drawing on our understanding of the future. The question is, then, whether we can attempt the radical transformation of our relationship with the environment, to maintain or restore contested ecological patterns, for all the 'attendant suffering' this will entail; or whether we will pursue what environmentalists dub "business as usual" until the point of our own exhaustion or a systemic collapse in the planet's ability to sustain us. Where Robert Pogue Harrison saw in Eliot's vision the beginning of the wasteland within, the environmental neglect of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries manifests the aridity of the poetic wasteland in the world around us. Or, to rephrase Harrison's remark, what Eliot identified as a cultural malaise is now an environmental one as well; we are in the endgame of the poet's Game of Chess. This recognition forces us to re-examine our foundational fictions of nature and culture – as I will do in the next chapter through my readings of Wallace Stevens.

[7] Nigel Clark reflects in 'Volatile Worlds, Vulnerable Bodies' on 'The abrupt climate change thesis' that 'speaks of thresholds which, once passed, leave climate systems tipping rapidly and irretrievably into alternative states' (32).

Chapter 3

'Out of nothing to have come on major weather': Wallace Stevens's fictions of our climate

The poetry of Wallace Stevens is preoccupied with the meteorological and seasonal, and the term 'climate' therefore carries extra weight in his writing than its more straightforward, idiomatic usage. Moreover, his persistent worrying away at notions of metaphor in his verse elides easy distinctions between literal and figurative, reference and referent. Howarth remarks that Stevens's use of metaphor 'does not […] allow you a secure vista on a scene from which you are safely excluded, and which then could not be believed in. Far more often, what starts out as a description turns out to be a series of shifting metaphors where the observer and the observed switch places' (132). Stevens's poetry expresses an awareness that we cannot separate ourselves from the world to regard it objectively, and recognises that perception is always entangled with conception. Having proposed that climate change demands a discourse that situates us within its complexity, multiplicity, contradiction and provisionality, I argue here that Stevens offers a poetics that can explore, manage and keep in tension these different states of mind and world.

In this chapter, I will read Stevens's work as a reminder that the experience of nature cannot be separated from the human imagination: pristine Nature is a myth of the mind, but a persistent one. Stevens's recognition of the imagination's intrinsic involvement in creating the world can be illuminated by Latour's notion of hybridity and the quasi-object to reveal a world neither entirely objective in its presence nor totally subjective as experience. In poetic terms, the world is what Stevens understands as 'fiction'. By failing to recognise this fictive, hybrid quality, civilisation supposes a separate natural realm into which it can cast its waste, in particular the intangible emission of greenhouse gases. As a result, we make what is, in Stevens's opus, a metaphorical creation of nature into a material re-creation of it. Stevens identifies the imaginative root of our relation with the climate. As Gyorgyi Voros asserts in *Notations of the Wild* (1997), a 'striking parallel exists between the current environmental movement's political and philosophical need to reenvision the world and humanity's place in it and Wallace Stevens's artistic, visionary articulations of the same questions' (18). Rather than assume that we have easy access to an independent nature, Stevens continually returns to the question of how we constitute the world, acknowledging both the necessity and the pleasure of making fictive engagements with it. Such awareness is valuable to our understanding of contemporary climate change, because the rate and quality of its phenomena require perpetual interrogation and re-interrogation.

Stevens's poems enact the failure of language to master or contain the world, and deal both implicitly and explicitly with the climate's evasion of and resistance to our intentionality. He depicts the way humanity's imaginative intervention in the world aggravates non-intentional natural agency. Voros points out that 'If complete identification existed between human consciousness and

"objective" world,' that is, if reference and referent were identical, 'there would be no need for language' (118). She contends that metaphor's 'efficiency lies in conveying a concept by way of an image' while 'its profligacy lies in that excess that spills over' (119), and it is the tension between the two forces that I will be exploring in Stevens's poetry in this chapter.

My previous chapter began by considering the limited ecocriticism on modernist writing. I will make a similar endeavour here by examining a brief range of ecocritical responses to Stevens's poem 'Anecdote of the Jar'. Through my own reading of this poem, I will show that the scope of Stevens's metaphors enables them to be read both as cultural mediations of the world and with more direct application to the 'thing itself', without being reducible to either. I will then proceed into a broader examination of Stevens's use of seasonal and meteorological metaphor, and the implications of this for a poetics and criticism of climate change. Stevens's choice of such imagery reads differently in the early twenty-first century because the terms in which we understand its vehicle – that is, climate – have changed so radically that they affect our understanding of his tenor. While the climate of Stevens's poetry is fictive, this does not make it false: its creative manifestations of abstract phenomena offer a cultural complement to the science of climate modelling, as I go on to explain. In concluding the chapter, I will use the terms of Stevens's own 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction' (*Collected Poetry & Prose* 329–52) to suggest that the poems of our climate change 'Must Be Abstract', 'Must Change' and 'Must Give Pleasure'. I will read both this long poem and selections from Stevens's opus by considering these qualities. Having situated visions of Nature in their mythic tradition in previous chapters, I will use the criteria of Stevens's supreme fiction to explore the material challenge that climate change presents to these necessary but contingent myths.

Anecdotal evidence: Ecocriticism on Stevens

Stevens's poem 'Anecdote of the Jar' (1919; collected in *Harmonium* 1923)[1] is the focus of several proto-ecocritical and ecocritical readings, which illustrate different approaches for the discipline. The poem's three quatrains support, but do not necessarily verify, these interpretations. This concision of potential meaning is valuable to a climate change poetics, because it shows how a literary text can be adaptive and responsive, and enact or enable an array of different environmental engagements. Whatever their differing emphases, however, these readings all indicate the role of both cultural and phenomenal forces in creating and shaping the world. In the poem, Stevens explores the interplay between an environing wilderness and a human product: he ascribes a restless agency to this 'wilderness' that 'rose up to' a 'jar', a totem of human manufacture placed on a hill in Tennessee; but the jar nevertheless 'took dominion everywhere'. This puts wild nature at odds with cultural artefact, not so much as opposing forces but rather as symbolising competing claims about the construction of the world.

[1] Dates given for subsequent poems discussed in this chapter will be those of their first appearance in a collection, unless otherwise stated.

The political import of the jar's 'dominion' is taken up by Michael Herr in his Vietnam war journalism, when he writes: 'Once it was all locked in place, Khe Sanh [Combat Base] became like the planted jar in Wallace Stevens'[s] poem. It took dominion everywhere' (*Dispatches* 90). Herr draws attention to the way the base colonised not physical territory but the political imagination, and 'had become a passion, the false love object in the heart of the Command'. Herr's allusion is in turn considered by Frank Lentricchia in *Modernist Quartet* (1994), where he elaborates on its environmental resonances: 'Stevens is made by Herr to speak directly against the ideology of imposition and obliteration coactive in Vietnam with a strategy of defoliation' (23). Robert Kern then cites both readings and summarises their trajectory: 'With its concern about defoliation and thus *environmental* imperialism, Lentricchia's political reading begins to edge toward a more fully ecocritical account' of the poem than Herr's ('Ecocriticism: What is it Good For?' 268; author's italics). This presents an ecocritical reading of Stevens that expands the realm of the political beyond its conventional boundaries as a solely human concern and into the environmental. Kern's reading aligns itself with second-wave ecocritical concerns about environmental social justice.

Robert Pogue Harrison's philosophical approach to 'Anecdote of the Jar', by contrast, is in the more grounded terms of first-wave ecocriticism: he suggests that the 'jar provides the surrounding nature with a measure of containment, of *human* containment' ('*Hic Jacet*' 395; author's italics). In the context of a broader argument about architecture, humanity and deracination, he asserts 'Places do not occur naturally but are created by human beings through some mark or sign of human presence'. He argues that the poem 'describes the minimal conditions of this sort of place-making' because 'the placement of the jar has established a horizon of reference' for the poem's 'slovenly wilderness' (395). This is complicated by 'the fact that the speaker "placed a jar in Tennessee": that there was already a place there in which to place the jar' (403), because the state bears the Cherokee-derived name before the speaker intervenes. Tennessee is already a place, humanly defined, rather than a nonhuman "space". This prompts Harrison to declare 'We are all latecomers, even those of us who believe we are firstcomers' (403). Human presence retrospectively affects our understanding of nature, which is for Stevens inescapably an idea rather than an objective fact. The political 'dominion' that Herr, Lentricchia and Kern identify is thus shown to be a contingent fiction.

In 'Not Ideas About the Thing but the Thing Itself', Harrison asserts that 'the idea of nature and the nature of the idea are correlated' (661) in Stevens's work. This means our attempts to conceive of 'the inconceivable priority of nature' are subject to 'the ever-receding priority of the real' (667, 668). We are forced to acknowledge that our attempt to get past a fiction of nature is impossible. 'Anecdote of the Jar' demonstrates Stevens's recognition that Nature is a human gesture that confirms human identity, as I discussed in my first chapter. But the poem also figures that gesture's circularity, enacting and eliding – continually and cyclically – the separation of culture and nature. This is evidenced in the roundness of the jar as an image, the repetition of 'hill' at the end of both

second and fourth lines in the first quatrain (rather than a conventional rhyme), and the poem's spiralling return of sound in 'surround', 'around', 'round' and 'ground'. In his reading of the poem, Roy Sellars notes the priority that the poem's syntax gives to human conceptions, because 'The adjective "slovenly", arriving in the vanguard, gives the "wilderness" it will qualify no chance' ('Waste and Welter' 40). The poem syntactically embodies the processes of human manufacture and civilisation by making us, as its readers, latecomers, as surely as we are in our environment. The landscape's evasion of these imposed human terms is then seen in the final verse, which moves away from the enclosure of a rhymed couplet, 'everywhere'/'bare' in the first two lines, to an unrhymed one, 'bush'/'Tennessee', in the second pair. The reflexivity of our engagement with the 'wilderness' is recognised by Lentricchia, who describes the imposition of jar on landscape as an act of 'imaginative imperialism [...] activated and subtly evaluated' in the poem (23). This quality of mutual activation and evaluation means the jar both focuses and fails to organise the 'wilderness' around it. That duality in turn makes the New World landscape, in Tony Sharpe's words, 'the site of possible despair and defeat, or victorious self-affirmation, or […] the site, simultaneously of both' (*Wallace Stevens: A Literary Life* 10).

By negotiating these different ecocritical readings, I am not claiming that the discipline merely adds its own voice to the conversation about the poem. To do so would be to dismiss the distinctive quality of a green reading, as George S. Lensing seems to do more sweepingly when he says 'all the fashions of theory have keyed to Stevens as a tuning fork for their own reverberations' (*Wallace Stevens and the Seasons* ix). A climate-change-inflected reading can and should entertain all the previous ecocritical accounts of 'Anecdote of the Jar', because together they demonstrate that a poem can signify concisely the multiple contexts and scales that climate change prompts us to consider. The sense of environmental belatedness that emerges in Harrison's account also offers 'Anecdote of the Jar' as the embodiment of the concerns I raised in my first chapter about the time lag between the persistent myth of an independent, sublime Nature and the world as a Latourian quasi-object, in which the hybridity of cultural and natural forcings becomes manifest.

Discussing the recursive structures of Stevens's poetry, J. Hillis Miller writes in *The Linguistic Moment* that they exhibit 'some play with the figure of container and thing contained or with an inside/outside opposition that reverses itself. Inside becomes outside, outside inside, dissolving the polarity' (403). The 'jar' provides a symbol for this structural effect, negotiating between a supposedly independent nature "outside" us and a manufactured product originating "inside" culture. It has a double allegiance to earth and ether, being both 'round upon the ground / And tall and of a port in air' (*Collected* 61). In these lines, rhyme and elongated, assonant vowels – 'round' and 'ground'; 'tall' and 'port' – relate the jar's attributes to the external environment, and the vowel sounds keeping that relationship open and suggestive as well as audible.

Our presence in the world creates and keeps re-creating Nature, and the 'jar' is also then a verbal discontinuity that jolts us from our complacency in assuming that the world only exists as a

foundation for culture. It is the failure to keep natural forces buried that prompts the jarring of and breakdown in order in *The Waste Land*, but rather than repeating that poem's effort of suppression, 'Anecdote of the Jar' recounts an attempt to control or reduce nature at the same time as acknowledging the impossibility of doing so. Both Stevens and Eliot imagine a mythic, prehuman nature, as a kind of legal fiction to contextualise civilised existence. Stevens complements Eliot in that, where Eliot is concerned with modernity's abortive attempts at progress out of and away from the natural, Stevens traces language's provisionality in mastering or comprehending this wilderness. In the image of the jar, Stevens transforms the Romantic sublime of Keats's Grecian urn into a mass-manufactured product, a souvenir for what is lost.[2]

The Grecian urn reproduces a vision of classical nature, where in contrast Stevens's empty vessel is 'gray and bare', devoid of representation. The transition from Romantic image to modernist symbol signifies a quality of abstraction that is valuable to consideration of climate change, because rather than seeking to imitate the scene of nature, the jar relates to what is beyond sensory experience. Bonnie Costello's account of Stevens's work maintains that his 'abstractions are prompted in physical reality' ('US Modernism I: Moore, Stevens and the Modernist Lyric' 164). By its process of abstraction, the poem stands apart from its historical moment and enables a climate-conscious rereading a century later. The obliqueness of Stevens's exploration of relations between imagination and world means it can be read today to appreciate how, over the course of the twentieth century, anthropogenic environmental change re-inscribes its supposed 'dominion' in the material world and the 'slovenly' climate resists such control. Civilisation's failure to share Stevens's recognition of nature and culture's mutual contingency is what underwrites human-instigated change, because by ignoring our imaginative responsibility in the creation of Nature as an idea, we effect a separation that becomes increasingly specious as the climate materially changes. As such, it is as though we have surrounded ourselves with metaphorical jars that take Stevens's image as their prototype: to recap Bill McKibben's words 'By changing the weather, we make every spot on earth man-made and artificial […] Nature's independence *is* its meaning; without it there is nothing but us' (54; author's italics). We fill the open, empty jar continually with our changing conceptions of the world, our abstractions contained on the ground. Therefore, there is no need to oppose the way the way that the poem 'has been read in terms of the endless Stevensian dialectic of reality and imagination' with more ecologically committed readings, as Kern implicitly does (267).

In mediating between the human creation of wilderness and our simultaneous failure to contain evasive nature, the 'Anecdote of the Jar' is a crucial organising fiction that helps us understand something of the phenomenal reality that escapes our sense experience. To quote Stevens's own adage on this kind of fiction: 'The final belief is to believe in a fiction, which you know to be a fiction, there being nothing else. The exquisite truth is to know that it is a fiction and that you

[2] Helen Vendler describes 'Anecdote of the Jar' as 'a palinode' or a poem of retraction, 'a vow to stop imitating Keats and seek a native[,] American language that will not take the wild out of the wilderness' (*Wallace Stevens: Words Chosen Out of Desire* 46). That language, however, is what bestows the quality of wild on the wilderness in my reading.

believe in it willingly' (*Collected* 903). The jar, like the poem in which it appears, is both a work of artifice and open to the air it contains, as in Miller's reading. The problem, both for Stevens and ourselves, is being aware of and resisting the tendency that Thomas C. Grey pinpoints in *The Wallace Stevens Case*, when 'in the presence of great external events, fact' threatens to 'overwhelm […] imagination' (29). To regard factual modes as the only possible way of communicating a 'great external event' is to conflate the fictional with the untrue, making us inclined to dismiss it. In the case of climate change, though, the 'event' is not simply external but entangled with human concepts and practices, so we cannot pretend it is something to be mimetically represented in text. Fictionalising it therefore becomes necessary. Stevens entertains fictive or speculative relations between things to help come to terms with them, demonstrating that 'circumstances apparently intractable to aesthetic treatment [are] in fact both in need of and amenable to it' (Sharpe 142).

Understanding the function of a supreme fiction of our climate in this way, I contend that Kern is wrong to suggest that the 'dominion' of the jar is '*merely* imagined' (269; my italics), or in Lawrence Buell's terms that 'what it seems to yield is merely our own construction' of nature (*Writing* 153). It is, rather, *necessarily* imagined. Sellars is alive to the value of the poem as a discourse. He remarks that, formally speaking, 'Anecdotes are generous', connoting something loose and casual while being to the point: therefore, 'a reader expecting philosophical positions or citable results will struggle to decide if there have been any' (40). In 'Anecdote of the Jar', this uncertainty surrounds our attempts to read culture and nature as separate, which means the jar as symbol can be endlessly recycled to provide dynamic readings changing as the climate changes.

Some poems of our climate

The value of Stevensian metaphor to the expression of our environmental relations lies in its hybrid quality. In the form of the jar, it represents a simultaneous containment and opening into the 'wilderness'. Stevens develops metaphors of the natural beyond 'wilderness', though, and terms such as 'climate', 'weather', 'season' and their associated lexicon are among the keywords of his poetry. To focus on these might seem unproblematically descriptive or topical, if we were to take them as literal. Likewise, we could be reductively symbolic if we consider them only in aesthetic terms, as Lensing does in his study *Wallace Stevens and the Seasons* (2001), which investigates 'the elaborate and prolific *metaphor of the seasons* that would deny the egotism of the self in autumn and winter but reward its appetites in spring and summer' (17; my italics). But in the context of the skilful equivocation between cultural and essential constitutions of nature in 'Anecdote of the Jar', I will suggest that Stevens's metaphorical meteorology makes the climate a product of both human and material phenomena.

Stevens's metaphorical exploration of the human–climate relation anticipates climate change's material emergence as a product of that relation over the twentieth century. To read the climate in this way fictionalises it: not in the sense that the climate is a falsehood, but in that it becomes more

readily comprehensible in human terms. As in fiction, we see the significance of the general as it resonates in imagined particulars; in Costello's words, 'metaphors' for Stevens are 'changes wrought on reality in order to engage with it' ('US Modernism' 171). The value of a climatic fiction is that it suggests our understanding of the world can only ever be provisional. Tim Armstrong points out that for Stevens, 'Weather is a particularly engaging metaphor for that which resists order' (121). Stevens's work can be usefully read by material ecocriticism, because both attend to the quality of generative openness in our environments. These play as much of a part in constituting us as we do in constituting them, resisting our linguistic and cultural order. Where Eliot dramatises this recognition through a collapse of received boundaries and collision of fragmenting discourses, Stevens enacts it in the reflexive examination of the imagination, in the attempt to distinguish what is characteristically human and what the human – as self or as civilisation – projects on to the world.

'A Postcard from the Volcano' (1936) is one exploration of this relationship. The presence of 'the opulent sun' in this poem symbolises, for Helen Vendler, 'The persistence of nature' (*Wallace Stevens: Words Chosen Out of Desire* 34), and is contrasted by Stevens with the voice of someone who perished in an eruption: 'Children picking up our bones / Will never know that these were once / As quick as foxes on the hill' (*Collected* 128). As the largest source of energy for the terrestrial biosphere, one which will not be affected by the deterioration of that system, the sun bears out the persistence of one paradigm of nature, the causal but indifferent physical principles of Soper's second definition. But the narrator also informs us 'that with our bones / We left much more, left what still is / The look of things, left what we felt // At what we saw'. That is, ways of perceiving the world also persist, and along with the input of solar energy they come to bear on the way we now view the world. But Stevens problematises our ignorance of the way these perceptions survive in language and their continued mediation of the solar reality: 'Children […] / Will speak our speech and never know'. The danger for us lies in our failure to recognise the hegemony that conventional ideas of Nature still exert, even when environmental conditions have radically altered. The 'dirty house in a gutted world, / A tatter of shadows peaked to white' (129) of Stevens's poem is the ruined remnant of the Romantic sublime. The 'dirty house' and 'gutted world' do not represent the concentration of human control of the environment that he symbolises in the 'Anecdote of the Jar', but being 'gutted', the world is also emptied of intrinsic value, like the jar. When the house is 'Smeared with the gold of the opulent sun', the rays are not merely physical phenomena but invested with the aesthetic value of gold, casting an ironic sheen of natural permanence over the historically ephemeral dwelling.

This entanglement of solar phenomena and perception, recognised by Stevens in conceptual terms, becomes material with the advent of anthropogenic climate change. The line break in 'left what still is / The look of things' invites us to linger on the possibility that we have created a contemporary reality, 'what still is', before this is resolved as the appearance of a reality alone, 'The

look of things' (128). Read in the light of McKibben's 'end of nature', this elision between essence and appearance continues in the subsequent lines, 'The spring clouds blow / Above the shuttered mansion-house' (129). In our present climate, those clouds troublingly represent the hybridised agency of humanity and atmosphere: how can we be certain the water vapour of which they are made comes from lakes and oceans, or from aeroplane contrails? We have left things that *look* like clouds, whether or not they *are* the clouds they once were. More than just the visual sense is required to appreciate our relation with, and implication in, the climate. In 'A Postcard from the Volcano', the human enclosure of the 'dirty house' cannot shut out its cultural legacy, which takes the form of 'A spirit storming in blank walls'. The choice of 'storming' as a verb achieves a status somewhere between metaphor and description, thanks to the meteorological context Stevens has created in the poem. Read in the twenty-first century, where a "tradition" of accumulated greenhouse gases in the atmosphere increasingly disrupts weather patterns, our own cultural legacy becomes manifest as a form of 'spirit storming' that likewise elides the categories of human conception and material phenomena.

Seasoned selves

These transpositions between vehicle and tenor of metaphor affect humanity's position in the world in Stevens's opus. His poems, Grey writes, are 'much more about places than about people. True, personae flock through them, but […] they do not emerge as living characters' (26). They are ghostly human figures open to the context of the imagined reality in which they are situated. While this resembles my account of Prufrock's semi-permeable selfhood (see Chapter 2, pp.60–1 of this thesis), Stevens's figures are rendered by an evenness of tone that applies to all aspects of the world, equalising human and nonhuman, rather than by the collision of discourses in which Prufrock is situated and by which he is constituted. This is evinced in 'The Snow Man' (1923), denotatively a 'body of the same substance as his environment' (Voros 139). In the poem's context, this Snow Man is far more abstract than the object of creative play from childhood.

The poem's opening clauses seem to be self-contained:

> One must have a mind of winter
> To regard the frost and the boughs
> Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;
>
> And have been cold a long time
> To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
> The spruces rough in the distant glitter
>
> Of the January sun;
> (*Collected* 8)

That is to say, the narrator might simply be describing the conditions 'one' would have had to endure in order to witness this landscape, 'a glittering foreground—almost an obstacle—through

which we are made to pass' (Vendler 49), although there is a hint of wry reflection in the tone. However, these observations are then qualified by the lines 'and not to think / Of any misery in the sound of the wind,' to suggest these opening states are preconditions for a perception that does not project human emotion on to 'the sound of the land / Full of the same wind / That is blowing in the same bare place // For the listener.'

Emphasising the imperative quality of the preceding 'must' and 'have been', we might read the poem as a sort of wilderness survival challenge, in which exposure to the winter and inhabiting 'the same bare place' is essential for the 'listener, who listens in the snow' to become 'nothing himself', achieving total immersion. Vendler writes: 'The effectual abolition of that listener to a vanishing-point […] makes the poem approach the hiding-places of unintelligibility' (49). An interpretation such as this valorises the wilderness over human identity, but, in contrast, we could read the 'must' and 'have been' as the projection of an impossible requirement, because the abolished listener would paradoxically have to retain the sense necessary to experience and articulate this attainment. The impossibility is hinted at by the repeated 'same' – 'the same wind / That is blowing in the same bare place' – because the need to assert that the man and land share weather and location suggests that we cannot instinctively experience that identity other than through its naming. Vendler identifies this discrepancy as 'nature […] projected onto another plane, the plane of language' (4). Even to distinguish an imagined 'Nothing that is not there' from 'the nothing that is' is to stress by repetition the materiality of the word 'nothing'. The Snow Man does then resemble Prufrock in that his environment comprises discourse, albeit in a radically minimal form 'on the threshold between naming and abstracting' (Voros 50). In aesthetic terms, the poem's environment is anthropogenic, a named 'nothing' invoked at its end, to complement the ambient cold's creation of the titular figure in the medium of his environment and its generation of the imagination, 'a mind of winter'.

Stevens does not in this poem readily subscribe to a pathetic fallacy where wintry conditions stand for or evoke a passionless being, because weather, seasons, and indeed all that does not admit of human control in his work, share the intensity of the Snow Man's winter. In the second poem of 'Credences of Summer' (1947; *Collected* 322–6), it is not frigidity but its opposite extreme that is sought to disabuse us of the illusions we bring to our interactions with the world: 'Let's see the very thing and nothing else. / Let's see it with the hottest fire of sight. / Burn everything not part of it to ash'. The end-stopped, declarative lines have the spareness Stevens aspires to in our perception, yet the imperatives here share the ambivalent quality of those in 'The Snow Man': they are only required to urge us if 'seeing the very thing and nothing else' is impossible. The poem goes on to enjoin us to 'Trace the gold sun about the whitened sky / Without evasion by a single metaphor', yet it is only through the medium of metaphor that we begin 'tracing' the sun, by 'seeing with the hottest fire of sight'. It is as impossible to disentangle the 'gold' from the 'sun' as it was in 'A Postcard from the Volcano'. By trying to see the sun in its own terms, we have to adopt a solar intensity of vision, and we become the environment in the way the mind of the Snow Man is 'of

winter'; at the same time, we only achieve that identity through the human device of metaphor. As 'Credences', these poems show that even the supposed objectivity of seeing 'the very thing and nothing else' is a matter of belief rather than superheated perception. Angus Fletcher draws on this terminology to account ecocritically for our experience of natural time, talking of 'such "states" as partial awareness, or, to use a word from Wallace Stevens, as the *credences* we enter into when seasons and their different weathers unfold before us' (*A New Theory for American Poetry* 164; author's italics).

Stevens's paradox progresses in 'Credences of Summer' as the tone seems to shift from insistence to something approaching desperation: 'say this, this is the centre that I seek. / Fix it in an eternal foliage // And fill the foliage with arrested peace'. The alliterative 'Fix' and 'fill' mime the effort to render a natural truth static, while the metaphor of 'foliage' entangled in this consonance is far from being burnt 'to ash' in the sun's 'essential barrenness'. The image makes an analogy between the human impulse to elaborate on truth, and organic growth, so that in both cultural and photosynthetic terms, solar energy is a driver of change and foliation in the terrestrial environment. The contrasting desire to fix Nature as timeless other makes Fletcher's 'partial awareness' not just partial in the sense of incomplete but also partisan, even wilful, because it favours a narrow vision of Nature that collocates 'arrested peace' with the open refusal to admit alteration: 'Joy of such permanence, right ignorance / Of change still possible'. We are commanded to 'Exile desire / For what is not' not only because that desire exists, but also to make the present state, 'is', permanent, and therefore not to wish for a change of season. We are at the limit of life when we reach 'the barrenness / Of the fertile thing that can attain no more' and seek to restrain natural processes of change. Voros likens it to 'a stagnant economy, in which all commerce between necessity and desire, barrenness and fecundity, summer and winter, sound and silence has halted [...] there is no true fulfilment without both' (123).

Human implication in the phenomenal world, culturally and physically, is re-affirmed in the third poem of 'Credences of Summer', where the locus of 'the barrenness / Of the fertile thing that can attain no more' is identified as 'the natural tower of all the world / The point of survey'. This is not a remote spot in which to reflect, though, but 'green's green apogee [...] a tower more precious than the view beyond'. The initial phrase may echo the 'green thought in a green shade' of Marvell's 'The Garden' (*Complete Poems* 101; line 48), but where the earlier poet seeks seclusion, out of the sun, Stevens looks for an elevated vantage point. Indeed, in the slippage of the word 'green' between Stevens's time and ours, the recognition of our own position as the point around which we organise the environment – as the wilderness surrounds the jar – represents a zenith of ecological awareness, rather than the remoteness of an ivory tower. While the more sedate tone of the three stanzas of 'Credences of Summer' III suggests a permanence achieved by the urgent effort of poem II, a permanence in which 'the sun, / Sleepless, inhales his proper air, and rests', that state is profoundly contingent on human mortality, because 'This is the refuge that the end

creates'. What conveys a sense of the 'sleepless' or the 'proper' is the condition not of nature *qua* nature but of approaching death. This identification of selfhood in the external world is the pathetic fallacy acknowledged as such. When 'the old man standing on the tower [...] is appeased, / By an understanding that fulfils his age, / By a feeling capable of nothing more', it is only *his* age that is matched with understanding, with a suggestion that there is something that exceeds his feeling that cannot be expressed. In that respect, these lines parallel those that concluded the previous section, 'the barrenness / Of the fertile thing that can attain no more', to suggest that it is our experience rather than the condition of nature that informs our understanding of the world – we cannot escape the anthropocentric nature of the text.

The co-creation of world through natural phenomena and human intervention becomes more explicitly aesthetic in poem VIII:

> The trumpet of morning blows in the clouds and through
> The sky. It is the visible announced,
> It is the more than visible, the more
> Than sharp, illustrious scene. The trumpet cries
> This is the successor of the invisible.

The trumpet's sound moves from behind the weather – it 'blows in the clouds' – then 'through / The sky', before taking precedence as a herald, 'the visible announced'. It alludes to the New Testament's vision of the apocalypse, when the 'the last trump' (1 Cor. 15.52) will signal the resurrection of the dead, making the hitherto invisible Kingdom of God present on Earth. But Stevens eschews specifically Christian imagery for a more abstract formulation, in which the revelation is aesthetic rather than divine.[3] Music becomes synecdochal for art in this arrangement, because as well as being the manifestation of weather patterns as sky or clouds, 'the visible announced' is, synaesthetically, the visual expressed as the auditory. Art, then, is both the precondition of meteorological phenomena, ushering them into the sky, and the condition of their reception or 'announcement' in language. But the trumpet proceeds to arrogate a special status for its expression, as both 'more than visible' and 'the successor of the invisible', because it supplements our experience of the seen world before proceeding to supplant invisible phenomena. Later in poem VIII, Stevens writes 'The trumpet supposes that / A mind exists, aware of division, aware / Of its cry as clarion, its diction's way / As that of a personage in a multitude'. The remarks would invest us with the capacity to discriminate, by 'division', between the music's position as 'clarion' or its manner of 'diction', and what it heralds, were it not for the fact that this is supposition. By likening its manner to 'a personage in a multitude', Stevens also gestures at individual identity as a supposition, or fiction. This is tacitly confirmed by the impersonal tone of poem VIII and its closing line: 'Man's mind grown venerable in the unreal'. That unreality, an

[3] Basil Bunting's reference to Judgement Day in *Briggflatts* is explicitly religious, depicting the angel 'Israfel, / trumpet in hand / intent on the east'. He does retain the association between the announcement and weather, however, with the angel's 'cheeks swollen to blow' and 'whose sigh is cirrus' (Bunting *Complete Poems* 72–3).

unacknowledged fiction, is the solipsistic separation of ourselves, as beings and as a culture, from our material world.

Compiling the climate

Stevens suggests that art cannot be distinguished from our perception of the world, and this serves a dual purpose in my discussion: first, that our fictions of Nature still colour our perception of the nonhuman world, in spite of the fact that, second, our physical and cultural entanglement in climate has exceeded the possibility of distinguishing our art(ifice) from processes such as the greenhouse effect or ocean circulation. In 1942's 'The Poems of Our Climate' (*Collected* 178–9), Stevens scrutinises the attempt to reduce the world to a clear image derived from nature, but in doing so exposes the tension between the categories of 'cultural' and 'natural'. The three pieces which comprise 'The Poems of Our Climate' express a simultaneous urge to bring the climate into focus and the necessity for the imagination to exceed that experience. Fletcher capitalises on Stevens's abstraction by making 'The Poems of Our Climate' more typical of how we write our engagement with the environment. He considers Stevens as exemplifying the problems we face when trying to render the scale and complexity of environments into text: 'If we turn to the poems of our climate as Wallace Stevens called them, we find extreme pressure put upon the classical aim of focusing image and action, and we ask how any reader could be expected to identify with the whole of an environment' (125). In line with Fletcher's argument, I contend that 'The Poems of Our Climate' enact our desire to reduce climate to something tangible, while acknowledging the failure of this process to capture the world in imagery, and the subsequent need to keep reaching beyond it and explore the material phenomena which it comprises.

Stevens writes in the second of 'The Poems of Our Climate': 'Say even that this complete simplicity / Stripped one of all one's torments' – as the cold does in 'The Snow Man' – 'Still one would want more, one would need more, / More than a world of white and snowy scents'. Compared with the structural failure to contain the world in ice or snow in *The Waste Land*, Stevens lyrically recognises the impossibility of uninflected blankness. It is no coincidence that the imagery in the first of 'The Poems of Our Climate' is of 'newly-fallen snow / At the end of winter when afternoons return': the snow's distinctiveness occurs when it is out of its element, in a transitional phase. But the emergence of spring from winter also foregrounds the clarification and reduction of nature in domestic environments: 'Clear water in a brilliant bowl, / Pink and white carnations'. These noun-phrases verblessly concentrate the natural into interior particularity, but then broaden out into the less tangible 'light / In the room more like a snowy air, / Reflecting snow'. The introduction of a simile and the fussy need to recapitulate its comparison as 'Reflecting snow' disrupts the imagistic simplicity of the opening lines, suggesting the conceptual effort that is needed to sustain those images. In the poem's move towards colourlessness, 'a bowl of white, / Cold, a cold porcelain, low and round,' we recall the focal image of 'Anecdote of the Jar', though Stevens is

more explicit here than in the earlier poem about its contingency as a way of containing the world. He sighs that 'one desires / So much more than that', and the line break seems to hone that desire into intensity before bathetically resolving into failed fulfilment as the vague 'so much more'. The movement shows that however absolute the image, it remains an incomplete account of the climate.

It is difficult too to reduce the flowers to their decorative function, as they are linked with human agency. As 'carnations' they are suggestively fleshy – 'Pink and white'. But this association with human presence exceeds the linguistic and visual to become economic, because the flowers have been cultivated, picked and arranged to serve as a domesticated image of the natural. Moreover, these abstracted blooms are unseasonably early given the 'newly-fallen snow' outside, in which it is unlikely that flowers will be growing. Their presence therefore hints at their greenhouse origins or the geographical distance they have travelled, mastered by the networks of transport and the economy that bring plants into the suburban milieu. What seems a simple signal of high spring is 'simplified', that is, procedurally managed by human agency, to falsify or bely lingering winter.[4] Stevens was familiar enough with the practice of floristry to recognise that domestic blooms entangle both cultural and botanical agency. In 'The Bouquet' (*CPP* 384–7), the eponymous flower arrangement 'stands in a jar, as metaphor'; Sharpe cites this poem while observing 'that centuries of commercial breeding and hybridisation (which Stevens knew about) have made the rose naturally artificial, or artificially natural – for where does nature end and (horti)culture begin?' (68). The carnations of 'The Poems of Our Climate' are likewise not just images, but images of imagery, the process by which our culture entangles itself with climate as soon as it tries to abstract (from) it.

In the third of 'The Poems of Our Climate', Stevens explicates the tendency that Vendler describes for 're-examin[ing] his premises anew in every poem' (41): 'There would still remain the never-resting mind, / So that one would want to escape, come back / To what had been so long composed'. This procedure of 'escaping' and 'coming back' has points of comparison with the contemporary practice of scientific climate modelling. Simulations have to be individually run and tend to be mutually exclusive, dependent on a defined set of input parameters. In *A Climate Modelling Primer*, McGuffie and Henderson-Sellers suggest these simulations are instrumental in that they are tailored to individual purposes: 'different model types are better suited to answer different types of questions' (241). Bronislaw Szerszynski further argues, in 'Reading and Writing the Weather', that climate models prefigure certain types of technical or technological response, and are thus linear and instrumental: there is 'always-already presumption of application' (19). Rather than working towards a specific output or scenario, Stevens is, in 'The Poems of Our Climate', tending

[4] A similar effect is created in Louis MacNeice's 'Snow' (*Selected Poems* 23), where, in a like scenario, interior and exterior are shared effects of one participle: 'the great bay-window was / Spawning snow and pink roses against it'. Their commonality is then both affirmed and disavowed by the next line, where they are revealed to be 'Soundlessly collateral and incompatible'. MacNeice's subsequent lines expose the contradictory scales at play in the art of his floral arrangement: 'World is suddener than we fancy it. // World is crazier and more of it than we think, / Incorrigibly plural' point to the necessary prevalence of the immediate in our experience of the world, and the multiplication of that experience's implication in cultural and phenomenal networks.

in the opposite direction, to investigate the imaginative impulse at the root of both scientific and poetic practice.[5] This impulse has assumed greater urgency since his time, because figuring possible future climates and their suitability – or otherwise – for the existence of life on earth is a practical necessity more than it is an aesthetic and philosophical paradox.

To elaborate on this difference: while models are designed, as Szerszynski points out, to generate particular answers, Stevens reminds us that 'The imperfect is our paradise', that there never has been a stable, Edenic state, and we shouldn't direct our efforts towards achieving one. If we consider this in aesthetic terms, we can read Stevens's assertion that 'delight, / Since the imperfect is so hot in us, / Lies in flawed words and stubborn sounds' as settling for enjoyment of poems as 'words' and 'sounds', despite their inability to match the world, and for being 'flawed' and 'stubborn' in those flaws. The ambiguity of 'Lies', though, suggests that in so doing, we countenance a false account of the climate. Furthermore, the line 'Since the imperfect is so hot in us' invites a reading of our mismatch with the climate in terms of thermodynamics. The imperfection of our linguistic and imaginative systems leads to metaphorical build-up of waste heat; by imagining these cultural framings as identical with the world, however, our practices build on that false premise to transfer entropy from metaphor into materiality, accumulating in the discontinuity between concept and phenomena. Our present, anthropogenically changed climate recontextualises Stevens's thermodynamic metaphor by converting the vehicle into the tenor, because the waste heat and greenhouse gases of industrial process demonstrate the imperfection of artificial systems. 'The Poems of Our Climate' do not need to give this 'imperfection' a moral spin to pinpoint the fallacy that human imagination is sufficient to the world.

Models for atmospheric apprentices

Stevens's poems reveal both the impossibility of enclosing the world as a way of understanding it, and the continual necessity for us to bring it within the scope of our imagination. The 'climate' of 'The Poems of Our Climate' is a provisional juxtaposition of images, for which its floral arrangement is synecdochal. The salience of Stevens's observation in a contemporary context is that scientific understanding of 'climate' is similarly an aggregate of variables as a working model. Szerszynski writes of these experimental processes:

> it is because the unruly, surd complexity of the weather is being tamed by being forced to pass through standardized forms of measurement, and through conventional practices of aggregation and modelling, that we are able to conceive of such abstractions as average global temperature or rainfall, let alone see them rising or falling ('Reading' 22).

Szerszynski's comments reiterate the instrumental direction of these processes: their function is to

[5] In 'Wallace Stevens and the Scientific Imagination', Judith McDaniel argues that 'in all of his work, Stevens expresses a distinctively "scientific" imagination' (223). By her understanding, 'Science in the twentieth century, particularly physical science […] has gone far beyond the "commonsense" rational approach of the last three centuries to a highly speculative, imaginative approach' (222). The theoretical ambition she identifies as common to Stevens and his scientific contemporaries is problematised by Szerszynski's instrumental account of climate modelling.

communicate abstractions. Poetry offers a complementary mode of communication because, while it also seeks to render the abstract comprehensible, it never purports to be more than indicative in so doing. The fictive quality of a poem expresses climate more readily than climatic phenomena themselves because the text is oriented towards the human reader, and the evident artifice also cautions us from taking it to be a like-for-like representation. If we do not bring such an awareness to scientific discourses of climate, we risk making these themselves the focus of our attention rather than the physical phenomena. In *Beyond Mind and Matter*, Patricia Waugh describes a 'tendency over time for the abstract fictions required by any system of thought to take on the appearance of concrete realities' (8), and just as, in her account, modernist writers challenged this tendency in the early twentieth century, their work can speak to the same fallacy today.

For Daniel B. Botkin, when we commit this fallacy, 'huge climate models are [then] the theory itself, and there is little evidence, and some contradictory evidence, that this is a helpful approach' (*The Moon in the Nautilus Shell* 339). He argues that, in contrast, what 'computer models can tell us is the implications of what we know (the facts) and what we assume about a system that interests us [...] This is the best use' (277). 'The Poems of Our Climate' attends to the implications of what we can know, as well as what we cannot, the elusive persistence of the 'unruly, surd complexity' of all climatic phenomena. This contrasts with the practices of 'standardized measurement', which on Szerszynski's account seek to 'force' and 'tame' the world rather than recognise its resistance to our control. Botkin argues that 'the harder we work to force environmental constancy onto our surroundings, the more fragile that constancy becomes and the greater the effort and energy it takes' (290). For me to argue that the climate is a construction, then, is not to claim that climate is only a supposition rather than material phenomena; it is to see that the attempt to reduce our understanding of 'climate' to these data is effortful precisely because it cannot be defined by those data alone. Without the measurements that Szerszynski describes we would not be aware of the changes in physical climate, and their importance cannot be overstated. Stevens's poem, on the other hand, recognises that we always need to reach beyond language, even if we can only do so *in* language, to appreciate what outruns our understanding and management.

Climate modelling responds to this uncertainty by generating new models. As Tim Flannery points out, its recursive quality is a function of each previous iteration's discrepancies: 'researchers strive to reduce the uncertainty of predictions by producing ever more sophisticated models that mimic the real world' (155).[6] More sophisticated, integrated climate models do not limit themselves to considering meteorological, oceanic and other phenomenal criteria but 'explicitly (albeit qualitatively) incorporate economic considerations, [and] estimate anthropogenic emissions requirements' (McGuffie and Henderson-Sellers 243). In these descriptions, the process is directed towards ever-greater accuracy by the inclusion of ever-greater numbers of parameters. Botkin

[6] Similarly, Latour proposes that, because 'nothing proves that […] externalised entities will always remain *outside* the collective' of human and nonhuman entities, the collective must be subject to 'progressive composition', that is, constant challenging and renewal of its terms and constituents (*Politics* 124 & 147; author's italics).

posits this as part of

> a kind of ecological uncertainty principle: The more you try to explain all the details, the more likely you are to make quantitative errors that lead you astray. The more details you seek to include, the greater the chance of errors that lead you astray. Yet, if you make your model (your theory) too simple, you are likely to miss the very qualities that determine what actually happens (281).

Stevens's poetics of recapitulation, on the other hand, responds to the uncertainties he finds by instead enacting the world's perpetual resistance to human mastery, from which the problem identified by Botkin stems. Miller describes how 'The poet tries first one way and then another way in an endlessly renewed, endlessly frustrated, attempt to "get it right," to formulate once and for all an unequivocal definition of what poetry is and to provide an illustration of this definition' (*Linguistic* 5). By accepting the contingency with which Stevens works, we can accept that the climate is changing without that acceptance having to depend on detailed depictions of our future. The belief in the possibility of accurate modelling is also the belief that we can fully comprehend physical processes and outcomes, which, even before we aggravated and intensified them, were already complex to describe, let alone manage.

Where poetry's sophistication differs from science's is that it intrinsically explores contextual parameters rather than modelled specifics, framing our understanding of the world as provisional rather than progressive. To offer one example from Stevens's opus, 'Sea Surface Full of Clouds' (*Collected* 82–5) contains five iterations of 'the slopping of the sea' during a cruise 'In that November off Tehauntepec', eschewing the notion of absolute mimetic truth in these alternative visions. Even if we read it as Lensing does, as a 'self-indulgent example of the making power of the imagination' (326), it exemplifies a bravura way of thinking and rethinking the world, never being satisfied with a definitive account. For instance, the ocean is in parallel syntactic structures variously 'the perplexed machine', 'the tense machine', 'the tranced machine', 'the dry machine' and 'the obese machine'. The term 'machine' is itself repeated mechanistically; rather like the jar, it makes the Romantic sublime of the ocean into something more resonant in the industrial–scientific age. Unlike the jar, though, the sea is the producer rather than product, driving process rather than remaining inert. As such, it demands fresh understanding each morning: Vendler suggests 'The daily impersonal newness of the visible world was at first a disturbing thought to Stevens, as we know from […] *Sea-Surface Full of Clouds*' (59; author's italics). Lines that echo 'A Postcard from the Volcano' – 'jelly yellow streaked the deck', 'blue heaven spread // Its crystalline pendentives on the sea' – still suggest a metaphysical permanence in the solar. However, the poem also slyly rebukes globally northern orders of nature with its Gulf location, 'commemorat[ing] the illicit achievement of summer in November' (Sharpe 112).

The ocean's agency and potency shifts through the poem. It can be incipiently menacing, 'in sinister flatness' or 'pondering dank stratagem'; it can be 'held […] tranced' in the manner of a

work of music, 'as a prelude holds and holds', aesthetically controlled and ordered; or it can even be just 'perfected in indolence'. Stevens's repeated re-characterisations of the ocean represent a response to the sea's own creation of itself, tracing the give and take of imaginative and oceanic agency.[7] The title of the poem is itself suspended between human perception and meteorological phenomena. The sea is 'full' of clouds from the point of view of an observer standing on deck, for whom their reflections appear in its surface. The sea surface also comprises water that has come from clouds and that will evaporate to form new clouds, so in that material respect it is also 'full' of them. Both readings transgress the linguistic separation of 'sea' and 'clouds', according to our understanding of 'full'.[8]

As its title resists easy determination, the poem also rejects definitive conclusion. Instead it draws attention to the changes in the world that, in a way paradigmatically Stevensian, requires we constantly re-examine our premises:

> Then the sea
> And heaven rolled as one and from the two
> Came fresh transfigurings of freshest blue.

The 'freshest blue' for Stevens signifies the renewal of imaginative energy and perception, aligning these with the natural cycles of waves and of night and day that have stimulated his engagement. Today, with the awareness that the ocean is increasingly acidifying as a result of anthropogenic carbon emissions and acting as a sink for vast quantities of plastic waste particulates, we cannot hope to share so positive an understanding.[9] What 'Sea Surface Full of Clouds' still offers, though, is a sense of natural persistence at the level of physical principle, and a demonstration of how we remain entangled in the act of creating and recreating the world, albeit in a significantly more material way than Stevens envisages.

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[7] A more explicit and accomplished examination of this co-creation is to be found in Stevens's later 'The Idea of Order at Key West', a poem discussed in my next chapter in comparison with an ode by Basil Bunting (see pp.134–6).

[8] A similar elision is apparent in poem XV of Stevens's 'Variations on a Summer Day' (*Collected* 212–15):

> The last island and its inhabitant
> The two alike, distinguish blues,
> Until the difference between air
> And sea exists by grace alone,
> In objects, as white this, white that.

The abstracted 'white this, white that' renders the distinction between 'air / And sea' increasingly slim, demonstrating the discrepancy between human practices of naming and phenomenal process such as the hydrological cycle. With the material emergence of climate change, distinctions such as these are more and more tenuous. Stevens positions this recognition with 'The last island and its inhabitant', as though the near-continuity of air and sea has submerged all other islands. Read in our contemporary context, the poem provides a salutary reminder of the 'grace' that prevents final inundation.

[9] According to the International Programme on the State of the Ocean, a 'unique consortium of scientists and other Ocean experts',

> Damage to the Ocean is not as immediately apparent as terrestrial destruction, but it is just as serious. All of the stressors we have put on the Ocean — from over-fishing to pollution — have contributed to its ill-health. The situation is now so severe that we are altering the chemistry of the Ocean, with significant impacts on marine life and the functioning of marine ecosystems.
>
> The Ocean has already absorbed more than 80% of the heat added to the climate system and around 33% of the carbon dioxide emitted by humans. Ecosystems are collapsing as species are pushed to extinction and natural habitats are destroyed. ('How Bad is it?')

Notes towards a climatic fiction

I argued, in my analysis of 'Anecdote of the Jar', that there is an environmental context in which to read Stevens's work; I then proceeded to suggest that, in his meteorological metaphors, he creates a climate that is constitutively provisional. To foreground the fictive quality of our engagements with the world is for Stevens a response to the way unacknowledged preconceptions shape that world: 'we live in an intricacy of new and local mythologies, political, economic, poetic, which are asserted with an ever-enlarging incoherence', he maintains in the essay 'The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words' (*Collected* 652). To think instead of 'a fiction, which you know to be a fiction', as Stevens does in the 'Adagia' (*Collected* 903), is to acknowledge our impulse for ordering the world, while ensuring we do not lose sight of its potential for discrepancies, or 'incoherence'. I have outlined some of the myths of measurement and mastery that perplex our contemporary engagement with climate change, and would contend, with Voros, that Stevens's poems 'are the imaginative enactment of stepping outside [...] conceptions in order to create "a nature"'(Voros 35; citing the adage 'The poem is a nature created by the poet', *Collected* 905). It is with their self-recognition and the relentless questioning and reframing of themselves that poetic fictions as a concept are valuable to our understanding of contemporary climate change.

By thinking of a 'climatic fiction', I do not intend to dispute the reality or the severity of the phenomena, or human responsibility for them. The reverse is the case: 'climate change' is a fiction inasmuch as its material phenomena exceed our use of the term, and our particular cultural framings of it. Incorporating this awareness in our discourse of climate change better prepares us to deal with the inherent uncertainties of the phenomena than does an insistence on verifying them. A 'climatic fiction' therefore acknowledges that its truth is not literal but is still necessary. It is a mode in which we can entertain manifestations of climate change as indicative of its presence, and develop the imaginative faculties that enable fuller engagement with its phenomena. This corresponds with Costello's ecocritical reading of Stevens in '"What to Make of a Diminished Thing": Modern Nature and Poetic Response', where she suggests the imagination can 'reveal the entanglement of nature and culture; the interplay between our desires, our concepts, and our perceptions; and possibilities for renewal and vitality within that entanglement' (574).

Using the framework of Stevens's long poem of 1947, 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction' (*Collected* 329–52), I want to assess the value of a fictive climate and the possibility of deriving a contemporary poetics of climate change from it. Stevens's three criteria for his 'Notes' are 'It Must Be Abstract', 'It Must Change' and 'It Must Give Pleasure'. By 'abstraction', I want to consider the way poetry stands apart from the reader's immediate experience and challenges its priority in the formation of conceptions, as our personal experience is at odds with its cumulative environmental impact. By the need for 'change', I maintain that poetry's invitation to be reread in a changing world can provide an adaptive quality for a climate change poetics. In the context of the 'pleasure' that Stevens requires of the Supreme Fiction, I will suggest, analogously, that poetry can make

nature, at Soper's level of scientific principle, sensible to the reader – in the dual sense that the supreme fiction appeals to the senses and that it makes some sense of the phenomena.

Reality check: 'It must be abstract'

To consider climate change entails an engagement with the climate as an abstract, beyond experienced weather. This is one of the crucial reasons *Why We Disagree About Climate Change*, as Mike Hulme explains: 'Climate cannot be experienced directly through our senses […] climate is a constructed idea that takes these sensory encounters and builds them into something more abstract' (3–4). This construction occurs, for example, through the methods Szerszynski describes ('Reading' 22). Stevens's poetry takes place between the particular of experience and this level of abstract, mediating between the two. It allows the particular its symbolic weight while also giving substance to the abstract. His metaphorical abstractions traverse the differing scales by which we need to understand our own and our culture's implication in the climate. As Timothy Clark points out,

> The self-evident coherence of immediate experience, far from being the possible foundation of secure theorising, is merely epiphenomenal and unable to see itself as such. It projects an illusory ground, a surface realm of human possibility, one that is delusory and even sometimes a form of denial ('What on World is the Earth?' 12).

Stevens's poems recognise this 'illusory ground' and offer strategies for negotiating it.

At two different extremes on the scale of terrestrial influence, the solar and the self are shown to be mutually creative agents in the first section of 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction'. The opening poem juxtaposes 'this invention, this invented world' with 'The inconceivable idea of the sun' (I.2–3) to suggest a contrast between a fictive environment and a sun beyond human conception. Indeed, the subsequent stanza exhorts the apostrophised ephebe: 'You must become an ignorant man again / And see the sun again with an ignorant eye / And see it clearly in the idea of it' (I.4–6). But in inviting us to 'see it clearly in the idea of it', Stevens expresses a similarly paradoxical notion of solar absolutism as 'Credences of Summer' since it includes the anthropocentric 'idea' in its formulation. That 'idea' is more explicitly anthropogenic in this poem than in 'Credences of Summer', because, understood as a cleaning rather than a burning, it does not derive from the image of the sun itself: 'How clean the sun when seen in its idea, / Washed in the remotest cleanliness of heaven / That has expelled us and our images . . .' (I.10–12; Stevens's ellipsis). This co-constitution of world from solar phenomena and human imagination is confirmed by the entangled insistence that 'The sun / Must bear no name, gold flourisher, but be / In the difficulty of what it is to be' (I.19–21), because 'gold flourisher' invokes a name at the point that naming is outlawed. Language, rather than the sun, is then the flourisher on 'what it is to be'.

This doubleness of perspective, which yearns for objectivity but has no terms other than the human in which to express it, recurs throughout 'It Must Be Abstract'. At VI.16–18, Stevens defines the hybrid quality of abstraction as 'It must be visible or invisible, / Invisible or visible or

both: / A seeing and unseeing in the eye'. In the concluding stanza of poem VI, the weather seems to exemplify this doubleness, as a manifestation whose terms and status shift: 'The weather and the giant of the weather' reprises unqualified conditions – 'the weather' as an unadorned noun – as distorted anthropomorphism – 'the giant of the weather'. The continuous reformulation accumulates in the following line, 'Say the weather, the mere weather, the mere air:' before the final line of poem VI suggests that the weather is 'An abstraction blooded, as a man by thought' (VI.19–21). But there is a slippage of metaphor, because to be blooded by thought creates the bodily world from the mind. Rather than regarding mind as a product of neurochemistry – that is, the mental as the product of the physical – Stevens's reversed formulation shows how contingent our sense of the body is on our imagination. Transposing this relation into 'weather', the tenor of the metaphor in the preceding line, reminds us that our sense of an anterior Nature is retrospectively 'blooded' by our own thought of it, as in 'Anecdote of the Jar'. In his reading of the poem in *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate*, Harold Bloom notes that 'the weather is not just a trope for the supreme fiction but is itself as much of that fiction as poetry is or can be' (186). By failing to recognise this, we believe our experience of the weather is independent of our projections, and in so doing behave as though our emissions cannot affect it, or can at least be readily distinguished from it. The presumption that our worldview is correct engenders contemporary climate change as its phenomenal complement.

At a point between perceiving self and the sun is our concept of the planet itself. The sun is visible as a distinct body where the earth is not, however. The necessity for us to imagine it, and the meanings accreting with that imagination, demonstrate our implication in its construction, much as our minds construct our experience of the weather in 'It Must Be Abstract'. Timothy Clark indicates that 'the terrestiality of one's own sensorium is implicated in the affect of the image [of the earth] in profound and inextricable ways' ('What on World' 16). This is a particular instance of a paradox recognised in early twentieth-century scientific thought, which Waugh describes thus: 'the empiricist sees that if the object of science is only ever an extrapolation from sensory experience, and if sensation remains the basis for this inference[,] then the empirical ground of knowledge rests on the subjective and therefore uncertain foundations of the […] mind' (15).

We can see an awareness of this problematic context, and a 'desire to explore modes of knowing and representing which might discover a bridge between the sensory world of experience and the formal world of structural relations' (*Beyond* 17), in the way an abstracted planetary image is framed in Ariel's poems in Stevens's 'The Planet on the Table' (1954). We are told that these poems

> should bear
> Some lineament or character,
>
> Some affluence, if only half-perceived,
> In the poverty of their words,
> Of the planet of which they were part. (*Collected* 450)

In his reading of the poem that concludes *The Song of the Earth*, Bate seeks to make the planet particular once more, transcending the mediations of the text that bring it to the table in the first place. He asks us to read the poem holding in mind 'a photograph of the earth taken from space' (*Song* 282) – already we are at one remove from the poem itself, and the poems of Ariel it contains. Progressively abandoning poem and picture, Bate is left with an imagined planet that he asks us to think of as 'fragile, a planet of which we are a part but which we do not possess'. Bate's suggestion that we 'do not possess' the planet is borne out in Stevens allowing that Ariel's poems can only reproduce 'Some lineament or character […] Of the planet' – they are sketchy or incomplete. But in the process, they are valuable as texts, even if not as models of the world, because they present 'Some affluence, if only half-perceived, / In the poverty of their words'.

However, Bate's perverse concentration on the titular topic of the poem (planet) rather than its context (table) ignores the immediate environment with which it furnishes us, and cannot therefore fully account for the relationship between the texts and 'the planet of which they were part'. He does not recognise what Waugh recognises, that 'the impulse towards this scientific view from nowhere as an escape from egotism can only be an initiating move. Once achieved, that view must reconnect with a situatedness in the world of here and now' (*Beyond* 26). If we are to do justice to Bate's meditation on the poem in the light of a photograph of the earth from space, we should consider the full environmental context of obtaining such an image. Timothy Morton writes in *The Ecological Thought* that: 'We become aware of the worldness of the world only in a globalizing environment in which [...] satellites hover above the ionosphere. […] We are becoming aware of the world at the precise moment we are "destroying" it—or at any rate globally reshaping it' (132). I have commented on this elsewhere, that 'Even the apparent vantage point provided by, say, a satellite is not external to the world […] but an implicit part in the creation of our understanding of it, because it is an instrument of terrestrial systems of government, science, engineering, communication and so on' ('Tensions in the Mesh' 329). Bate's discussion of the poem is valuable in that it doesn't require the energy expenditure of an orbital shot, rather, a projection of the imagination. But his reading of the poem is entirely abstract, whereas the poem also imagines the terrestrial situation that enables abstraction.

Stevens achieves this relation with an enframing technique in which 'one mind apprehend[s] the imaginative action of another', what George Bornstein dubs the "'double consciousness" [...] of Stevens'[s] mature verse' (*Transformations of Romanticism* 198). By figuring the poet of 'The Planet on the Table' as the angelically-named Ariel, Stevens transfers the lyric impulse into a fictive archetype, shading the personal into the abstract. Where Bate's reading seeks a direct apprehension of the planet, Stevens complicates it with an intervening consciousness, meaning that direct access to the physical earth is denied. In this entanglement of different scales, Stevens is able to mark again the interdependency of human and solar creativity: 'his poems, although makings of his self, / Were no

less makings of the sun'. If we read these lines in one way, Ariel's poems invent 'his self' and the sun – they are 'makings' or versions of those entities. If we read them in another, the poems are the product of both the (lyric) self and the enabling environment for which the sun is the dominant input of energy. Indeed, in Vendler's reading: 'our poems, are products of that solar energy that makes all things come into being. Our artificial distinctions between "nature" and "art" err: in this view, art is part of nature' (37–8).[10] The mutuality of these readings, and of human and solar agency, gives expression to Oppermann's observation that 'the natural and the cultural can no longer be thought as dichotomous categories. Rather, we need to theorize them together, and analyze their complex relationships in terms of their indivisibility and thus their mutual effect on one another' (Iovino and Oppermann 462–3). The movement of the poem from self to planet to sun illustrates the value of Stevens's poetics to understanding climate change: it situates and implicates the self in different scales simultaneously.

Roy Sellars negotiates between the poem's possible positions when he suggests that the 'ripe shrub' that 'writhed' in line 6 'may indicate an environmental threat or over-heated atmosphere, presaging the extinction of life on earth' (45). Whether or not we accept this speculation will depend on the perspective from which we read the poem, and it is here that Sellars makes his argument more telling: 'Ariel as non-human, aligned with the sun (line 7 ['His self and the sun were one']), may be indifferent' to this threat, but 'From a human perspective the stakes could hardly be higher' (Sellars 45). That is to say, we have to assume Ariel's abstract position to be conscious of the planet's scale, but must then to return to earth, in the figure of the poet, to appreciate what the vision means for ourselves as humans. The climate-aware critic is conscious of a double consciousness of their own, an implication with planetary scale while also being seated at the table.

Future imperfect: 'It must change'

Stevens's abstractions enable these changes of perspective, but our point of view is altered as much by time as by our imagined position in space. This indeterminacy is also recognised by Stevens, and his poetics demonstrates that the imposition of human order is a fiction as well, one that is subject to the passage of time. In 'It Must Change', the second part of the 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction', he offers one figuration of art as 'The great statue of the General Du Pay' which 'Changed his true flesh to an inhuman bronze' (III.1, 13). The contrast between 'true flesh' and 'inhuman bronze' elaborates on the terms of 'The Snow Man' in suggesting that a rigid art obscures the conditions of its generation by aspiring to fixity. Shifting circumstance is again figured in the terminology of nature in poem IV: 'This is the origin of change. / Winter and spring, cold copulars, embrace / And forth the particulars of rapture come.' (IV.4–6). While this does not seem to admit

[10] Miller writes: 'The sun is that which cannot be looked at directly but is the source of all seeing, the designer of the figures of its happiness. The sun is the visible, invisible figure for the invisible and unnamable, for the base of the intelligible' (*Linguistic* 418–9).

human input in the process of change, with art subject instead to seasonal progress, we are subtly present in the way Stevens anthropomorphises winter and spring as 'copulars'. Stevens identifies a natural impulse for change common to humans and material phenomena. That change is pleasurable, too, in 'the particulars of rapture'.

In contrast to this is a prevailing tendency in which civilisation resists or denies the possibility of change by envisaging a stable or cyclical Nature. Botkin summarises this in his remark: 'The more technologically and legally advanced a civilization, the greater the need and desire for environmental stability, for a balance of nature' (290). This technocratic–legalistic resistance to change stands in contrasts to poetry's engagement with it; but Stevens's biography represents a possible reconciliation of the two tendencies, given his employment for the last four decades of his life by the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, where he 'reviewed surety claims [...] making both legal and business judgements' (Grey 16). In the article 'Insurance and Social Change' (1937), Stevens suggests 'that we may well be entering an insurance era' (*Collected* 793), citing 'those European countries where social pressure has been most acute and social and political change most marked [to] indicate that, as the social mass seeks to maintain itself, it relies more and more on insurance' (795). That is to say, as the pace of 'social and political change' accelerates, society demands exponentially greater reassurance from insurance. Stevens advises the insurance trade that 'the more they are adapted to the changing needs of changing times [...] the more certain they are to endure on the existing basis' (796). Stevens's analysis shares with his poetry an insight into adaptability. Sharpe even suggests 'both poetry and insurance could be described as pragmatic responses to a world conceived idealistically' (147).

A more contemporary account of the insurance sector, concerning climate change rather than social change, is provided by the organisation ClimateWise, which styles itself as 'the global insurance industry's leadership group to drive action on climate change risk'. In the document *Moving Beyond the Uncertainty of Climate Change Risk* (2012), the group's chair John Coomber asserts that insurance CEOs 'should aim to do "something for the future" i.e. activities that are unlikely to be a money[-]earner during their tenure but are good for the long term health of the firm'. These terms echo Stevens's words on business sustainability and survival (796), quoted above. Crucially in a textual context, Coomber remarks that 'Inherent uncertainty means that every statement made in relation to climate change risk must be caveated, but that is not an excuse for inaction'. By the addition of more detail in the form of a caveat, the insurer's approach resembles the climate modeller's.

Rather than seek to control or account for all possible futures, however, Stevens identifies a hub of imaginative understanding common to both present and the future, what Harrison describes as the 'common, antecedent matrix' of both mind and nature ('Not Ideas' 665). The poet's recursive syntax caveats each of his propositions, but enacts rather than exhausts the principle expressed in the lines 'There would still remain the never-resting mind, / So that one would want to

escape, come back / To what had been so long composed' ('The Poems of Our Climate', *Collected* 179). Rather than investigating the principles at work in our relation with climate, Coomber's analysis prioritises human activity, and regards 'the challenge [as] arising from the side effect of generating fossil fuel energy, the emission of greenhouse gases and their impact on the world's climate systems'. If emissions are only a 'side effect', this centres our understanding around the human practice of 'generating fossil fuel energy'. Beck cautions against such an unreflexive, anthropocentric approach, however: 'unseen, screened-out "side effects" do not eliminate the self-endangerment to which they point, but rather intensify it' (127). While wilfully assigning greenhouse gas emissions to the category of 'side effect', as Coomber does, does not screen them out, it still moves them to the corner of the eye.

To instead imagine climate change, rather than define it, requires us not to think of 'climate' as simply a zone in which human 'effects' occur, because climatic phenomena also have agency and affect our culture, which is always entangled with them. Stevens envisages such interaction of human intention and phenomenal nature in the fifth poem of 'It Must Change' in horticultural terms. While a fruit tree is planted, its persistence 'Long after the planter's death' perplexes the original intentions: 'A few limes remained, // Where his house had fallen, three scraggy trees weighted / With garbled green.' (V.3–5). Humans no longer have a place in this locale as the collapsed house represents the ruin of a controlled, orderly environment, a motif already seen in 'A Postcard from the Volcano'. Although there is a hint of human inscription on the land in the intentional act of planting the trees in 'It Must Change', this is 'garbled' – even the 'limes' are garbled "lines". Change is not limited to what we as humans intend to change, but is a process to which the human cultivation and direction of nature are subject. The subtitle 'It Must Change' is not then an exhortation for human beings to be drivers of change, but a reminder that we need to accommodate such change into our understanding of the world. Botkin draws a valuable distinction in this regard:

> [T]here are kinds of changes that are natural in that they have been part of the environment for a long enough time for species to adapt to them, and many [species] require these changes. If we take actions that lead to these kinds of changes and at rates and quantities that are natural in the sense I have just described, then these are likely to be benign. If we invent some novel change that species have not had a chance to evolve and adapt to, then those are more likely to lead to undesirable results, and we should be very cautious in using them (xv).

Stevens expresses an awareness of the first, 'natural' kind of change, and if we share this recognition rather than persist in an attempt to stabilise or control nature, we can more readily see where our interventions accelerate or exacerbate change.

The planted lime trees comprise one such intervention, but one to which the landscape can readily adapt. Contemporary climate change is 'novel' in Botkin's terms because it leads to 'undesirable results'. Moreover, its capacity to exacerbate prevailing, naturally driven change is

increased because its emergence cannot be sourced back to the motivations, whether rational or irrational, of human beings. At one order of magnitude, the lime trees represent organic growth exceeding its original function for humans – Timothy Clark draws this contrast in more general terms when he characterises 'the immediacy of perception [as] our scalar blindness to the tree as a temporal entity, one that grows, flourishes or dies etc. over a very long period of time' ('What on World' 11). At a greater order of magnitude, climate change is not even something we can glimpse at a moment in time, as we can a tree. It persists as an intangible result of chaotic and hybridised ecological interactions between unintentional human effects and environmental forces.

Climate change thus outruns the insurer's attempt to caveat it, and becomes categorically different to the 'accelerating social change' Stevens discusses. As Nigel Clark indicates, climate change's intellectual difficulty entails 'not only isolating the human contribution from the "background noise" of natural climatic variability, but doing so with enough confidence to be able to apportion human forcing among geographically and historically determinate social groupings' ('Volatile' 42). As these processes 'form a single complex global system – with its own internal dynamics and emergent properties – certain conventions of isolating specific causal agents and accounting for their contribution to overall change need to be fundamentally rethought' (44). By continually entangling human perception with perceived phenomena, and attesting to the agency of both, Stevens makes poetry a fuller engagement with the world than the lawyer's or insurer's attempts to discriminate and control it.

Recognising this need for his Supreme Fiction to 'change', Stevens situates himself in a tradition of English literary thought, in which poets have identified that their work will respond to future contexts. For instance, new works reorder our reading of the canon in Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (*Selected Prose* 37–44), while Shelley characterises poets in 'A Defence of Poetry' as 'the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present' (*Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 508). Having examined Stevens's accommodation of prospective change in his poetics, I now consider how his conception of change is *itself* changed by responding to contemporary environmental understanding. In his 2010 'Anachronistic Reading' of Stevens's 1942 poem 'The Man on the Dump' (*Collected* 184–6), J. Hillis Miller proposes: 'It is impossible to read [the] poem thoughtfully today without seeing how [the] dump with its single human presence anticipates our present condition' (83). While 'Stevens lived in that happy time before we became aware of climate change [and] global warming', as we read his work now we are not so fortunate.

Miller's process 'sees a text as prefiguring a future event that comes to seem what the text predicted, foresaw, or forecast' (82). I would refine this by suggesting that the particular resonance of 'The Man on the Dump', its response to changing conditions, lies in the attention Stevens pays to the principles of waste disposal, the material implications of which have been exacerbated by human behaviour since the poem's composition.[11] In an aesthetic context, Stevens's remark that

[11] Waste disposal extends beyond intentional acts. As Miller observes, it includes 'all the carbon dioxide in the

'The dump is full / Of images' marks a despair that our ways of viewing the world are past the point of meaningful use, as in 'A Postcard from the Volcano', 'Children […] Will speak our speech and never know' (*Collected* 129). Among the images on the dump are 'the floweriest flowers' and a 'green' that 'smacks in the eye', and these are read by Costello as evidence 'of weariness and disgust', prompted by 'how hackneyed these images have become' ('US Modernism' 170). Yet in his choice of the dump itself as image, Stevens draws attention to something that is as intrinsic to our environment as the tired natural tropes among the other waste accumulating there.

In its mixture of artificial and organic imagery, 'The Man on the Dump' exhibits the same reciprocity of cultural and natural agency that characterises Stevens's poetry. At one level, the poem's dump represents a specific physical environment that Stevens knew. Lensing comments that Stevens's daughter 'Holly Stevens reminds us that the description is modeled upon the actual dump in Hartford and the man who occupied it' (219).[12] In contrast with the trees seen by Lawrence Buell and David Wood (discussed in my first chapter, pp.23, 45), the dump is not a natural environment but an artificial one, comprising manufactured or cultivated articles left by intentional acts of disposal: 'The bouquets come here in the papers'. The artificiality of the dump as a material construct is heightened and intensified by the process of its rendering as poetic metaphor. Stevens does not frame the poem as a glance from the window towards a "real" location, as Buell and Wood do. Instead, the concentration of the items abstracted on the dump signifies wider human networks in time and space: 'the wrapper' and 'the corset' hint at what they were designed to contain (indeed, there is still a 'cat in the paper-bag'), while 'the box / From Esthonia' (sic) has travelled across continents. In that context, Stevens's 'can of pears' has an element of economic symbolism that it shares with my reading of Prufrock's peach or Sweeney's hothouse grapes in Eliot's poems.

At the same time, the dump is not only an object created by human action, because it has its own agency. The accretion of these items on an *ur*-dump is symbolic of everything that humanity has to keep at bay to identify itself as humanity. Ellmann's remarks on *The Waste Land* remain apposite in this context: 'the subject defines the limits of his body through the violent expulsion of its own excess' (94). But the dump's 'trash' itself represents the persistence of matter beyond its cultural function. In attending to it, Stevens recognises what Jane Bennett, in her own encounter with litter in *Vibrant Matter*, describes as 'stuff that commanded attention in its own right, as existents in excess of their association with human meanings, habits or projects' (4). Although 'Everything is shed' in 'The Man on the Dump', the poem makes an imaginative recovery of waste

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atmosphere from automobiles, coal-fired electricity plants, and other sources that is a chief contributor to global warming, […] all that methane from domestic cows and from landfills, […] all the smoke from forest-clearing' ('Anachronistic' 85).

[12] Lensing cites Holly Stevens's autobiographical sketches, 'Bits of Remembered Time' (1971), in which she recalls 'a vast stretch of barren land that people used as a dump. […] On this lot a man, seemingly coming from nowhere, built his home. A glorious shack, made of all the appropriate junk that could be found, with even a chimney: only when we noticed smoke coming out did we realize someone was living there' (652). The Stevenses detect the presence of another human from the emissions he creates rather than his own person, demonstrating that scale and perspective are a crucial determinant of whether we focus on human beings or the environment.

that disabuses us of our sense that we inhabit a civilisation with no hinterland of landfill. It serves to remind us that 'our trash is not "away" in landfills but generating lively streams of chemicals and volatile winds of methane as we speak' (Bennett vii). Stevens's explicit and fictive abstraction of the Hartford dump changes through Miller's practice of anachronistic reading to shed light on the undisclosed social myth of cleanliness and progress.

The greenhouse affect: 'It must give pleasure'

Stevens recognises that nature always exceeds our definitions of it, and through this recognition we can consider the requirement for his Supreme Fiction to 'Give Pleasure'. The process by which phenomena resist fixity has been figured in terms of sexual pleasure in 'It Must Change': 'Winter and spring, cold copulars, embrace / And forth the particulars of rapture come' (IV.5–6). Rather than imposing human order on these processes, poetry, by changing, participates in the same generative forces. For instance, Stevens has identified the imagination with natural renewal in 'Sea Surface Full of Clouds', because the poem's cyclical quality recapitulates the waves' own 'fresh transfigurings of freshest blue' (*Collected* 85). Bloom considers the criterion of 'pleasure' in aesthetic terms, for 'what is pleasure for a strong poet, ultimately, if it is not the pleasure of priority in one's invention?' (174); but I have shown that Stevens aspires, as a poet, towards an abstract root common to imagination and phenomenon, and that neither natural nor cultural agency has 'priority'. This capacity for 'invention' must then be attributed to nonhuman, unintentional forces as much as to human will. Costello defines the common capacity as 'the superfluity of human and natural creativity that stimulates change' ('What to Make' 586). The creative impulse is superfluous to our normative sense of order, but can thus engage with transformative phenomena in a way that analytical impulses cannot.

The tension between analytical and imaginative impulses can be seen in the final poem of 'It Must Give Pleasure', the third section of 'Notes Towards a Supreme Fiction'. Stevens addresses the 'Fat girl, terrestrial', the 'fluent mundo' that is the world (X.1, 20): 'You remain the more than natural figure. […] That's it: the more than rational distortion' (X.11–14). In these two lines, Stevens contrasts the rational, which we might see as the conventional province of the human, and that of the natural. However, the 'fluent mundo' – a term that itself exceeds a more denotative description such as 'changing world' – cannot be contained by either category, 'rational' or 'natural'. Furthermore, Stevens's recursive phrasing shows that the act of imagining the world as person is a fiction, because its quality changes almost immediately from 'fat' to 'terrestrial'. The world has an affect that 'cannot be imagined (even ideally) as [a] person', in Bennett's words. In the spirit of the alternative readings that Stevens's poetics encourages, 'the more than rational distortion' also suggests that phenomenal nature is not identical with the 'rational distortion' we have made of it. That rational distortion then reads as our imposition on the world, fitting its processes to our sense of order.

Stevens marks a distinction between our capacity for perception and the conception he wishes to rid us of in poem VII of 'It Must Give Pleasure':

> […]But to impose is not
> To discover. To discover an order as of
> A season, to discover summer and know it,
>
> To discover winter and know it well, to find
> Not to impose, not to have reasoned at all,
> Out of nothing to have come on major weather,
>
> It is possible, possible, possible. It must
> Be possible (VII.7–14).

The tension between perception and conception is expressed in the strain of the repeated 'possible', whose reach gestures at something unattainable, as the opening clauses of 'The Snow Man' outline conditions it is impossible for imagination to fulfil. The 'order' in 'It Must Give Pleasure' VII is derived from nature 'as of / A season'; but because it is an analogy, the season is a conception we seek in the phenomenal world, something contingent on our current interglacial episode rather than an abiding, objective presence throughout the earth's existence. Yet Stevens tells us we are 'not to have reasoned' at all to get here, which rules out the possibility of (pre)conceiving the seasons; we are instead 'Out of nothing to have come on major weather'.

Stevens suggests that it is in these 'discoveries' that we can take pleasure. However, just as I suggested that the oceanic optimism with which he regards renewal in 'Sea Surface Full of Clouds' is complicated by our understanding of marine pollution, so too must his pleasure in the discovery of 'major weather' be read alongside Botkin's discrimination between naturally originating and artificially exacerbated change. Increased literal instances of 'major weather' today are the result of anthropogenic climate change, arising from the very unreasoned processes that shadow our employment of instrumental reason; Stevens's lines in 'It Must Give Pleasure' now, therefore, offer an expression of our failure to capture the word by 'rational distortion'.

The importance of 'discovery' over 'conception' highlights another aspect of the pleasurable that becomes relevant to a poetics of climate change, that is, our sensory experience of being in the world. We cannot depend on our sense experience to tell us about climate change, but if climate as an abstract can be rendered as though it has sensory presence then we will more readily register it. Costello glosses Stevens's use of the term 'pleasure' by highlighting such a sensual quality, but qualifies it with an apprehension that seems appropriate to the context of climate change: she says to 'give pleasure' means to 'make our eyes dilate, our hair stand on end, satisfy a need' ('US Modernism' 179). This reminds us of our bodily contingency in the world, as experienced by the old man in the tower of 'Credences of Summer'.

In 'What to Make of a Diminished Thing', Costello reads Stevens's 1954 poem 'The Plain Sense of Things' (*Collected* 428) in relation both to natural excess, her quality of 'superfluity', and to our imagined place in the world:

> After the leaves have fallen, we return
> To a plain sense of things. It is as if
> We had come to an end of the imagination,
> Inanimate in an inert savoir.

What remains of the imagination is its essential quality, and Stevens strives towards this because the poem observes that 'the absence of the imagination had / Itself to be imagined'. To achieve 'The Plain Sense of Things' is to attain a fictive state akin to that of 'The Snow Man', or the old man of 'Credences of Summer' who 'feel[s] capable of nothing more' (*Collected* 323).

For Lensing, Stevens's winter is to be read solely in human dimensions: he claims that 'the dismemberment of nature […] took on wide social and personal connotations' for Stevens (67). Yet to invoke the 'dismemberment of nature' in 2001, as Lensing does, and not to even gesture at its relevance to the state of the planet fails to take account of poetry's response to its context of reading, to which Miller is more sensitive in his consideration of 'The Man on the Dump'. Lensing also submits the 'rat come out to see / The great pond and its waste of lilies' to a biographical interpretation, seeing it as 'the reductive minimum, the final seer [...] the ineradicable imagination of a lessened poet' (64) – as which he argues that Stevens may have imagined himself, being in his seventies when he composed the poem.

In contrast, having aligned 'human and natural creativity' in her term 'superfluity', Costello is able to trace the entangled significance that Lensing ignores. She notes that the rat might also be 'the sign of renewal entering the poem of waste'' ('What to Make' 586). Because 'nature and culture slide together' in Stevens as Costello maintains, the rat is doubly an indicator species, signalling a change of season, and a focal point for the poet's imagination. As the latter, 'Its angle of vision does not allow the wide prospect of the elevated Romantic beholder, but a nearly horizontal perspective, in which imagination and reality become so close as to be indistinguishable' ('What to Make' 586). That doubleness means that Stevens's rat serves as another exemplar of Bornstein's notion of 'double consciousness': it is a mediating image, both observer *of* nature and observer *in* nature. Although Costello asserts that Stevens's rodent 'is evidently not the rat that appears in Eliot's *The Waste Land*', which she considers 'a leftover from the trenches' (586), 'The Plain Sense of Things' shares the earlier poem's concern with the potential for renewal, while the rats in both are hybrids of objective entity and imaginative projection (see Chapter 2, pp.71–2 of this thesis). Stevens makes that doubleness into a way of escaping anthropocentricity. The already impersonal narrating voice – 'we return', 'We had come to an end' – hesitantly transcends humanity to participate imaginatively in the world it perceives, rather than remaining content with reducing that

world to a perceived object. In this extension, we see a quality of Bennett's notion of vital materialism, that 'a chord is struck between person and thing' (120).

Because the imagination takes pleasure in being 'superfluous' to reasoned order, it is able to account for what exceeds human conception. In 'The Man on the Dump', the dump remains the object of the poet's imaginative attention even while it marks civilisation's attempt to rid its consciousness of those items. In 'The Plain Sense of Things', this paradox of waste is embodied in the word 'waste' itself. It can stand for desolation, as in the title of Eliot's poem, but it can also signal surfeit or excess, as Costello argues: 'the "waste" of the lilies suggests the opposite of barrenness', in Stevens's poem ('What to Make' 586). As desolation, a 'waste of lilies' is in the same state as the 'leaves' that have 'fallen' in the first line; as surfeit, lilies cover the pond in anticipation of the renewal of spring from winter. The 'waste' is doubly squandering and profligacy, depending on whether one looks at the 'great pond' through the poet's eyes or the rat's. If we see it from the point of view of the biographical Stevens, in his seventies when the poem was published, the sense of desolation or emptiness is emphasised, as it is for the old man in the tower of 'Credences of Summer'. But from rat's perspective, the seasonal cycle persists and renewal is possible. The ambivalence is inherent to Stevens's poetics. In 'The Plain Sense of Things', the imagination entertains the possibility of organic renewal despite the condition of waste, whereas in 'The Man on the Dump', the condition of waste is humanly created, representing a failure to imagine the trash possesses the vital materialism that Jane Bennett attributes to it. The lilies and the dump can be distinguished by Botkin's categories of natural and unnatural change.

Because it results from the accumulation of waste greenhouse gases, climate change signifies the failure of imagination that I read in 'The Man on the Dump', but on a global scale. It attests that we have only imagined as far as the energy or resources we have produced and used, and relegated the emissions generated to the status of 'side effects'. Such waste is not licensed by Stevens's identification of a root common to imaginative and natural renewal. Rather, the poet demonstrates that we have to resort to the imagination's scope to perceive material phenomena that exceed our experience and interests. In 'The Plain Sense of Things', this human practice of waste, as compared to natural waste, is signified by 'The greenhouse' whose 'chimney is fifty years old and slants to one side'.[13] There is no possibility for natural renewal as the greenhouse depends on human intervention to restore it – it 'never so badly needed paint'. But in terms of waste, it is still subject to the same physical principles as the lilies on the pond. If we consider the greenhouse's waste in terms of desolation, its poor state of repair and decrepit chimney signal a failure to contain and harness heat: that heat dissipates into the atmosphere, and the wasteful world remains cold and icy. An alarming alternative, however, comes into consideration if the 'waste' of heat is profligate, because this entails an accumulation of (literal) greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

[13] As the dump of 'The Man on the Dump' is an image of an artificial site, so too is the greenhouse. Also like the dump, the greenhouse may be inspired by a site in Stevens's neighbourhood – Holly Stevens mentions 'The greenhouses [that] were on our route' to Elizabeth Park in Hartford (656). In both of his poems, Stevens abstracts environmental particulars to make them into resonant symbols.

In 'Poésie Abrutie' (*Collected* 268), whose title goes beyond pleasure to be 'Besotted Poetry',[14] the greenhouse becomes a concentrated and intensified symbol of human interaction with the climate, in the same way the dump of 'The Man on the Dump' becomes a concentrated and intensified symbol of waste disposal: 'The greenhouse on the village green / Is brighter than the sun itself. / Cinerarias have a speaking sheen.' Recalling that the 'sun itself' in Stevens operates as a figure for reality in its broadest terms (Vendler 34), we can read the artificial intensification of solar energy by the greenhouse here as a figure for poetry, a concentration of natural energy by the imagination. This becomes explicit in the way that the plants in the final line are given a 'speaking sheen', a linguistic, and thus human, supplement to the reflected sun. This is a fictive intensification of the distant solar body's energy into one multifaceted image, bringing it within immediate sensory experience. As such, it highlights both literally and figuratively the underlying natural principles that we would otherwise ignore or relegate to our unconscious, because we more intensely witness the sun's brightness and feel its heat. We already use the phrase 'greenhouse effect' to imagine in human terms the operation of the climate, but in likening the atmosphere to an artificial structure we retrospectively impose order on it, as the jar does on the wilderness. The greenhouse figures the fictions that we need to construct to make climate amenable to human sensation.

The fictions of our climate

If the irruption of major weather into our systems of thought startles us, is there anything more conventionally pleasurable that a supreme fiction of the climate can offer us? However dire our entanglement in climate change is, sombre doomsterism is at best a smug and at worst an off-putting rhetorical strategy. In 'Apocalypse Forever', Erik Swyngedouw goes so far as to suggest that this approach represents a 'negative desire for an apocalypse that few really believe will realize itself' (219), with the effect of evading the political implications of climate change and pressing on with capitalism redressed as sustainable development. He thus advocates 'the construction of great new fictions that create real possibilities for constructing different socio-environmental futures' (228). More imaginative and more stimulating ways of accounting for our ecological implication are therefore valuable.

Stevensian recapitulations of our predicament may thus throw up unexpected insights, supreme fictions for our future. His 'Anecdote of the Jar' is more appealing for not being, say, 'Sermon of the Jar'; while 'Sea Surface Full of Clouds', rather than being aesthetic for its own sake, actually demonstrates the recursive imagination we should employ in considering our phenomenal environment. This quality, playful rather than programmatic, has analogies with the improvisatory approach that Nigel Clark advocates in response to the possibility of sudden climate change:[15] 'If the abrupt climate change thesis has a lesson,' he writes, 'it is surely as much about the way that

[14] This is according to the translation provided by editors Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson in their note to the poem (*Collected* 1002).

[15] Specifically, this term describes the possibility that our cumulative environmental impacts could trigger a shift in conditions that is sudden or swift, by both geological and cultural timescales.

extreme conditions condemn us and other creatures to experimentation and improvisation as it is about the need for precaution and self-restraint' ('Volatile Worlds' 49).

We cannot let playfulness become synonymous with complacency; but our agency is equally limited if we burden ourselves with visions of definitive climate collapse. We can 'discover' our way through by 'coming on' it, rather than by imposing 'rational distortion' and imagining that to be a great order. The scope afforded by poetic fictions enables us to entertain and explore the imaginative consequences of our environmental interactions without committing ourselves to their material consequences. Abstract, changeable images of our climatic present and future can engage us by bringing those qualities into our sense experience and remind us that our survival is 'dependent on innumerable daily acts of endurance, compassion and making-do as it is on moments of high drama or breakthrough' ('Volatile Worlds' 50).

Chapter 4

'Who will entune a bogged orchard?' Basil Bunting and nature's discord

Like the two poets I have already discussed, Basil Bunting engages with the challenge of making nonhuman phenomenal agency manifest. I have read Eliot as exploiting discontinuities in culture to indicate our implication in forces that we would conventionally repress, and argued that Stevens demonstrates our difficulty in projecting on to the climate an instrumental idea of order because language never entirely corresponds to the forces it seeks to describe. Bunting's poetry represents the entanglement of human and world with a different technique, embodying natural phenomena not just in imagery but aurally in the materiality of his language. In 'Radical Landscapes', Harriet Tarlo writes that Bunting 'uses musical forms and terms to explore the changing, shape-shifting environment. […] musical elements and natural elements correspond and coexist in such a way that neither can be said clearly to be a metaphor of the other, but [they] coexist as signals in a sequence' (158). This weaving together of agencies in his poetry helps prepare us to deal with the implications of anthropogenic climate change.

Bunting scales up from individual experience through the levels of bioregion and civilisation to nonhuman terrestrial and cosmic forces. The 'patrolled bounds' between our usual distinctions of scale are, in his work, zones which species that are 'companion' to the human 'slither' across, such as the slowworm and rat in his 1965 long poem *Briggflatts* (Bunting *Complete Poems* 59–81; 71). Equally unbounded is the modernist selfhood that Bunting develops in his poetry. The self cannot be readily identified with the body, which is shown to be situated in and constituted by the environment throughout his work. His is not the uncomplicated surrender of psyche to world articulated by Theodore Roszak in the notion of 'ecopsychology', which proposes that 'the psyche is rooted *inside* a greater intelligence once known as the *anima mundi*, the psyche of the Earth herself' ('Where Psyche Meets Gaia' 16; author's italics). Rather, there is in Bunting's work a transition between human and natural creations that can be illuminated by Nancy Tuana's theory of viscous porosity and Beth Dempster's of ecological boundarylessness. In responding to the question 'who will entune a bogged orchard […] ?' that Bunting asks in the second part of *Briggflatts* (*Complete* 69), I argue in this chapter that the music of his poetry attunes our erring ears to nonhuman phenomena, but without seeking to bring us into easy harmony with them.

I will begin this chapter by examining Bunting's poetics, which is informed by both a Romantic and a modernist heritage. He formulates an open style to express the entanglement of human cultural and wild natural agency, which I read as exemplifying Latour's quality of hybridity. His patterning of this entanglement is open-ended rather than teleological, and can be seen in his arrangement of elemental imagery such as fire and water. Patterns are complicated and disrupted by human presence, which imposes a direction on material phenomena that those phenomena resist,

in particular in modernity, generating waste and exacerbating a tendency towards entropy. Bunting's awareness of this disruption is marked by a departure from usual narratives of selfhood, and I go on to explain how identity is complicated by the environment of his poems. Reciprocal attempts to bring the world into harmony are thus fundamentally compromised, and we as humans must become reconciled to a state of decay.

The chapter will centre on an analysis of *Briggflatts*, using the poem to display the efficacy of the critical tools I have so far developed. The poem represents the culmination of Bunting's work and is dubbed '*An autobiography*', although as the poet himself notes it is 'not a record of fact' (*Complete* 226; author's italics): it proceeds from his boyhood landscape of northern England to London, the Mediterranean and into the mythic history of Alexander the Great, before returning to his home soil. I will also consider Bunting's earlier work by looking critically back through *Briggflatts* to demonstrate how its ecopoetics is developed in the course of his writing. His work allows us to envisage human beings as part of ecological co-creation, what Beth Dempster calls 'sympoiesis' ('Boundarylessness' 94–5). He represents our entanglement with nonhuman process without intentional control on either part. Such a poetics, I contend, is valuable in the articulation of human implication in contemporary climate change.

Positioning poetics: Nature in transitional textual relation

In light of his engagement with our experience of nature, Bunting's work might be seen as more obviously amenable to environmental readings than Eliot or Stevens under the terms of first-wave ecocriticism. However, it is for his articulation of a particular relation with natural phenomena that I consider Bunting's work here, not the incorporation of these phenomena in his work per se. The relation he identifies in his poetry persists into the twenty-first century, even as material nature is irrevocably altered by anthropogenic climate change.

Bunting establishes this relation through a synthesis of Poundian with Wordsworthian principles. In the preface to the 1968 edition of his *Collected Poems*, Bunting declares: 'If ever I learned the trick of it [i.e. poetry], it was mostly from poets long dead whose names are obvious' (reprinted in *Complete Poems* 21). Wordsworth is the first of these, and Bunting concludes his list with his contemporaries Ezra Pound and Louis Zukofsky. The influence of Wordsworth and Pound in *Briggflatts* is evident to Burton Hatlen in 'Regionalism and Internationalism in Basil Bunting's *Briggflatts*'. Hatlen considers the provenance of the 'concrete particular' in Bunting's imagery, for instance (60):

> The power of poetic language to render up such presences steadily increases as we move from Wordsworth to Pound. Too often Wordsworth […] give[s] us abstractions rather than images. But Pound's verse is full of the things of this world, perceived with astonishing precision; and *Briggflatts* is a post-Imagist poem as well as a bardic poem, each detail finely drawn.

In affirming this heritage for Bunting, I also contend that he disavows certain egotistical projections

of Wordsworthian Romanticism as well as the self-assertions of Poundian modernism. He enables an understanding of human–natural relations as mutually creative and influential.

For Wordsworth, the infinite reach of the imagination contrasts with the irruption of reality. When the 'soulless image' of Mont Blanc 'usurped upon a living thought / That never more could be' (*The Prelude* 1850; VI.527–8), Wordsworth shows that his imagination outruns the world, and is brought down by the mismatch with it. But the power of the imagination persists, and Wordsworth later calls it 'That awful Power' that 'rose from the mind's abyss' (1850 *Prel.* VI.594), so it re-ascends despite the mountain's earlier 'usurpation'. Bunting's modernism in contrast attends to what Isobel Armstrong, in *Language as Living Form in Nineteenth-Century Poetry*, dubs 'The sensory, immediate and self-enclosed image', which 'may partake in some sense of the world of phenomenal experience' (209). This is the influence of Pound's harder, imagistic phase, and of William Carlos Williams's dictum, first expressed in 'A Sort of a Song', 'Compose. (No ideas / but in things) Invent!' (Williams *Selected Poems* 133). Yet a truly self-enclosed modernist poetics would preclude relation with the outside world, which is in this arrangement irremediably other, brought into the text but standing for nothing other than itself. Armstrong then asks of such an image 'how does it interpret itself?' Eliot grapples with this resistance of the objective world – Prufrock's failures of self-assertion and civilisation's effort to impose order on nonhuman processes in *The Waste Land*, respectively, reveal the vulnerability of ego and of culture to forces they would exclude or control. In Eliot's work, this recognition comes only after resistance to those forces has been attempted. Bunting, however, already accepts this entanglement with the world, and, pragmatically, develops a poetics from it. The objective world remains no less present, but its effect is to efface rather than fracture a sense of self.

At the opening of *Briggflatts*, the figure of a stonemason inscribes human language materially into the world, and he demonstrates the give and take that an acceptance of the world's objective presence entails. The mason exists according to natural rhythm rather than that of the clock, 'tim[ing] his mallet / to a lark's twitter', and acknowledges that his mineral medium is materially responsive rather than purely passive, 'listening while the marble rests' (*Complete* 61). While the gravestone he makes is a signifier of human particularity and 'the stone spells a name', it stands in contrast to the dead man 'In the grave's slot', thus in fact 'naming none, / a man abolished'. The two processes, death and commemoration, are not opposed but inextricably entangled, because it is the dead man's decomposition that prompts the mason's composition in the stone. As in Stevens's 'The Plain Sense of Things', processes of organic waste engender renewal because 'Decay thrusts the blade' and 'wheat stands in excrement / trembling'. In *Briggflatts*, however, this process has none of the aesthetic vitality of Stevens's dialectic between imagination and reality, as even the birdsong becomes effortful: 'Painful lark, labouring to rise!' (61). The notion of birdsong, which uses the terms of human music to describe a nonhuman source of sound, here signifies both a human acceptance of natural rhythm, and that rhythm's tendency towards death and decay.

Bunting's expression of human entanglement with the world, and the world's material resistance to human beings – the marble resists the mason, while the process of decay is not arrested by the erection of a gravestone – exemplifies the two qualities of Nancy Tuana's notion of 'viscous porosity'. She writes: 'Attention to the *porosity* of interactions helps to undermine the notion that distinctions, as important as they might be in particular contexts, signify a natural or unchanging boundary, a natural kind. At the same time, "viscosity" retains an emphasis on resistance to changing form' (194; author's italics). To read this in Bunting is to see his admission of nonhuman material agency into the poem, as marked for example in the mason's words 'Rocks / happen by chance'. The conclusion of the first section with the lines 'Name and date / split in soft slate / a few months obliterate' (*Complete* 64) paradoxically 'entunes' in its repeated rhymes a process of symbolic decay, where even the solidity of the gravestone is subject to elemental erosion. The patterning marks an epigrammatic acceptance of what Tarlo calls 'the ultimate "fact" of nature' (158). As such it contrasts with the mountain's troubling presence for Wordsworth, or the terror that Eliot communicates in the vitality of the lilacs in the opening of *The Waste Land*. Bunting accepts both material nature and the possibility of 'chance' into his view of the world without having here to bring them within the comprehension of the conscious mind. Tarlo affirms that 'The assumption that landscape writing always presents the land, in ways associated with traditional pastoral, as romantic, sublime, mystical and sentimental is belied' by Bunting's poetics (150).

Our ease of access to such troubling material phenomena is complicated when human activity seeks to contain or suppress them, however. A transition away from grounded understanding of the world is doubly inscribed in *Briggflatts* with the movement from the first to the second part of the poem: first, there is a change of setting from rural to urban landscape; second, and more significantly, is the change of mindset this relocation prompts. In the first part of the poem we can 'trace / lark, mallet, / becks, flocks / and axe knocks' (*Complete* 64). This list mingles processes natural and human: birdsong (or flight), carving, the run of a stream, agriculture and history. The associations 'traced' between the two spheres are reinforced by the common brevity of the Anglo-Saxon diction and the material consonance in the '-k' and '-ks' sounds. As Tarlo points out, 'the activity of nature is not so much invoked as embodied' by Bunting's sonic patterning in the poem (156). By the second movement of *Briggflatts*, however, the poet-figure is 'a spy', and what in his boyhood was 'tracing' now serves more functional ends: he 'gauges', 'decodes', 'scans' (*Complete* 65). His relation with the world becomes instrumental, rather than fully sensory, although by enjambing the objects of these verbs, Bunting suggests that natural phenomena outrun human processes of containment. As in the penultimate stanza of the preceding section, these images also entangle the natural and artificial or functional, with 'a Flemish horse / hauling beer' for instance. The weather is still present in the city in the form of 'thunder', and even the human channelling of water and gas, in 'pipes clanking', registers material resistance through their sound. The pipe, a connective device, also suggests a link between urban emplacement and natural resources. Rather than

straightforwardly lamenting physical separation from a rural idyll, part II of *Briggflatts* is marked by its troubled reaction to nature's material excess, which cannot be entirely suppressed or instrumentalised even in the city.

This is a concern Bunting also explores in his earlier sonata *The Well of Lycopolis* (1935). On one hand, the London of this poem is characterised by its absolute distinction from nature: 'The nights are not fresh / between High Holborn and the Euston Road / nor the days bright even in summer / nor the grass of the squares green' (*Complete* 42). On the other hand, the invocation of natural time in these lines conjures the very processes the metropolis occludes. The titular 'Well' is itself an image of the inability to mark a distinction between human signification and natural phenomena, as it represents both civilisation's dependence on natural resources and water's own agency. If drunk by a woman, the fabled Lycopolis water would break her hymen, inscribing her body as though she had lost her virginity whether or not she had done so.[1] The legend anticipates Alaimo's observation in *Bodily Natures* that 'the human body is never a rigidly enclosed, protected entity, but is vulnerable to the substances and flows of its environments' (*Bodily* 28). Bunting's line 'We have laid on Lycopolis water' (*Complete* 42) can therefore be read as reflecting both cultural and natural agency. It is a declaration of hospitality, when water has been provided for us; but 'laid' also has a sexual connotation, and an association with impurity. As in my reading of water in *The Waste Land*, Bunting indicates that we cannot make an instrumental distinction between kinds of water; neither can the city distinguish itself from the natural resources it abstracts. More broadly, in a poem Howarth characterises as 'satiris[ing] Bloomsbury's incestuous mixture of modernism and literary journalism' (211), the apocalyptic mode of Eliot's writing is itself subject to Bunting's pastiche.[2] The parodic tone of *The Well of Lycopolis* suggests once more that Bunting emphasises material phenomena's resistance to human control, whereas Eliot in *The Waste Land* sets them in tension. With the juxtaposition of civilised practice against its long-range environmental impacts, Bunting's writing offers an emergent mode for dealing with concerns that human practice has aggravated in the time since he was writing.

Notions of natural purity are tainted by the metropolis. In both *Briggflatts* and *The Well of Lycopolis*, Bunting is aware that urban environments require us to find a different language to engage with the natural, rather than simply polarising a pure nature and a polluted culture. In that awareness, Bunting confronts a problem also faced by his Romantic predecessor, as identified by Robert Pogue Harrison: 'It is in the city that Wordsworth recollects the scene of nature, and it is only by recollecting his recollection that he relates to the presence of nature […] The nostalgia, in turn, is

[1] Bunting cryptically says in his note on the poem: 'Gibbon mentions its effects in a footnote' (*Complete* 147). Gibbon's footnote itself reads: 'Lycopolis is the modern Siut, or Osiot, a town of Said, about the size of St. Denys, which drives a profitable trade with the kingdom of Sennaar; and has a very convenient fountain, "cujus potû signa virginitatis eripiuntur"' (*The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* ed. Womersley; Vol. II., reprinting Gibbon's original third and fourth volumes; 64 n.112.) The Latin translates, 'on drinking which, the signs of virginity are torn'.

[2] This is most notable in section III of *The Well of Lycopolis*: 'Can a moment of madness make up for / an age of consent?' (Bunting *Complete* 43) spoofs Eliot's 'The awful daring of a moment's surrender / Which an age of prudence can never retract' (*The Waste Land* 403–4). Bunting also vulgarises 'twit twit twit' (*Waste* line 203) in 'tweet, tweet, twaddle, / tweet, tweet, twat' (Bunting *Complete* 43).

what draws nature into its presence' (*Forests* 163). The contrast between the first and second movements of *Briggflatts* is a contrast between the embedded language of youth and the self-conscious language of the metropolis. Both modes, however, are subject to a dilemma identified by Terry Gifford in *Pastoral*: 'The problem is to find a language that can convey an instinctive unity that is at once both prior to language and expressed by a language that is distinctively human' (8). The real shift between the first two parts of *Briggflatts* is not then from "natural" language to a more alienated vocabulary, but between a language which accepts both its limitations and the counter-agency of material phenomena, rather than one which attempts to master their dynamic force. The structure of *Briggflatts* is, throughout, further conditioned by the human view. What at first seem artless and self-important uses of language, in the first and second sections respectively, are actually both retrospective, seen from the reflective position arrived at in the poem's final movement. Boyhood and literary apprenticeship take place in the broader environment of that view, which is able to entertain the material value of the world in its own right, 'the loveliness of things overlooked or despised' as Bunting suggests in his *A Note on Briggflatts*.

Because such material phenomena are a constant presence in *Briggflatts*, we should be wary of suggesting that those in a rural landscape are somehow more authentic than those in the city. Hatlen points out that *Briggflatts* 'is full of references to—and invokes by their Northumbrian names—the flora, the fauna, the topography, and the agricultural and domestic traditions of a specific region of the earth' (52). We see this, for instance, in the closely observed account of the mason's work, and its relation to natural time, or the discriminating ear that picks out the 'sweet tenor bull' of the poem's first line (*Complete* 61). Yet this attention to detail is not unique to the rustic situation of the first section, and persists in the city, where a gaze 'gauges / lines of a Flemish horse / […] the angle, obtuse, / a slut's blouse draws on her chest' (*Complete* 65). We ought not, then, make the poem speak solely to regionalist agendas, even though Bunting himself on occasion favoured such readings. In the first of his own notes on the poem, for instance, he declares that 'The Northumbrian tongue [that] travel has not taken from me sometimes sounds strange to men used to the koiné or to Americans who may not know how much Northumberland differs from the Saxon south of England. Southrons would maul the music of many lines in *Briggflatts*' (*Complete* 226). Jonathan Bate endorses Bunting's position in more environmental terms by referring to *Briggflatts* as a 'Northumbrian poem […] in which identity is forged in place' (*Song* 234). However, Tarlo rightly identifies that Bunting 'chooses (some would say disingenuously) to emphasise the rural and local aspects of a poem which in fact ranges the world and time' (152).

Tarlo's analysis also serves to demonstrate how far a literary text can exceed authorial expectation and assertion. By resisting and then moving on from both rural and metropolitan ('bogus'; *Complete* 65) accounts of the world, the poet is already conscious of the significance of elsewhere. He is both local and global in his outlook at the same time, hence the 'Regionalism and Internationalism' Hatlen stresses in the title of his analysis. The London of *The Well of Lycopolis* is

situated in a broader context, while *Briggflatts* begins with the local, the river 'Rawthey's madrigal', and flows down to the 'strong song' of the 'sea' by the time of its coda (*Complete* 61, 81), admitting the pull of oceanic processes. Hatlen elaborates: '*Briggflatts* issues from and seeks to speak for a place that looks east to the North Sea as much as or more than it looks south to London' (54). Bunting's practice, drawn to the sea and further onwards as 'the pilot turns from the wake' (*Complete* 65), thus moves in the opposite direction to Wordsworth's nostalgic impulse. Of that, Harrison writes, 'It is against the current of this river that the soul returns, from the alienating openness of the sublime […] to the intimate enclosure of [its] origins' (*Forests* 163). Wordsworth's return is against the current; Bunting allows himself to be subject to the tides, carried not home but out into the elements.

An elemental economy

The way *Briggflatts* is drawn on into the sea is indicative of the environmental boundaries that remain open throughout Bunting's poetry. The poems move outwards from sites of human significance into elemental material processes. *Briggflatts* for instance resonates with images of elemental water and fire, and puts any instrumental use of them within a cyclical, consequential context. Anthony Mellors sees this openness of Bunting's verse as part of the more general trajectory of *Late Modernist Poetics* that he analyses:

> Mythic consciousness attests to cosmic powers that allow 'man' to recover and participate in natural processes rather than symbolising the division between human significance and a chaotic universe. The shift is towards an ecological theory of artistic enactment: man is created by his environment, therefore he must learn to express himself through it, to permit himself to be expressed by it, instead of trying to beat it into shape (23).

Mellors's crucial observation is that, once environmental factors are recognised as an influence, we cannot then look to control our nonhuman environment in a straightforward fashion, to 'beat it into shape'. Bunting expresses himself by weaving what Phillip Brown calls 'the elemental threads' of *Briggflatts* 'into a rich fabric, the complexities of the soil cycle and the water cycle interlacing to create an intricate pattern' ('A Northern Lucretius' 3). This is already evident in the way the sonata moves from the river to sea. In this regard, we can characterise Bunting's work as post-pastoral, by the terms Terry Gifford outlines, because it 'convey[s] an awareness of both nature as culture and of culture as nature' (162). Gifford writes that contemporary 'literature has gone beyond the closed circuit of pastoral and anti-pastoral' in its visions of nature 'to achieve a vision of an integrated natural world that includes the human […] a discourse that can both celebrate *and* take some responsibility for nature without false consciousness' (148; author's italics). In expressing such a recognition, Bunting's work is valuable to a poetics of climate change, because this demands our attention to nature's forces and acceptance of our role in exacerbating them.

The purpose of patterning nature in Bunting is to render it, as all-encompassing system and process, sensible at the experiential level. This represents his engagement with a Romantic dilemma articulated by Soper in 'Passing Glories and Romantic Retrievals': 'Speech or writing mediates, either deliberately or as an effect, that which is immediate and preconceptual, and thus renders conceptual—and in the process in some sense "betrays"—that which is as it is, and is experienced as it is, only because it cannot be spoken' (21). Bunting negotiates this dilemma by working in the opposite direction, rendering process – which has to be conceived because it takes place through time rather than instantaneously – in the movement of the verse. Through this movement, imagery such as the rocks or marble of *Briggflatts* become part of networks of motifs rather than remaining isolated, intractable objects. Bunting effects an engagement with nature not, or not solely, by registering a close scrutiny of the environment but by giving artist and natural forces equal status in the creation of the work of art.

As a result, the processes that Bunting examines, although physical, are not reified. They are systemic rather than bounded, leading forever out of the poem to the phenomena of which they are a part.[3] Beth Dempster's notion of 'boundarylessness' can be productively applied here. Dempster suggests that ecosystems have previously been considered bounded or 'autopoietic', that is self-generating, according to some supposedly inherent or autonomous design. By way of example, she says of her own training as a forester 'in the fairly common "harvesting" mentality' that it 'promotes interpretation of forest systems as autopoietic' (105). In this way, forests as systems have become regarded as mechanisms amenable to human control and market management. An alternative conception might be more helpful, she proposes. She considers the shoreline and snowline of a US West Coast rainforest as an example, and argues that:

> While these may be boundaries, they are not "self"-produced. […] the tree-line is a result of biological as well as climatic factors. If the latter are included as part of the system producing the boundary, then the boundaries must be drawn to incorporate these components, which would include a greater spatial extent, moving the boundaries further out (Dempster 104).

Any influence coming to bear on a system, such as 'climatic factors', should merit consideration as part of that system, even if it lies beyond geographically conceived boundaries. Dempster dubs such an understanding of systems 'sympoietic' rather than autopoietic. This is akin to material ecocriticism's conception of agency as not entailing intentionality, with organisms to be regarded as sites where fields of force come to bear rather than as bounded entities.

[3] This is consistent with an understanding of systemic ecology that emerges in middle of the twentieth century. Donald Worster outlines the conceptual value of the ecosystem in *Nature's Economy*: 'Using the ecosystem, all relations among organisms can be described in terms of the purely material exchange of energy and of such chemical substances as water, phosphorous, nitrogen, and other nutrients […] These are the real bonds that hold the natural world together; they create a single unit made up of many smaller units—big and little ecosystems' (302). The 'ecosystem brought all nature—rocks and gases as well as biota—into a common ordering of material resources. It was more inclusive, paradoxically, because it was first more reductive', Worster explains.

Bunting's poetics suggests that the conventionally separate zones of human and natural creativity are transgressed in sympoietic fashion. It is possible thus to consider the animal world in *Briggflatts* in artistic, organisational terms. When 'Anemones […] / design the pool / to their grouping' (*Complete* 69), they are autonomous entities extending their influence beyond their individual bodies. In sympoietic terms, the power of creation and organisation is not confined to life, either, with agency ascribed to meteorological phenomena when 'Mist sets lace of frost / on rock for the tide to mangle' (*Complete* 78). Bunting's image demonstrates Tuana's theory of '*emergent interplay*, which precludes a sharp divide between the biological and cultural' (189; author's italics) in the production of phenomena: the 'lace' becomes a craft-like decorative overlay on the rock, but is a temporary inscription, as subject to phenomenal change as the gravestone was in the first part of the poem. Hence the system is not in aesthetic harmony, but is one where the 'tide' can disorder delicate patterning of 'mist' and 'frost', all aspects of the hydrological cycle in different states. In Dempster's terms, this is not an autopoietic system that exhibits 'Homeostatic balance' but a sympoieitic one, 'Balance[d] by dynamic tension' (103) between different states of matter, vapour ('mist'), solid ('frost') and liquid ('tide').

The dynamic tension to which Dempster refers can be seen in the way the poet puts human and nonhuman agency on an equal footing in *Briggflatts*. The natural world and music share a creative impulse throughout the poem, Bunting using imagery drawn from the former synaesthetically to communicate the quality of the latter. The verve of 'Asian vultures riding on a spiral / column of dust […] figures sudden flight of the descant / on a madrigal by Monteverdi' (*Complete* 69). These lines embody the effect of the music in a physical image, but at the same time associate it with death and decay, thanks to the connotations of vultures and dust. Later in the poem, analogy shifts into agency. Bunting asks us to 'consider' the music of baroque composer 'Domenico Scarlatti', and hears 'stars and lakes / echo him and the copse drums out his measure' (*Complete* 76). In the transition from the verb 'echo' to 'drums', the metaphor moves from passive to active, as the trumpet in Stevens's 'Credences of Summer' VIII first follows then precedes the weather it announces. Bunting's practice in *Briggflatts*, 'pragmatically admitting nature into culture's ken and vice versa', writes Sara R. Greaves, means that 'culture and nature, the visual and the auditory, tenor and vehicle, weave in and out defining each other' ('A Poetics of Dwelling' 69). That is to say, human presence in his poems is not the only source of agency.

Poetics of entropy

Mutual agency is not always harmonic in Bunting, as human design and natural process can be equally destructive. In the lines 'White marble stained like a urinal / cleft in Apuan Alps, / always trickling, apt to the saw', the process of gradual natural erosion makes the marble suitable for human intervention, that is, 'apt to the saw'. Similarly, both 'Ice and wedge / split it or well-measured cordite shots, / while paraffin pistons rap, saws rip'. Having established this

common destructive capacity, Bunting goes on to compare waste from both natural and industrial process, in the image 'clouds echo marble middens' (*Complete* 67). Water vapour cast off from land and sea is made to resemble the cast-offs of marble extraction in an analogy of a natural system with an economic one. In more general discussion of ecosystemic terminology, Donald Worster suggests in *Nature's Economy* that use of terms such as "producer" and "consumer" to describe organisms in ecosystems is indicative of an economic worldview; furthermore, regarded '[a]s a modernized economic system, nature now becomes a corporate state, a chain of factories, an assembly line' (313). Remember that Dempster also suggests forests are characterised as mechanistic so they can be economically co-opted by the 'common "harvesting" mentality' (105).

Yet the economy is not the only possible model to describe natural phenomena; neither can economisation account for all material processes. Clouds represent one stage of a continuous hydrological cycle, whereas the middens are dumped waste from human industrial endeavour, that is, a process where continuous, cyclical use is not envisaged. This complicates the notion of an 'echo' between them. Worster considers other scientific models of the environment that account for such discrepancies:

> The ecosystem of the earth, considered from the perspective of energetics, is a way-station on a river of no return. Energy flows through it and disappears eventually into the vast sea of space; there is no way to get back upstream. [...] By collecting solar energy for their own use, plants retard this entropic process; they can pass energy on to animals in repackaged or reconcentrated form—some of it at least—and the animals in turn hold it temporarily in organized availability (303).

If we liken our economies to ecosystemic closed loops, however, we neglect what must necessarily be wasted. As a result, waste collects as we both produce and efface it. With this doublethink, the human economy is not an harmonious replication of the natural economy, but an exacerbation of its tendency towards entropy. This is, crucially, where Bunting's poetics departs from Gifford's notion of the post-pastoral. Bunting cannot be read as sharing the post-pastoral 'recognition of a creative–destructive universe equally in balance in a continuous momentum of birth and death' (Gifford 153), because his poems tend towards destruction rather than creation. Bunting's image reveals the role of human activities in aggravating an innately entropic tendency.

Taking up Bunting's reference to 'paraffin pistons' – human tools run on fossil fuels – we can consider his analogy between midden and cloud in terms of the carbon rather than the water cycle. Vegetation extracts CO_2 from the atmosphere and converts it into nutrition as part of its life-cycle, as it does solar energy in Worster's account; in contrast, human activity simply offloads excess greenhouse gases – emissions from fossil fuel combustion, which derives energy from the sunlight stored by ancient photosynthesis[4] – into atmospheric middens. In the 1933 poem 'They Say Etna'

[4] In 'Rock, Life, Fire', Nigel Clark describes 'the element of excess that attends the unearthing of a previously inaccessible fire source, or what is effectively the making present of past solar energy' (270).

(*Complete* 182–4), Bunting also entangles economic activity with its offcasts when he remarks that 'Waste accumulates at compound interest' – a line Eric Mottram reads as evidence that 'miners underground exemplify the expenditure of energy in the gears of capitalism' ('An Acknowledged Land' 80). In the poem, waste is shown not just as the result of but as essential to the processes of capitalism, because 'Capital is everything except the desert / sea, untunnelled rock, upper air'. Capital is defined by its environmental exclusions. It is through the aspiration to acquire these 'excepted' environments that Capital broaches the territory of excess. In Bunting's phrasing, 'Breathed air / is Capital, though not rented: / 70 million tons of solid matter / suspended in the atmosphere' by volcanic eruption. This marks one form of accounting, where the unrented air and the volcanic aerosols that escape human commodification are enumerated. But by suggesting that 'Waste accumulates at compound interest', Bunting also sardonically accounts for the externalised costs of human activity, that is, what industrial processes choose not to utilise and thus discard.

In so accounting for 'waste', which is ordinarily discounted, Bunting crosses the boundary that creates "externality" in the first place. He thus anticipates Wood's exegesis of externality in *The Step Back*, that 'temporal externalisation—dumping waste in the river of time—makes sense under more expansive conditions. But [it] makes less and less sense as the world gets smaller' (174). In 'They Say Etna', the world is considered in terms of resources, which are abstracted from the natural processes that accommodate them, thus generating waste. This contrast is evident in the two parodic, headline-like statements that are contrasted in the poem's final lines. The declaration '**MAN IS NOT AN END-PRODUCT, / MAGGOT ASSERTS**', reflects on the human bodily decomposition that Bunting will return to in *Briggflatts*, emphasising human materiality as a process rather than as a 'product' of markets. By more economically-oriented understanding, however, '**MAN IS AN END-PRODUCT AFFIRMS / BLASPHEMOUS BOLSHEVIK**' (*Complete* 184).

The notion that we fail to contain or constrain the processes of nature, seen here in both *Briggflatts* and 'They Say Etna' in earthly, mineral form, characterises other elemental imagery throughout *Briggflatts*. Water resists commodification as, reduction to, or imposition of a defined state, as in *The Waste Land* and *The Well of Lycopolis*. When 'fog on fells' is juxtaposed with 'spring's ending' (*Complete* 64), it is not just that the supposed 'end' of a season is smudged out by vaporous water, it is that the transition erases any certain seasonal boundary. This motif of unseasonal weather recurs throughout the poem, with the 'bogged orchard' and the 'damp' that 'hush[es] the hive' in 'A disappointed July' (*Complete* 69), or, conversely, the unexpectedly melting ice that opens the wintry fifth movement of the poem, 'Drip – icicle's gone' (*Complete* 78). These images are again prefigured in *The Well of Lycopolis*, with the difficulty of registering seasons; passages such as 'Scamped spring, squandered summer, / grain, husk, stem and stubble / mildewed; mawkish dough and sour bread' (*Complete* 43) show, as the earlier examples I have cited from the poem, the failure to synchronise human time with seasonality, meaning that the instrumental efforts of agriculture go past their prime, as Mother Venus also does. Meanwhile, the line 'What reply will a / June hailstorm

countenance?' (*Complete* 41) signals both the unmanageable quality of water as unexpected weather and nature as an unanswerable agent through the hydrological cycle. In these moments, seasonality is revealed to be contingent on the human imposition of order on the world, an order that natural phenomena materially resist.

Another strand of water imagery that runs through *Briggflatts* not only resists but erases human inscription on the world. 'Rain rinses the road' in the poet-figure's native countryside, and once he is at sea, 'Fathoms dull the dale' (*Complete* 63, 66). The latter, oceanic distances occlude the memory of home; but there is an overtone of swamped land as well, the 'bogged orchard' that is to come. The transience of humanity compared with water is most evident in the lines 'Who cares to remember a name cut in ice / or be remembered? / Wind writes in foam on the sea' (*Complete* 66). In the context of part II of *Briggflatts* – in particular the line 'There is a lot of Italy in churchyards' (67) – there is an apparent allusion to Keats's Italian gravestone, inscribed 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water' (Motion *Keats* 564). One possible source behind Keats's choice of epitaph, however, is Shakespeare and Fletcher's *King Henry VIII*, 'Men's evil manners live in brass, their virtues / We write in water' (4.2.45–6).[5] These resonances extend the significance of Bunting's 'name cut in ice' so that it includes reputation, inscription and language; what is at stake in the transition between ice and sea, then, is the trace of humanity itself. Water serves a similar function in *Briggflatts*'s first movement when the boy's young love 'fetches' 'Rainwater from the butt […] to wash him inch by inch' (*Complete* 63). The cleansing process begins an act of self-erasure by the poet-narrator that continues throughout the poem, alongside the 'rinsed road' becoming 'dulled dale'. An intimate identification with the landscape is also indicated by the sly reference to the boy's testicles as 'pebbles', making stony the organs that are seed-bearing. Whether we take the geological or procreative association from the innuendo, it situates the narrator in his spatial or historical environment, taking him out of himself into the landscape or generational time.

There is a similar interdependence of elemental agency with the human in *Briggflatts*'s motifs of the domestication of fire. The poem demonstrates fire's dual quality of productivity and destruction when it is exploited by humans. In the first part of the poem, the burning of wood 'smoulders to ash' to release the evocative 'smell of October apples' (*Complete* 63). The poet writes retrospectively on the way the wood holds over an autumnal memory until the spring, when it is released in the process of combustion. That unseasonal aspect of the process is uncontrolled, unintentional, and creates tension between natural time and human experience. In the second part, heat is

[5] See *King Henry VIII* (Arden Shakespeare: Third Series) 377. Motion says Keats 'had devised an inscription which adapted the translation of a Greek proverb', and interprets it as meaning his poetry 'was [now] part of nature – part of the current of history' (*Keats* 565). Oonagh Lahr, whose scholarship Motion cites (604 n.3), includes Shakespeare and Fletcher's lines among the possible inspirations for Keats's epitaph in 'Greek Sources of "Writ in Water"'. However, her main argument is that although 'The bitter epitaph Keats devised for his own grave is sometimes supposed to derive from a line in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster*', the English sources are indebted to 'a proverbial expression in ancient Greek' (Lahr 17). A. J. Woodman rebuffs Lahr's assertion, claiming that 'Since "writing in water" occurs numerous times in English poets—in Shakespeare, among others—it is *a priori* more likely that Keats's mind was not on classical literature at all' (13). In either event, Bunting's lines resonate in a long tradition, situating anonymous description in the current of natural history.

instrumentalised, unseen but inferred from its effect, in the lines 'porridge bubbling, pipes clanking' (*Complete* 65). In the third part of the poem, however, we are reminded that this process can run out of control; the army's 'torches straggle / seeking charred hearths / to define a road' (71). The soldiers both create and follow a trail of destruction, the 'charred hearths' employing aural and imagistic concision to signify a connection between domestic warmth and unchecked combustion; Bunting's use of the elemental image flickers between its associations with utility and danger. He exploits the hybrid quality that Nigel Clark identifies in his account of fire's emergence and its adoption by humans: 'almost everywhere there is natural fire' on earth 'there are or have been humans willing to augment the planet's own pyrophytic tendencies' – that is, its suitability for fire. This augmentation takes us to the point of 'contemporary excess of anthropic combustion' that Clark implicates in climate change ('Rock' 269, 268). Observing 'that the interplay of biological life and terrestrial fire holds the earth's atmosphere at a point which is far from equilibrium', Clark concludes that now 'might not be [a] good time to risk radically supplementing the earth's combustive budget' (272–3). Whether we read fire as having been used for heating or slaughter in the image of 'charred hearths', its waste, carbon dioxide, also accumulates at compound interest.

Bunting's sonata form enables him to develop the significance of his elemental motifs as they recur throughout the work, expanding their resonance. By the time we reach the poem's final movement, we can share Brown's observation that, 'As rock and water undergo transformation, so too does fire, and the several hearths of *Briggflatts* are subsumed into the flames of the cosmos' (12). Bunting describes as 'Furthest, fairest, things, stars, free of our humbug' (*Complete* 80), but just as his experience of his natural environment is impossible to communicate without language, these vast, stellar processes are still entangled in human terms. To describe a star as 'wrapt in emphatic fire roaring out to a black flue' (80) is to invoke domestic processes of combustion to convey the stellar. Moreover, whatever the quantity of fuel remaining, it is still a finite resource by Bunting's terms of comparison with coal. Bunting's metaphor emphasises a sense of entropy on the cosmic scale, and as we read it today its vehicle becomes as resonant as its tenor.

The star's light is further figured as the 'tremulous thread spun in the hurricane / spider floss on my cheek, light from the zenith' (*Complete* 80); as 'spider floss', the image explicitly connects across natural, personal and cosmic scales. While drawing on scientific understanding, Roszak makes a similarly poetic association between selfhood and stellar matter: 'We now know that the elemental stuff of which we are made was forged in the fiery core of ancient stars. In a very real sense, the ecologist's web of life now spreads out to embrace the most distant galaxies' (8). Bunting situates his affirmation, however, in an entropic context, conveying the common contingency of the stars' lives and human existence in the lines: 'Each spark trills on a tone beyond chronological compass, / yet in a sextant's bubble present and firm / places a surveyor's stone or steadies a tiller' (*Complete* 80). Although a star's existence outruns anthropocentric timescales, that is, our 'chronological compass', it helps situates human presence in the world by directing our navigation and building. It

is when we take that instrumental language to assume it means mastery over these fires, rather than a relation with them, that we fail to recognise the scalar discrepancies inherent in our conceptions, and we intensify their capacity to endanger us.

Bunting unbound

By tracing processes in nature and considering them in terms of human practices and identity, Bunting seems to honour another of Gifford's post-pastoral criteria 'by learning that what is happening in us is paralleled in external nature' (156). Yet Gifford's analysis necessitates the supposition of an 'external nature' at the same time as trying to elide it, because there has to be a medium outside the self in which what happens internally is paralleled. This is one characteristic of Romantic relations with nature, in this example early in *The Prelude*: 'For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven / Was blowing on my body, felt within / A correspondent breeze, that gently moved / With quickening virtue' (1850 *Prel.* I.33–6). Wordsworth's imagination is here enlivened in a manner akin to electromagnetic induction rather than by a literal "inspiration" of the breeze through nose or mouth; the meteorological and metaphorical breezes are, unexpectedly, separated by the boundary of the skin. The wind does have creative agency, as Patricia Waugh demonstrates in her reading of these lines in *Practising Postmodernism, Reading Modernism*. For her, the passage marks a recognition of the "aesthetic" in the world: 'In Wordsworth's writing, […] we can detect that form situated in nature, a blessing in the gentle breeze which actually blows upon us to meet a corresponding breeze within' (22). However, while there is a correspondence between the breezes, it is not a transaction across boundaries as such: the human *in* the environment is still separate *from* it. In Bunting's work, a dispersal of selfhood and what it means to be human addresses our implication in the environment in a way Wordsworth's internalised process cannot.

Bunting's questioning of the twinned stability of selfhood and environment modifies the Romantic discovery of the self in nature to create a sense of permeable, contingent identity, conditioned by and conditioning its environment. The elemental patterning of water in *Briggflatts* resists reduction to a single significance and erases human traces, and its permeation of bounded selfhood is a motif Bunting develops from his earliest work. For instance, while Ode 3 (1926) opens 'I am agog for foam', that 'I' is quickly lost in a profusion of plurals 'our loneliness […] our envy', 'Its indifference / haunts us' and so on (*Complete* 99). Individuality here is expanded into a collective humanity, and any character this humanity has is contingent on the elements. In this way, Bunting begins 'breaking down the monolithic entities of Self and Other', in Greaves's words (69), so that nature is not other but an essential part of human identity. Bunting opens, as Dempster does, 'the possibility of relinquishing boundaries' (Dempster 97), both between individual human being and humanity, and between culture and nature. Compare this with the opening of *The Prelude*: Wordsworth's 'blessing in this gentle breeze' (1850 *Prel.* I.1) is instrumental in the creation of the self with the sympathetic 'corresponding mild creative breeze' it engenders within. In Bunting,

while the environment provides the terms conditioning human experience, that experience is not individuated. Neither is nature benign in his ode; it is not even understood.

The simultaneous influence and incomprehensibility of oceanic force is taken a stage further in Ode 17 (1930). In this poem, the sea is resistant not only to explanation, but also defies attempts to order it, physically and linguistically. The poem opens:

> Now that sea's over that island
> so that barely on a calm day sun sleeks
> a patchwork hatching of combed weed
> over stubble and fallow alike
> I resent drowned blackthorn hedge, choked ditch,
> gates breaking from rusty hinges,
> the submerged copse,
> *Trespassers will be prosecuted.* (*Complete* 113; author's italics)

This expresses a failure of imposed boundaries, the 'hedge, […] ditch, / gates', to contain unexpected weather, later described as 'this subaqueous persistence / of a particular year'. Although the narrator claims to 'resent' these drowned boundaries, the tone is more resigned than bitter, with the first line implying that the rising sea has been anticipated before 'Now'. By quoting the sign '*Trespassers will be prosecuted*' in this context, the limits of cultural order are revealed, as though the sea should be subject to legal admonition but that had failed to have an effect. Even to identify and name a place as 'that island' is to intimate that it has always been an island and will remain so, although as Stevens points out in 'Variations on a Summer's Day' these linguistic distinctions exist 'by grace alone' (*Collected* 215). Whereas Stevens acknowledges the imaginative interdependency of poem and sun with the punning lines 'his poems, although makings of his self, / Were no less makings of the sun' ('The Planet on the Table', *Collected* 450), the same contingency of text on environment in Bunting is signalled by the physical failure of the sign to prevent flooding, using image rather than wordplay. The two poets present alternative answers to Timothy Morton's questions about how we constitute an environment: 'At what point do we stop, if at all, drawing the line between *environment* and *non-environment*: The atmosphere? Earth's gravitational field? Earth's magnetic field, without which everything would be scorched by solar winds? The sun, without which we wouldn't be alive at all? The Galaxy?' (*Thought* 10; author's italics). Stevens reads the environment as being as far as the sun, while Bunting sets no limit, rather suggesting that it is human-imposed limits that are imaginary or inherently vulnerable to transgression.

Ode 17 develops through the simile 'a film of light in the water crumpled and spread / like a luminous frock on a woman walking / alone in her garden' to the narrator's regretful 'Very likely I shall never meet her again', suggesting that what nature symbolises in the poem is in fact simply the female. Hatlen similarly suggests that in *Briggflatts* the 'variable' of 'the natural world […] is, however, usually an extension of the domestic/erotic world of the Woman' (54). In *The Song of the Earth,* on the other hand, Bate reads a reverse analogy in the first part of the sonata: 'the girl he [the

poet-boy] lies with is, like Wordsworth's Lucy, an embodiment of the land' (234). This is seen at least in a further association of water in *Briggflatts*, when boy and girl 'kiss under the rain' (*Complete* 62), or, in a later liaison, with 'the smooth wet riddance of Antonietta's / bathing suit, mouth ajar for / submarine Amalfitan kisses' (67). Both Hatlen and Bate read the relationship between (a) man and nature as an erotic one, and as such that relationship can be useful to climate change criticism because it renders large-scale material phenomena – landscape or water-cycle – imaginatively susceptible to sense. Greaves also draws the female/nature parallel in her analysis of *Briggflatts*, but her ecofeminist reading highlights the irreducibility of either to the other. She also points up eco/feminist agency as opposed to the agency of (a) man: 'the most obvious Romantic Others, woman and nature, are not merely passive receivers and enhancers of the active masculine sublime, but active agents themselves' (69). Furthermore, in Ode 17, the female and the natural are actually distinct, because the former fails in her attempt to control and refine the latter, to cultivate 'her garden' that she 'had prepared […] for preservation'. Her effort is conducted 'not vindictively, urged / by the economy of passions', suggesting her acceptance of natural agency rather than an assertion of human design on it. The subsequent lines support such a reading: 'Nobody said: She is organising / these knicknacks her dislike collects / into a pattern nature will adopt and perpetuate'. This disavows human attempts to impose a 'pattern' on the world, accepting natural agency rather than attempting in vain to prevent its 'trespass', as in the first stanza.

Trespass, or transgression of boundaries, also has a temporal dimension, as David Wood's image of 'temporal externalisation' as 'dumping waste in the river of time' suggests (174). Bunting's poem is not therefore bounded by its relation to the context of composition, and its language cannot prevent the trespass of its own future rereading in retrospective contexts – such as that of a changing climate. In this case, human beings have collectively imposed 'a pattern nature will adopt and perpetuate' in the form of excessive greenhouse gas emissions, exacerbating imbalances and disharmonies already present in the earth's systems. As human identity does not respond independently to such environmental change in Bunting's poetry, but is rather determined by it, selfhood too becomes subject to the contingencies of time. To read the self in his work as a sympoietic system, which in Dempster's terms is 'maintained by dynamic interdependencies', is to recognise how it is changed by the changing environment: she explains that sympoiesis 'has neither temporal nor spatial boundaries' (94). Bunting's poems enact a recognition that selfhood and civilisation are contingent upon natural particularities and process, that there can be no easy, lyric, presupposition of the self. This is an inheritance from Wordsworthian Romanticism, in which, Isobel Armstrong writes:

> Experience is sequential and our collective analysis of it is sequential too, and the process of externalising and repossessing experience is not merely the analysis of a prior process ready to create further experience but the *subject* of a further one. Through the temporal process analysis is returned to the self as *experience* (38; author's italics).

The self is cumulative through time, and through language, in a work like *The Prelude*. Wordsworth is not seeking to describe a self that exists discretely or completely at any stage. In Bunting, the smell of fire and the autumn it recalls form part of a later recognition, as I have shown, but identity is still more contingent than it is in Wordsworth. Where Wordsworth was 'Fostered alike by beauty and by fear: / […] In that beloved Vale' (1850 *Prel.* I.302–4), there is no such dialectical harmony in Bunting, the environment disrupting as much as shaping the sense of selfhood.

Brian Conniff's analysis of *Briggflatts* in *The Lyric and Modern Poetry* makes such a recognition central to Bunting's poetics, especially given that the poet himself styled the work as '*An autobiography,* but not a record of fact' (*Complete* 226; author's italics). Conniff characterises *Briggflatts* as anti-lyric, because, conversely, 'A timeless lyric paradise has an ultimate and coherent vision, but it has no convincing physical vision. It has idealized love, but it has no actual care' (196). By rejecting such an unexamined projection on to the world, Bunting in *Briggflatts* conveys an understanding valuable to contemporary environmentalism, namely that we can have no ethic of care for our global environment if we prefer a mythic, idyllic Nature over it. The poem's anti-lyrical tendency also enables us to see more easily its resistance to a consistent narrating first person singular. Waugh comments generally that "'I" is a logical fiction necessitated by grammar and official biography […] closing down ethical possibilities of being by fixing the self in social convention and oppressive tradition' (*Beyond* 25). Conniff explains that in *Briggflatts*, by contrast, 'One individualized voice or another is always speaking, but not one of them seems to get very close to a "record of fact" about any author, real or imagined' (182). In the opening part of the poem, the figure of the poet is a boy or a young man in the third person, objectified in a retrospective view. His identity is further disrupted as we enter the poem's second movement where, Conniff contends, the 'seasonal narrative structure no longer holds together, at least in the expected way, because the young poet-to-be of section one has disappeared in the shadows; he has turned into a dispersion of figures' (172). Among the roles Conniff enumerates are the 'Poet appointed', 'a spy', 'The pilot' and so on (*Complete* 65), and these come about because the poet 'finds that each culture [...] necessitates a new identity, a new disguise' (Conniff 172).

In the third, central section of *Briggflatts*, the poet's own multiple figures are supplanted by a soldier in Alexander the Great's army and the slowworm that was introduced in the first movement of the poem. Together with the figure of the conqueror himself, the section presents three aspects of selfhood, each entailing a different relation with the environment – nostalgia, conquest and dwelling. The mobilised soldiers lament: 'we desired Macedonia, / the rocky meadows, horses, barley pancakes, / incest and familiar games, / to end in our place by our own wars' (*Complete* 72). Even in their longing for home, however, they do not idealise it, neither as physical landscape nor society. In contrast, Alexander seeks to master the way ahead. His men 'deemed the peak unscaleable; but he / reached to a crack in the rock / with some scorn, resolute though in doubt' to make his ascent. This marks a direct bodily engagement with the mountain that perplexed

Wordsworth's imagination, despite its material resistance to Alexander's climb, 'file sharp, skinning his fingers'. Overreaching himself, the figure of the conqueror is subsequently cast down and 'he lay / on glistening moss by a spring' where he hears the other voice of the poem's third part: 'neither snake nor lizard, / I am the slowworm' (*Complete* 73). Neither aspirational like the conqueror nor backward-looking like his army, the slowworm is content in its ecological niche: 'Ripe wheat is my lodging. […] I prosper / lying low, little concerned'. Nevertheless, it still has an impact on its environment extending beyond its own bodily presence, as the wheat's 'swaying / copies my gait'. Mediating between the soldiers' nostalgia and Alexander's ambition, the slowworm still acknowledges that presence in the world entails a relation with it and an effect that cannot be confined to the body. As the section ends, being and world are brought into literal harmony 'where every bough repeated the slowworm's song'. But the movement of the poem means this is a momentary respite rather than a permanent state of stability.

Bunting transfers aesthetic agency here to the animal kingdom, as he does with the 'sweet tenor bull' of the poem's opening line. Human agency is by contrast fragmented in the poem, as is the poet's own non-lyrical identity in his multiple roles. Rather than assert human individuality 'into a pattern nature will adopt and perpetuate', the unbounded selfhood seen in *Briggflatts* registers its presence in nature in other ways. Sara Greaves develops Conniff's line of argument with an explicit emphasis on reading 'A Poetics of Dwelling' in the poem: 'the self is refracted through a range of personae, human and animal, as if to deny humankind its supremacy. The landscape is fused with parts of the biological body, eroticised by the dispersal in the text of sexual metaphors such as the pebbles and the slowworm, infusing it with desire' (69). The poem is not then autobiography but a natural history, the story of the environment's unshaping of a self. While this may seem close to pastoral visions of a self in harmony with, or part of the harmony of, nature, Bunting's vision of the nonhuman world 'except[s] nothing that is' (*Complete* 75), paying attention to the full range of its processes and complexities rather than making it selectively paradisal.

One of the most striking instances of this in *Briggflatts* is in the sexual union of Pasiphae and the 'god-bull' at the close of the second movement:

> nor did flesh flinch
> distended by the brute
> nor loaded spirit sink
> till it had gloried in unlike creation (*Complete* 70).

In his exegesis of these lines, Bunting writes: 'Those fail who try to force their destiny, like Eric [Bloodaxe]; but those who are resolute to submit, like my version of Pasiphae, may bring something new to birth, be it only a monster' (*Note*). He contrasts here the failure of assertive personalities, among which we can also number Alexander, with a necessary endurance in our submission to forces outside our control. The 'monster' brought to birth by Pasiphae's submission is the Minotaur, the result of interaction between the conventionally segregated spheres of the

human and the natural. The monster's image, never explicit in the poem, is the problematic shadow of both the 'tenor bull' of the opening line and the conqueror's assertive masculinity, among other human presences. Pasiphae's acquiescence recognises the divine in its bestial, natural form as the superior partner in the generation of this hybrid; she conceives a monster and Bunting names it as such, an 'unlike creation'. It is identifiably 'unlike' in that it corresponds to the category of neither man nor beast.

In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour suggests it is precisely the distinction between categories of human and natural that engenders such hybrids, however. He argues that we as moderns 'innovate on a large scale in the production of hybrids' and that this 'is possible only because [we] steadfastly hold to the absolute dichotomy between the order of Nature and that of Society' (*WHNBM* 40). The concept of hybridity is not unique to modernity, as the Minotaur myth shows; what is uniquely modern is the hybrids' excessive quantity and the suppression that creates them. Latour goes on to ask 'where are we to classify the ozone hole story, or global warming or deforestation? Where are we to put these hybrids? Are they human? Human because they are our work. Are they natural? Natural because they are not our doing' (50). Bunting indicates how monstrous these hybrids are, even when we accept their presence in the world; Latour suggests further that the agency of nature remains and is exacerbated when we do not recognise or accept it. Hence, global warming is 'not our doing' in an intentional sense, even while it is the product of our deliberate practices or 'work'.

Latour describes these entangled agencies as a network, and 'the idea of the network is the Ariadne's thread of these interwoven stories', although 'the delicate networks traced by [her] little hand remain more invisible than spiderwebs' (*WHNBM* 3, 5). While the Daedalean labyrinth is, like the Minotaur, not explicitly referred to in *Briggflatts*, there are a number of allusions to similar structures in the poem, which mingle animal and human, natural and aesthetic agency. For instance, there is the 'rat […] daring / to thread / lithe and alert / Schoenberg's maze' (*Complete* 69), and the 'Tortoise deep in dust or / muzzled bear capering / [that] punctuate a text whose initial, / [is] lost in Lindisfarne plaited lines' (*Complete* 68). These are woven among numerous references to natural networks throughout the poem, such as the 'lace of frost' (78), and the 'shadows [that] themselves are a web' in the sentence before Pasiphae's ravishing by the bull (*Complete* 70). This entanglement of aesthetic and biophysical networks into the labyrinthine structure of the poem gives expression to the complexity that anthropogenic environmental change demands we recognise. In theoretical terms, it can be seen in Alaimo's plea for 'A trans-corporeal ethics' which 'calls us to somehow find ways of navigating through the simultaneously material, economic, and cultural systems that are so harmful to the living world and yet so difficult to contest or transform' (*Bodily* 18). Bunting's use of myth presents a way of understanding phenomena that exist outside too-readily demarcated categories of human intentionality.

Pasiphae's acquiescence to the mythical bull belies benign visions of a restorative or nurturing

nature, even while it would place the human world in her passive, problematic position of submission and mothering a monster. While this does not give Pasiphae the 'active agency' that Greaves claims is evident in some of Bunting's women, the poet nevertheless distinguishes femininity from nature, as he did in Ode 17. This contrasts with conventional 'constructions of nature as female (as mother/virgin)' that are critiqued by ecofeminist scholars such as Gretchen Legler ('Ecofeminist Literary Criticism' 228). Legler argues that such conceptions 'are essential to the maintenance of this harmful environmental ethic and […] hierarchical ways of thinking'.[6] Bunting instead subverts hierarchy by revealing the hybrids it creates. The bull as brute nature imposes itself on Pasiphae, who is a representative not specifically of the female but of the human. Compare the opening of the third movement of *The Well of Lycopolis*, in which the re-mythologised nature ravishes 'Infamous poetry, abject love':

> Aeolus' hand under her frock
> this morning. This afternoon
> Ocean licking her privities
> Every thrust of the autumn sun
> cuckolding
> in the green grin of late-flowering trees. (*Complete* 42)

While both scenarios subjugate the female to the natural, the subjugating agent is not the human male. Indeed, *The Well of Lycopolis*'s narrator regards the elements as having taken the woman from him, complaining 'I shall never have anything to myself' (*Complete* 43). The implication is that we must endure and adapt to the exigencies of the nonhuman world, rather than attempt to master them – however repulsive that may be, however far we are then objectified. While this valorises a masculine stoicism in endurance, it does not enable masculine mastery of its others, the natural and/or the female.

In the weave of Bunting's poem, we are brought close to such alien, uncontrollable entities. In this respect, his practice accords with Timothy Morton's 'ecological thought', which situates us in a 'mesh' alongside the '*strange stranger*'; Morton explicitly uses this phrase 'Instead of "animal"' because of the latter term's familiarity (*Thought* 40–1; author's italics). 'The ecological thought permits no distance', Morton writes, and 'This means confronting the fact that all beings are related to each other negatively and differentially' (39). The slowworm and bull are both 'strange strangers' in *Briggflatts*, but perhaps the most tellingly proximate animal to the human is the rat that recurs throughout the poem. In *The Waste Land*, the rat exists in a quantum state between real and mythical, symbolising the decay that flourishes in the poem; in Stevens' 'The Plain Sense of Things', it is both observed and observer. In *Briggflatts,* the rat instances the kind of 'immediate and

[6] In *Briggflatts*, Bunting incidentally fulfils other of Legler's criteria for ecofeminist writing, specifically: '1. "Re-mything" nature as a speaking, "bodied" subject'; '2. Erasing or blurring of boundaries between inner […] and outer […] landscapes, or the erasing or blurring of self-other […] distinctions'; '3. Re-eroticizing human relationships with a "bodied" landscape'; and also '7. Affirming the value of partial views and perspectives, the importance of "bioregions", and the locatedness of human subjects' (Legler 230–1).

self-enclosed image' that characterises modernism, as described by Isobel Armstrong (209): it is in Bunting's words, 'rat, roommate, unreconciled' (*Complete* 77). 'Roommate' suggests that it shares our habitat in very close proximity, in the way that Morton's concept of the 'mesh', 'vast yet intimate', means 'everything is brought within our awareness' (*Thought* 40). Yet our being 'unreconciled' with it means, in Morton's terms, its 'strangeness is itself strange. We can never absolutely figure [it] out' (41). What being 'reconciled' with the rat might entail is suggested by its earlier appearance in *Briggflatts*, 'rummaging behind the compost heap' (*Complete* 69): it is associated with waste generated by human existence, but waste put to productive use in a cycle of decay and fertility, unlike the 'marble middens' in part II that I have discussed. If he were able to be 'reconciled' with this, the poet-self would be like Pasiphae, accommodating himself to the exigencies he cannot instrumentally control.

Mapping the order

The cumulative influence of environmental factors in Bunting's poetry is to disperse the sense of self, rather than to inspire or reveal it as it is in Wordsworth, according to Waugh's reading. Waugh contrasts that Romantic discovery of the self in the world with 'theories which view the idea of self-conscious fictionality as an impulse of the human rage for order', and cites Stevens as one exponent of this tendency (*Practising* 20). In Bunting, such attempts at self-assertion are marked by their failure. What does this diminution of selfhood imply for the state of the world?

The relation between the two may be characterised psychologically, by aligning intentional intervention in the environment with the ego; and, in contrast, associating overlooked environmental impact with the unconscious mind. Theodore Roszak suggests how superego and id can be read as becoming manifest in the world: 'Precisely because we have acquired the power to work our will upon the environment, the planet has become like that blank psychiatric screen on which the neurotic unconscious projects its fantasies' (5). The relegation of waste to our environmental unconscious thus leads to its accumulation and the formation of hybrid phenomena, typified by anthropogenic climate change. Bunting recognises that the wilful imposition of order actually generates uncontainable disorder, and this is evident in *Briggflatts*. Conniff suggests that the poem's opening stanzas, where the liveliness of the bull and the slowworm are juxtaposed with the mason's meditations,

> balance […] one man's death [a]gainst its full compensation in the natural world. The pastoral tradition, especially in its elegiac conventions, has placed great value on one such compensation—and *Briggflatts*, at the very start, seems to fit in. Everything in the poem seems part of a natural order: death is balanced by sexual awakening, winter by spring. This scheme of things is only mildly disturbed by an impinging feeling […] that the poetic balance is a little overwrought: […] it seems that Bunting must convince himself of the conventional order (166).

Conniff thus claims that 'The poet turned to the natural, objective world for a sense of order; but

everything in this world […] is restlessly active, as though it were all moving in defiance of the aesthetic desire to arrange it all, the would-be poet's will to mastery' (171). Hence the poet's eventual realisation that 'he does not have to pretend that his own life ever appeared to him as a coherent story […] his world always controlled him more than he ever controlled it' (Conniff 183). This unravelling of self-imposed order in the poem, which is styled as an autobiography, can be traced throughout Bunting's writing.

We have already seen how the narrator's mood rises and falls with the movement of the tide in Bunting's third ode (*Complete* 99): 'I am agog for foam', he announces, as the tide is 'Tumultuous come / with teeming sweetness to the bitter shore'. As in *The Well of Lycopolis* and *Briggflatts*, phenomenal nature appears in an erotic, procreative role, siring the experience of the self. But as the poem draws to its close, 'we again subside / into our catalepsy'. This is not just a simple synchronisation of human with marine vicissitudes but an exchange across them: the tide moves from 'indifference' to becoming 'mad waves' that 'spring […] / towards us in the angriness of love / […] tossing as they come / repeated invitations […] of unexplained desire'. The world beyond the human has an intrinsic appeal, and 'The dear companionship of its elect / deepens our envy'. Yet it remains beyond us, because the sea's desire is 'unexplained', and the sky's 'endless utterance of a single blue' remains 'unphrased'. That is to say, the world's affect is irreducible to human sense while it appeals still to human sensation. The effort to express it is not an imaginative struggle so much as an erasure of human selfhood. The tide of Ode 3 presents the challenge that Kent C. Ryden outlines when, in discussing conceptions of environmental literacy, he considers 'nature and natural systems in the role of the author while placing humans in the position of incompetent readers' (Ryden 3; see also Chapter 1, p.30 of this thesis). This ode anticipates *Briggflatts*'s 'unscarred ocean' where only the 'Wind writes in foam' (*Complete* 66).

Bunting recognises, then, that language can only pattern human experience, rather than order material phenomena themselves. To assess what makes his poetics distinctive, we can compare the ode with a modernist poem that marks a more intellectual engagement with these questions, Stevens's 'The Idea of Order at Key West' (*Collected* 105–6).[7] The poems both express a proximity to and a haunted relationship with the sea, although Bunting's is more erotically than aesthetically charged than Stevens's: the ode is immediately felt, 'agog' from the beginning, whereas 'The Idea of Order at Key West' is seemingly more dismissive. In the line 'The water never formed to mind or voice' (*Collected* 105) Stevens's narrator indeed suggests it is not worth understanding. However, his

[7] The Bloodaxe *Complete Poems* dates Bunting's ode as 1926, while Stevens's 'The Idea of Order at Key West' first appeared in the quarterly *Alcestis* among 'a group of eight poems [...] in October 1934', his daughter recalls (*Letters of Wallace Stevens* 256). It is unlikely that Stevens would have read Bunting's poem, but not impossible: Roger Guedalla notes in *Basil Bunting: A Bibliography* that *Redimiculum Matellarum*, the volume in which the ode first appeared, was 'Published March 1930, privately' at Milan, and claimed in its opening pages to be 'copyright in all civilised countries but not (yet) in the United States' (Guedalla 13). Guedalla continues that 'The book's publication went totally unnoticed, except for a review by Louis Zukofsky' (14). Nevertheless, Guedalla records that in *Poetry* 27.1 (Oct. 1930) 'The "News Notes" p.59 refer to the [...] publication of *Redimiculum Matellarum*' (Guedalla 75). Stevens was a sometime contributor to *Poetry*, so may have seen the notice, though his most recent publication there, 'Hibiscus on the Sleeping Shores', had been nine years earlier in *Poetry* 19.1 (Oct. 1921).

insistence on this point – 'it was […] not the sea we heard', the 'sea / Was merely a place', 'The meaningless plungings of water and the wind' – paradoxically create an impression of something that nevertheless *needs* to be understood. It insists on being attended to, but by being inexpressible it puts us in the position of Ryden's 'incompetent readers'. By the end of the poem, Stevens observes a 'rage to order words of the sea', even though there have been no words 'of ourselves and of our origins', only 'ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds' (106). In this respect, the poem acknowledges what goes beyond civilising experience, as *The Waste Land* contends with the intransigent nonhuman forces operating against cultural order. Compare with Stevens's 'ghostlier demarcations' the sky's 'utterance of a single blue / unphrased' in Bunting, something expressive but not explicitly expressed, evading understanding on human terms.

Both Bunting and Stevens make the world's expression of itself syntactically conditional:

> *If* the bright sky bore
> with endless utterance of a single blue
> unphrased, its restless immobility
> infects the soul, which must decline into
> an anguished and exact sterility
> and waste away:
> (Bunting *Complete* 99; my italics)

> *If* it was only the dark voice of the sea
> That rose, or even coloured by many waves;
> *If* it was only the outer voice of sky
> And cloud, of the sunken coral water-walled,
> However clear, it would have been deep air,
> The heaving speech of air, a summer sound
> Repeated in a summer without end
> And sound alone.
> (Stevens *Collected* 105; my italics)

Human understanding is contingent; the natural aspect is in contrast 'endless' in Bunting and 'a summer without end' in Stevens. This is not an expression of timeless, lyrical nature, but Kate Soper's second-definition processes that 'are indifferent to our choices, will persist the midst of environmental destruction, and will outlast the death of all planetary life' (*What* 159–60). Soper's 'indifference' is made explicit in Bunting, although not so in Stevens. The contrast between the two poems also comes through in their respective attributions of agency:

> the sea
> trembling with alteration must perfect
> our loneliness by its hostility.
> (Bunting *Complete* 99)

> It was her voice that made
> The sky acutest at its vanishing.
> She measured to the hour its solitude.[8]
> She was the single artificer of the world
> In which she sang.
> (Stevens *Collected* 106)

In Bunting, the sea 'must perfect' one of 'our' qualities – that is, we are subject to oceanic processes beyond our control.[9] In Stevens, it is the singer, another self, who perfects and delimits ('made […]

[8] Contrast the way Villon in Bunting's early sonata complains that 'they have […] run the white moon to a schedule'. This effort is supplemented by a number of impositions on the natural environment: 'They have melted the snows from Erebus, weighed the clouds, / hunted down the white bear, hunted the whale the seal the kangaroo' (*Complete* 28).

[9] Even if we are to read the littoral in the poem as libidinal – that is, not literally – Bunting's analogy still needs to imagine an uncontrollable, nonhuman tidal energy to operate.

acutest') the sky above the sea. Thus in Bunting, nature controls self, and in Stevens, the self orders, or attempts to order, nature, albeit aesthetically rather than instrumentally. Yet the very self-consciousness of that process in Stevens's poem, and of the way, later, 'lights in the fishing boats at anchor there, / […] Mastered the night and portioned out the sea', shows that these absolute boundaries do not inhere in the atmosphere or hydrosphere, but are impositions from human perception, hence the wistful tone of the 'ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds' that are beyond us in the poem's final line. Stevens's Key West is not just on the Gulf of Mexico, it is on the gulf between language and the inexpressible. Bunting and Stevens recognise in their poems that the world reacts to us in ways that cannot be satisfactorily accounted for in human terms, and civilisation's failure to share this recognition is one of the conditions that has engendered anthropogenic climate change.

Ode 3's impassioned submission to the sea may lack the intellectual nuance of Stevens's poem. However, in his work 'Chomei at Toyama' (*Complete* 85–94), Bunting finds a voice in which to investigate human failure to order the world according to the imagination. As a free adaptation of a medieval work, the 1932 poem also takes up, as Stevens does in his opus (see for instance Chapter 3, p.105 of this thesis), the challenge of a text's changing position in response to its future. 'Chomei at Toyama' is written in the voice of twelfth–thirteenth-century Japanese writer Kamo no Chōmei, whom Bunting notes 'belonged to the minor nobility of Japan and held various offices in the civil service. […] He retired from public life to a kind of mixture of hermitage and country cottage at Toyama on Mount Hino and there, when he was getting old, he wrote the Ho-Jo-Ki in prose, of which my poem is in the main a condensation' (*Complete* 227). In the poem, Bunting's Chōmei epigrammatically advises 'To appreciate present conditions / collate them with those of antiquity' (*Complete* 87), and the lines enact this principle as an adapted restatement of that principle, by representing it some 700 years later. That restatement suggests that historical change or progress is limited, because Chōmei's sentiment still pertains in the era of modernity. Bunting thus sets two forms of time, cyclical and linear, in opposition in the poem. In a letter to *Poetry* magazine's associate editor Morton Zabel in January 1933 negotiating the poem's publication, Bunting commented on the pattern he sought in composing it:

> the balance of the calamities and consolations pivoted on the little central satire, the transmogrifications of the house throughout, the earth, air, fire and water, pieces, first physical then spiritual, make up an elaborate design which I've tried not to underline so that it might be felt rather than pedantically counted up. Also the old boy's superficial religion breaking down at the end needs what goes before to give it relief, and what goes before needs the breakdown to anchor it to its proper place (1).

As I showed in my first chapter, the 'consolations' of nostalgia persist today, even though we abide in an era of exacerbated environmental change. The same tendency, from supposed stability towards chaos, is one Bunting's version of Chōmei charts. He still strives for a 'balance of

calamities and consolations' in the pastoral vein here. Later, in *Briggflatts*, a similar process occurs as the self emerges from nature as the object of nostalgia, doubly remembered in the 'smell of October apples' (*Complete* 63), to end in cosmic dispersal.

Bunting's account of 'Chomei at Toyama' privileges the elemental, as Chōmei does in his attention to Japanese affairs. The poem's Chōmei relates 'I have been noting events forty years', and natural disasters are prominent among those he recalls (*Complete* 85). The first is a fire that destroyed 'In a night, / palace, ministries, university, parliament', then a 'cyclone' of three years later after which 'Not a house stood' (*Complete* 85–6). These disasters lay waste to the institutions of civilisation, and as such Chōmei describes them as 'Massacre without cause' (*Complete* 86). The phrase highlights the difficulty we have in comprehending natural agency, because Chōmei has to liken it to a human atrocity, a 'Massacre', although a 'cyclone' lacks the intention that such slaughter would entail. It registers the agency of natural forces, but has to conceive of them in human terms. Nancy Tuana shows how complex this problem becomes today when she considers how to talk about a contemporary meteorological catastrophe, 2005's Hurricane Katrina. She asks:

> Does it make sense to say that the warmer [sea surface] water or Katrina's power were socially produced, rendering Katrina a non-natural phenomenon? No, but *the problem is with the question*. We cannot sift through and separate what is "natural" from what is "human-induced," and the problem here is not simply epistemic. There is scientific consensus that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are raising the temperature of the Earth's atmosphere. These "natural phenomena" are the result of human activities such as fossil fuel combustion and deforestation. But these activities themselves are fueled by social beliefs and structures (193; my italics)

Nevertheless, Tuana continues, 'This does not mean that we cannot attempt to determine the extent to which human factors increased the intensity of a hurricane or some other weather-related phenomena'. The weather event exposes the traces of agency.

Bunting's Chōmei also interrogates the significance of the cyclone as 'Massacre without cause' with the question in the subsequent line: 'Portent?' In the context of Hurricane Katrina, Chōmei's one-word question about the weather's significance could be answered affirmatively, albeit tentatively. We make Katrina a site for debate about climate change – a 'portent' of it – because it is spectacularly visible in precisely the way climate is not. 'You can't visualize the climate', Morton reminds us (*Thought* 28). Within the movement of the poem, Chōmei is asking whether these natural disasters portend the 'thunderbolted change of capital, / fixed here, Kyoto, for ages' (*Complete* 86). As we saw in Ode 3, Bunting can ascribe human qualities of 'utterance' to natural process, but this transference is reversed here so the clipped 'thunderbolted', which at first seems to affirm that weather necessitated Kyoto's relocation, is in fact a metaphor for the speed with which the move was carried out: human process described in natural terms. Even though 'Nothing compelled the change nor was it an easy matter', the position of 'thunderbolted' so soon after fire and cyclone complicates the semantic fields of human and natural agency. Chōmei's cyclone resembles Katrina in that it serves to reveal human entanglement with meteorological processes,

though in the poem it is a society caught up in the effects of weather rather than its causes. Where Katrina complicates matters is that modernity's too-rigid distinction between human and natural realms becomes more obscured by the hybrid material phenomena that result from this categorisation. Tuana observes that 'Agency […] emerges out of such interactions; it is not antecedent to them. Our epistemic practices must thus be attuned to this manifold agency and emergent interplay' (196).

To read a commonality in a medieval Japanese cyclone and Hurricane Katrina is to attest to the persistent materiality of our entanglement with the environment. The relation remains the same across the centuries despite the notion of history as progressive. Bunting was alert to our continued subjection to the elements, and wrote to Zabel's boss at *Poetry*, Harriet Monroe, in November 1932: 'The curiously detailed resemblances between mediaeval Kyoto and modern New York are not my invention, and I didn't feel called on to disguise them' (1). The poem expresses its acceptance of the resultant inevitabilities both in Chōmei's tone of resignation – 'Men are fools to invest in real estate' (*Complete* 86) – and the continued description of human catastrophe in meteorological terms – 'a thunder of houses falling' (*Complete* 88). Human and natural become corresponding threats when Chōmei writes that his new home 'stood on the flood plain. And that quarter / is also flooded with gangsters' (*Complete* 89). Mottram is therefore correct in observing that both 'Nature and men are to be stoically endured, a recurrent theme in Bunting' (94–5).

Nature at the end

Those entangled agencies come to a culmination in *Briggflatts*, as my analysis throughout this chapter has indicated. As in Wordsworth or Chōmei, the poem looks for an apparent order in nonhuman nature through which to express a human understanding. Bunting elaborated the order of *Briggflatts* in an interview with Peter Quartermain and Warren Tallman, and explained that, having sketched a five-part pattern for composition, the next thing was 'to look at it and […] say obviously what any poet thinking of shape would say […]: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter' ('Basil Bunting Talks About Briggflatts' 15). Quite why it is 'obvious' that five movements would represent four seasons is unclear. What is most telling, however, is that it is the peak-scaling arrogance of a human conqueror – Alexander's assertiveness – that disrupts the seasonal order, by rising to bisect it in the central, third part of the poem. Even while seeking confirmation in one natural pattern – that is, the movement of the seasons – the poem is re-patterned by another, the formation of a mountain.

Alexander's effort in ascending the 'unscaleable' peak brings him before the angel 'Israfel, / trumpet in hand, intent on the east, / cheeks swollen to blow' waiting for 'the signal [to] come / to summon man to his clay' (*Complete* 72–3). Teetering on the brink of catastrophe, the conqueror tumbles to earth, waking 'on glistening moss by a spring' where he encounters the slowworm. In this creature's words, he is reminded of his place in the world: 'I prosper / lying low, little concerned' (73). Alexander thus fails in his ambition, but the poem still has scope to use this as a

demonstration of humility – an apocalypse in the sense of revelation rather than cataclysm. A comparable mountain misdirection occurs for Wordsworth in *The Prelude* when he is hiking on Mont Blanc, but this has more interior biographical significance than in *Briggflatts*. The narrator and his companion

> […] clomb with eagerness, till anxious fears
> Intruded, for we failed to overtake
> Our comrades gone before. […]
> every moment added doubt to doubt (1850 *Prel.* VI.575–78)

This becomes a scaling of the ego as much as an ascent of the mountain, and aspires to keep climbing even at the very moment it recognises its failure: 'still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds' (VI.587). These ambitions are figured by Alexander in *Briggflatts*. He serves as a mythic symbol rather than a psychological dissection of arrogance, in contrast to his more cautious soldiers. The emphasis in his ascent, and in the slowworm's song, is the exploration of the environment as much as the self. This episode prepares the way for the dispersal of ego and belittling of human time in the subsequent movements, and the poem works itself out in the discrepancy between human ego and natural agency. Conniff remarks that, as *Briggflatts* progresses,

> The seasons of the year no longer have an obvious parallel in the seasons of the poet's life. He is caught, suddenly, in an anti-Romantic schism: he can no longer assume a fundamental sympathy between his emotions and the natural world, a sympathy that would have allowed him, in effect, to subordinate a world of "objects" to his own subjective experiences (175).

That is to say, the phenomenal world in *Briggflatts* resists the imposition of an order in the form of traditionally conceived natural–seasonal cycles, much as anthropogenic climate change exposes human inability to master or engineer atmospheric processes. It is in this context that unseasonal, entropic motifs occur in each of the ostensibly seasonal movements of the poem.

Without the poet's supervening lyric ego, Conniff contends that the poem's 'natural forces are benign, even though they have been "let loose," as far as possible, from the narrator's controlling mind' (184). How far *is* 'as far as possible'? After all, Conniff treats Bunting's resistance to Romantic tendencies here as a conscious poetic strategy, a controlled pose in which the poet only seems to relinquish control rather than actually giving it up. Nevertheless, even though Bunting tacitly imposes an order of increasing disorder on nonhuman nature, in doing so he counterpoints traditional ideas of natural harmony, because the emphasis of *Briggflatts* is on 'chance events' (Conniff 184). The poet resists the identification of individual life with natural, seasonal cycle, just as Dempster acknowledges 'the temptation to think that organisms *are* autopoietic and ecosystems *are* sympoietic is tantalizing' (105; author's italics), before disavowing that temptation. As such, she recognises that that the terms represent an inviting way of conceiving the world, akin to Stevens's fictions, rather than an irrefutably true and incontestable observation. In a like manner, once

Bunting sees its fallacy, the seasonal cycle of *Briggflatts* dissolves with the final movement of the poem, which, as we have seen, begins with unseasonal melt: 'Drip – icicle's gone' (*Complete* 78).

Climate change gives unanticipated material reference to Bunting's disordered seasons. It shows us that what we regarded as pastoral timelessness is in fact a product of our current interglacial episode. With an objective relationship between the human and the environmental opened up from Bunting's early odes onwards, the poet provides a salutary reminder of our earthly bearings – provided we are prepared to accommodate, rather than to neglect or manage, the 'strange stranger' of climate that has an inexpressible, material agency of its own. Its agency is still more clearly seen in the work of Bunting's contemporary, David Jones, whose work I discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

'An Older Great Cold': David Jones's Anathemata *and the gratuitous environment*

Climate change criticism must come to bear even where climate change is not the matter of the poem; climate cannot be bracketed off into the genre of the "environmental", as it is on political and news media agendas, so neither can the scope of its relevance in literature.[1] I have aimed to demonstrate this in my rereadings of poetry that pre-dates popular understanding of the phenomena of climate change. The work I have analysed indicates the contingency of human existence in the terrestrial environment, challenging defined, formal boundaries between the cultural and natural, and exposing the presumption of our intentional mastery of climatic forces. Poetry reveals the permanence of our relation with non-intentional phenomena in the face of anthropocentric accounts that suggest otherwise, and this relation is revealed again, materially, in the manifestation of contemporary climate change. Both text and climate expose the entanglement of human and natural agency in making the world, and this can also be demonstrated through a critique of modernist work that *is* explicitly occupied with the human–climate relation, David Jones's *The Anathemata* (1952). The strategies employed in this work represent a practical, creative response to the issues I have outlined.

Jones refers to his title as meaning 'the blessed things that have taken on what is cursed and profane things that are somehow redeemed' (*Ana.* 28–9). The work addresses the development of earth's prehistoric environment into conditions suitable for humanity, describing the genesis of terrestrial landscapes and cultures after the end of the preceding glacial.[2] It treats of history's emergence from primeval origins, in particular in its first section, 'Rite and Fore-Time', and implicates environmental factors in the emergence of civilisation in a way that civilisation, so far as my analysis of *The Waste Land* has suggested, tries to jettison. Jones is also interested in the Waste Land as a cultural motif, but subordinates it to Roman Catholic tenets rather than drawing on a range of faiths as Eliot does in his poem. The imaginative scope of Jones's work also responds to the demands that climate change makes on the imagination and on literary form. Rather than reading environmental change as he does, however, I will show how his poetics enables expression of the unintentional agency of natural phenomena in shaping and influencing human development. I thus shift from his focus on Christ to mine on climate.

The Anathemata traces the emergence of humanity in both terrestrial and maritime environments, but situates this within a sequence of oblique narratives – in Jones's subtitle, 'Fragments of an attempted writing' – where the motifs of Christ's incarnation and passion resound both backwards

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[1] As Timothy Morton comments in *Ecology without Nature* 'The time should come when we ask of any text, "What does this say about the environment?"' (5; see also Chapter 1, p.38 of this thesis).

[2] I refer to *The Anathemata* throughout as a 'work' rather than 'poem', in acknowledgement of its mixture of verse, prose, inscription and annotation.

and forwards in time. My reading will concentrate on its first section, 'Rite and Fore-Time', which describes the end of the preceding glacial and the evolution of human culture and art. Subsequently, *The Anathemata* traces a highly allusive voyage from the Mediterranean to Britain that represents both the diffusion of Christianity in the West and the journey towards Christ's incarnation in the work's final sections. In sum, *The Anathemata* 'is about civilization, its emergence from history, prehistory, and biological and geological evolution, and its meaning in the light of the Creation, the Incarnation, the Passion, and the Mass' according to Henry Summerfield (*An Introductory Guide to* The Anathemata *and* The Sleeping Lord *Sequence of David Jones* 19). In "'It was a Dark and Stormy Night …'", Oswyn Murray provides an important qualification about the distinctiveness of Jones's work, though: 'the underlying theory of history behind […] *The Anathemata* is explicitly conceived as universal for western culture, and not entailing a belief in the Catholic faith' (15). Jones is generous and associative rather than dogmatic in his theology, taking a view in which non-Christian cultures, such as the Roman pantheon and Celtic lore, foreshadow the true faith.

Jones finds images that resonate beyond specific historic cultures, which he accumulates into a fractal work where individual vignettes and episodes present scale versions of a master narrative, making full use of his text's scope as 'open in form' but 'formally whole' in Thomas Dilworth's words (*Reading David Jones* 118). *The Anathemata* incorporates a diversity of forms and modes: the opening spread (*Ana.* 48–9) offers inscription, prose and verse, all rife with quotation and parenthesis, reflecting the work's deliberately fragmentary quality. Interpretative direction is given by Jones's preface and footnotes, some of the latter proving so extensive that they require full pages behind plates facing the main run of text. This multiplicity and the acknowledgement that it is an 'attempted writing' together represent an imaginative rather than objective engagement with prehistory.

The advantage of Jones's assemblage of techniques is the considerable scope it gives the work. It can, for example, encompass durations of time difficult to envisage on human scales, most pertinently prehistoric climatic change and the transition from Pleistocene to Holocene. In the words of N. K. Sandars, 'those terrifying distances' of time 'are become at once local, colloquial and friendly' ('The Present Past in *The Anathemata* and Roman Poems' 53). My attempted reading, as distinct from Jones's attempted writing, extends the implications of his account conceptually and temporally into the Anthropocene, the name coined for our present epoch by those who maintain that human presence on earth constitutes a geological influence in its own right.[3] Because Jones develops a poetics that transcends the scale of individual human lives and the lives of particular civilisations, he exhibits what Summerfield calls an 'astonishing power to write lyrically of geological

[3] Will Steffen, Paul J. Crutzen and John R. McNeill define the word in their article 'The Anthropocene': 'The term [...] suggests that the Earth has now left its natural geological epoch, the present interglacial state called the Holocene. Human activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of Nature and are pushing the Earth into planetary *terra incognita*. The Earth is rapidly moving into a less biologically diverse, less forested, much warmer, and probably wetter and stormier state' (Steffen *et al*. 614, authors' italics). This proposed classification gives greater temporal extent to Bill McKibben's end of nature.

change and archaeological findings' (19), a capability which lends itself to a poetics of climate change. By unbinding environmental agency from the liturgical significance Jones ascribes to it, I in turn give free imaginative rein to climatic agency, approaching *The Anathemata* as a work of aesthetic rather than statistical climate modelling, as I did with Wallace Stevens's opus.

I will first compare Jones's handling of our human narrative with more straightforward prose accounts of anthropology. With its emphasis on the divine, *The Anathemata* does not focus on *Homo sapiens* in the way that anthropology by definition does, and the work thus does not privilege human presence in the environment, but considers the network of forces that comprise the world. I will then consider the ways Jones achieves this technically, as an exemplification of climate change poetics. The implications of this technique will be explored in an ecocritical consideration of Jones's notion of the 'utile' and 'extra-utile' in art. This informs his understanding of 'anathemata', which names what civilisation excludes – although those exclusions can be both positive, in the sense of being venerated, and negative, in the sense of being overlooked or ignored. The negative aspect corresponds with my proposition that the repressed accumulation of greenhouse gases is a tradition that manifests materially in contemporary climate change. The positive side is in the vital, superfluous agency of the nonhuman, which we witness in *The Anathemata*'s exploration of our relation to the animal kingdom. Jones's expression of sympathy, I argue, shows that civilisation's existence is just as contingent on climatic process as that of nonhuman creatures, belying narratives of human exceptionalism.

Throughout the reading, I advance my ongoing argument that tensions in human relations with the environment in the poetry I have analysed resonate so strongly today because, exacerbated by an intervening fifty or more years of human civilisation, these tendencies put even greater strain on our attempt to manage the nonhuman world. To read works such as *The Anathemata* is thus to find a way of articulating those tensions, and to begin to trace their exponential development towards contemporary environmental emergency.

A telling teleology

Central to my analysis of the other poets in this thesis has been the problematic status of humanity as distinct from yet situated within networks of material phenomena. This has crucial implications for the relative importance and influence we afford ourselves in the world. Literary response to this quandary is qualitatively different to scientific, or even pseudo-scientific, accounts, as can be seen in comparing *The Anathemata* to two such texts that consider the data of prehistory. Jones invites comparison with more linear accounts of human history in his citation, among numerous other sources, of Catholic historian Christopher Dawson's *The Age of the Gods* (1933). Dawson purports to offer an anthropological overview of the emergence and development of humanity and civilisation, promising 'to undertake some general synthesis of the new knowledge of man's past that we have acquired', thanks to which 'a general vision of the whole past of our civilisation has become

possible' (Dawson xii), though his endeavour has an implicitly Catholic trajectory. A more recent account covering the same period as *The Age of the Gods* is Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs and Steel* (1998), which takes a scientist's rather than historian's perspective. This offers a prose treatment of the terrestrial environment's influence on human development, surveying 'the 13,000 years since the end of the last Ice Age,' when 'some parts of the world developed literate industrial societies with metal tools' (13).

Both Dawson and Diamond are concerned with producing accounts that advance their cases through reasoned argument rather than literary imagination. As analytic narratives, they are required to make cause and effect connections between data, and run the risk of reducing cultural development to a mechanistic, materially determined sequence. Both recognise this in moving to disclaim such an approach. Dawson insists 'Not that man is merely plastic under the influence of his material environment. He moulds it as well as being moulded by it' (xiii). Diamond goes further:

> the notion that environmental geography and biogeography influenced societal development […] is considered wrong or simplistic, or it is caricatured as environmental determinism and dismissed […] Yet geography obviously has *some* effect on history; the open question concerns how much effect, and whether geography can account for history's broad pattern (25–6; author's italics).

Diamond's formulation asks how nonhuman factors and processes ('geography') have influenced culture ('history'). This is a succinct restatement of the question that has occupied me throughout this thesis, given climate change's challenge to the notion that either nature or culture is the primary determinant of the world. According to Bronislaw Szerszynski, climate change 'represents a collision point between humanity's civilizational ideals and its creaturely nature: between progress and extinction, between the linear time of history and the cyclical time of nature, between transcendence and metabolism, between spirit and mere exhalation' ('Reading' 10). Diamond's 'open question' therefore directs my consideration here of the extent and character of climate's influence on 'history's broad pattern' in Jones's work, and how literature negotiates that give and take of influence in comparison to the two prose accounts.

With Jones's own propensity for questions, we can usefully set one of his against Diamond's. As a boat approaches the British Isles at the opening of *The Anathemata*'s third section, 'Angle-Land', the poet asks 'But, what was her draught, and, what was the ocean doing?' (110). The extent to which a ship's 'draught' displaces water in order to float is the extent to which human technology affects its environment, but Jones's 'and', poised in its careful parenthetical commas, balances this displacement with the invitation to consider oceanic process. The latter part of the question is not 'and, what did the ocean do?', which would imply that it was 'doing' only in response to the presence of the ship. Rather, it is 'and, what was the ocean doing?' a formulation that suggests the water is independent in its agency, a 'doing' already in progress and thus not solely contingent on human activity. Jones's question attends to what Serenella Iovino traces in 'the oceanic aquascape',

the 'Interweaving stories that navigate both above and below the water surface' (Iovino and Oppermann 457). The poet's image of a vessel makes specific, metaphorically tangible, what remains abstract in the scientist and critic's theoretical terms.

To see quite how accommodating *The Anathemata*'s scope is to 'interweaving stories' and the different agencies they trace, we can make a useful comparison with the narrative modes of Dawson's and Diamond's accounts. Both authors seek to employ scientific discourse – anthropological and archaeological – rather than theological signification to structure their narratives, but in so doing both take a more teleological approach. Instead of making Christ central to history, as in *The Anathemata*, humanity is the ultimate end of millennia of progress in both Dawson's and Diamond's books. Although Dawson maintains that 'progress is not […] a continuous or uniform movement, common to the whole human race' (xvi), his subordinate clause does not so much qualify his understanding of the concept as make it the preserve of particular peoples. He goes on to reflect that 'Progress is an abstract idea derived from a simplification of the multiple and heterogeneous changes through which the historic societies have passed', suggesting it is a helpful if reductive organisation of events, but again limiting it to those societies privileged enough to be 'historic'. This is most evident in the linear metaphor he uses in his discussion of Neanderthals, whom he considers 'an over-specialised by-product, a side path or blind alley on the road of human development' (10).[4] By contrast, he considers that 'It was no doubt in the antediluvian world of the Tertiary Age, with its mild climatic conditions and its vast development of mammalian life, that the earliest forms of man first came into existence' (5). These factors prove the spur to human development in a subsequent passage:

> it was probably only after the expulsion of man from the Paradise of the Tertiary World, with its mild climatic conditions and its abundance of animal and vegetable life, that he made those great primitive discoveries of the use of clothing, of weapons, and above all of fire, which rendered him independent of the changes of climate and prepared the way for his subsequent conquest of Nature (Dawson 6).

In these remarks Dawson enfolds Biblical and geological accounts of history to read the emergence of humanity as a gradual but predestined triumph over the environment.

Diamond is likewise conscious that he may be read as endorsing a progressive account of history, and he tries to disclaim an ideological inflection to his subject matter by saying, 'We tend to seek easy, single-factor explanations of success. For most important things, though, success actually requires avoiding many separate possible causes of failure' (157). Yet even here, talk of 'failure' suggests the grand narrative is one based on the accomplishment of defined goals on what Dawson called the 'road of human development'. Diamond makes repeated use of the terminology of failure

[4] To relegate a species to a 'by-product' is to make it subsidiary to a particular process. Beck's analysis of the 'side effect' in risk society, which I have discussed (see Chapter 3, p.104 of this thesis) and take up again later in this chapter, makes a similar point.

and development in describing historical change. He begins his fifth chapter, 'History's Haves and Have-Nots', for example, by declaring that 'what cries out for explanation is the failure of food production to appear, until modern times, in some ecologically very suitable areas that are among the world's richest centers of agriculture and herding today' (Diamond 93). Likewise, his account of the 'problems [that] *delayed* the domestication of apples, pears, plums, and cherries until around classical times' (125; my italics) seems to depend on the notion that history runs accordingly to a schedule. But this is a retrospective imposition. Diamond takes the data of Western history and makes them the yardstick by which he judges other cultures, underscoring an ideological leaning towards European ideas of progress. Hence, he reflects on 'some puzzling non-inventions in the Americas' (370), faulting the pre-Columbian peoples for not achieving what their European counterparts had done. He is even more explicit in lauding contemporary neoliberalism when he describes the 'factors behind Europe's rise: its development of a merchant class, capitalism and patent production, its *failure to develop* absolute despots and crushing taxation' (410; my italics).[5] By flaunting to a greater or lesser extent their standards for civilisation, the prose modes of both Dawson and Diamond privilege a particular vector of human development, and as such they presume readerly expectations of narrative that proceeds in cause-and-effect fashion towards a contemporary pinnacle. Both books assume the gradual transition of terrestrial influence from natural to human agency as civilisation progresses.

The Anathemata also seems to move, eschatologically, towards an historical apogee, although it is divinely rather than humanly directed. More clearly than Diamond, Jones reads environmental factors as preparatory for the appearance of humanity, civilisation and its saviour on the planet. Prehistoric changes in the terrestrial environment do literal groundwork for civilisation. Summerfield's summary of pp.58–66 of the work puts it baldly: 'The Creator scheduled the appearance of man' (45). That humanity is the subject of the work is evident in the following passage, for instance:

> Before the melt-waters
> had drumlin-dammed a high hill-water for the water-maid
> to lave her maiden hair.
>
> Before they morained Tal-y-Ilyn, cirqued a high hollow for
> Idwal, brimmed a deep-dark basin for Peris the Hinge and for
> old Paternus (*Ana.* 66).

The 'melt-waters' need the figurative references of 'her' in the first verse-paragraph and the human names in the second to be temporally 'before' and functionally 'for'. As Dilworth indicates, the 'maiden' is a river, but it can only be virginal because it is imagined in human terms: she is 'Maiden because her waters are unmingled' (126). Jones's second stanza goes on to cite bodies of water created by glacial melt, and his lines elide the lakes and those they are christened for, such as 'The

[5] The latter 'failures' are explicitly contrasted by Diamond with the history of China.

saint after whom Llanberis and Lake Peris are named', and 'Padarn, the sixth-century saint' (*Ana.* 66 n.2). The passage reaches back in time, but it must do so from a human perspective, where the 'high hill-water' is 'drumlin-damned' for the purpose or utility of allowing the (anthropomorphised) 'water-maid' who comes after 'to lave her maiden-hair'. So, while Jones allows for what occurs 'Before' humanity, history and indeed prehistory are always tending in humanity's direction. We depend on our environment; but the development of that environment is ultimately directed towards fostering us. Its contingency on us is evident in our naming of it with a confirmatory cultural gesture.

An anthropocentric relation is also apparent in the subsequent lines:

> Before the Irish sea-borne sheet lay tattered on the gestatorial
> couch of Camber the eponym
> lifted to every extremity of the sky
> by pre-Cambrian oros-heavers
> for him to dream
> the Combroges' epode (*Ana.* 67).

As Summerfield indicates, an 'eponym' is 'a person from whose name the name of a nation is supposedly derived. Cambria = Wales (Med[ieval] Lat[in])' (50), and this makes a further identification of individual with land, privileging the former. Compare this with the 'onomastic […] attempts to explain place-names' in Welsh folktale collection *The Mabinogion* (xi), on which Jones drew extensively for *The Anathemata*. According to that collection's editors Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, these stories represent a source of 'fanciful explanation' (xviii) where narratives with human figures are retrospectively created to name the landscape. In *The Anathemata*, the landscape serves to elevate the figure for whom it will be named, to let him compose the 'epode' that will unify his people. The elevation is both physical and ritualistic, given the use of the word 'gestatorial', glossed by René Hague as 'originally merely a *sella gestatoria*, or sedan chair, but borrowing a grander sense from the papal *sedia gestatoria*', the throne in which popes were borne on ceremonial occasions (*A Commentary on* The Anathemata *of David Jones* 60; author's italics). The movement of ground enables the ascent of the civilisation that develops on it.

Despite the orientation of these passages towards human existence, we can distinguish the way that Jones refers to embodied experiences, such as washing hair or being borne aloft, from Dawson and Diamond's more theoretical view of human evolution and cultural progress. There are other instances in *The Anathemata* where this embodiment, rather than relating the environment in terms of its human utility, enables nonhuman forces to be made legible, such as the beautiful image of 'Her loosed hair […] marking the grain of the gale' (107). In N. K. Sandars's words, 'Jones takes this great heap of the past and tells it not as history, but as something we have experienced in our own flesh' (53). Sandars significantly differentiates Jones's practice from that of scientific discourse. 'This new, this larger and infinitely more complicated world', discovered by science, 'is intellectually

known, but hardly yet *felt* at all'; therefore, 'just as soon as scientific knowledge has apprehended new territory it is proper that the poets should appropriate it' (Sandars 51; author's italics). Jones's anthropomorphism is not scientifically objective, but as a self-acknowledged fiction, it makes the world accessible to human sense while emphasising our dependence on it. It accords with Patricia Waugh's account of the modernist context in *Beyond Mind and Matter*, when 'The new science' of the early twentieth century 'required and provided the pressure for the evolution of a new epistemology which could relate the abstract logic of the mathematical relations to the appearance of particulars, sense-data, in the world' (8).

Jones responds to scientific discovery by positioning it within this understanding. His general note to 'Rite and Fore-Time' explains 'The findings of the physical sciences are necessarily mutable […] But the poet, of whatever century, is concerned only with how he can use a current notion to express a permanent mythus' (*Ana.* 82). Dawson and Diamond both synthesise 'the findings of the physical sciences' but are much less explicit about their 'permanent mythus' of progress with which they frame those findings. Jones on the other hand is open about the 'the embodiment and expression of the mythus and deposits comprising the cultural complex' (*Ana.* 19), which is catholic in both its denominational and broader senses. Although there is doctrinal reassurance in the organisation of this permanent mythus, because what appear to be fragments are organised around the presence of Christ in history, *The Anathemata*'s occupation with the divine means that humanity is never elevated to the apogee of history, as Dawson and Diamond assume is the case. In Jones's reading, humans are situated within this cultural complex, an epiphenomenon of divine intention through environmental agency. *The Anathemata* is thus always awaiting the presence of the divine for completion of meaning. If we do not lend our faith to that presence, the text is open to other agencies for completion.

As *The Anathemata* is not occupied with a narrative that assumes, and culminates in, the ascent of Western civilisation, its pattern is not limited to the trajectory of humanity out of prehistory but can also speculate about what may come after civilisation. The cycles of glacial and interglacial that Jones charts through 'Rite and Fore-Time' could also entail the expansion of ice at a future juncture. He asks whether the exemplary city of Troy could end 'under, sheet-dark Hellespont' (*Ana.* 57), lines glossed by Summerfield as asking 'Will glaciers one day cover Greece and the Aegean?' (Summerfield 41). Jones eschews a progressive narrative of human development of the kind Dawson and Diamond exemplify, and instead positions the work in the vicissitudes of climate. In imagining an iced-over future, he acknowledges geological, climatological and evolutionary contingency. Our present understanding of geology, climate and evolution are thus seen to be among the 'necessarily mutable' aspects of science, to adopt Jones's formulation.

Richard Kerridge directs our consideration of scientific and cultural responses to physical phenomena when he writes that 'The environmental crisis is only identifiable by means of expert interpretation of immensely complex, *constantly changing* data, and by the use of computer modelling

and specialized techniques of statistical analysis' ('Ecocriticism' 5; my italics). Kerridge strictly demarcates the remits of science and literary critique by declaring that 'the scientific data and the interpretation of those data are fiercely contested in ways that only experts can evaluate', so 'part of the business of ecocriticism is to define how that taking-on-trust [of scientific findings] can be done scrupulously'. This is not to define separate areas of interest for science and criticism, but to describe their differing responsibilities to common interests.

Kerridge here provides a critical solution to a creative problem that Jones identifies in his preface: the 'tempo of change […] in the physical sciences makes schemes and data out-moded and irrelevant overnight [and] presents peculiar and phenomenal difficulties in the making of works' (*Ana.* 15). Jones's own response to the handling of data in *The Anathemata* is to provide an interpretative framework in which to organise and evaluate the science of his day. His juxtaposition of data with his Catholic 'mythus' shows that the two serve different functions, which we can characterise as discovery and revelation respectively. We cannot then simply transfer our faith in religion to scientific findings because the two have different qualities and purposes. When we elevate science itself to the status of world-view or 'permanent mythus', rather than a means of critically investigating phenomena, we make a mythology of scientific practice itself, 'when it serves as revealed truth in which we need only believe without question' as Daniel Botkin puts it (xvi). Yet both Dawson and Diamond adopt scientific discourse to normatise the progress with which they inflect their findings.

In contrast, Jones's poetics formally enacts the recognition that there are agencies that exceed our understanding, and that our interaction with the world represents a transformation of its data to bring them within our comprehension. This is evident from *The Anathemata*'s opening lines – 'We already and first of all discern him making this thing other. His groping syntax, if we attend, already shapes' (*Ana.* 49). The 'groping' opening lines of the work situate it at the point of relation between the human and the other, the attempt to make the unsayable sayable. As John Matthias explains in his introduction to Jones's *Selected Works*, there is 'an encounter in [Jones's] work with sheer *otherness*, things otherwise opaque made numinous by the craft of the maker' (15; author's italics). Jones has recourse to questions throughout *The Anathemata* to show how he is shaping what is opaque. In one imagining of the first humans, for instance, he asks:

> By what rote, if at all,
> had they the suffrage:
> Ascribe to, ratify, approve
> in the humid paradises
> of the Third Age? (*Ana.* 64–5)

In these lines, Jones interrogates the manner or 'rote' by which early humans petitioned to understand and order their world. His source is Dawson's passage about 'the expulsion of man

from the Paradise of the Tertiary World' (Dawson 6; cited in *Ana.* 65 n.1), but the interrogative syntax makes the poet's account speculative where the historian's is affirmative.

The acknowledgement of language's role in shaping and 'making other' our experience of the world is most evident when Jones sets the scene for humanity. He responds imaginatively to a world recognised as mutable: 'where the world's a stage / for transformed scenes / with metamorphosed properties' (*Ana.* 62). These lines are as aware of their own artistry as Shakespeare's from *As You Like It* to which they allude (2.7.140).[6] Jones's performance here is double. First, his lines mount the scenery in which every subsequent performance of the mass will be rehearsed. He develops this metaphor of environment as performance space in the lines that follow: 'from what floriate green-room, the Master of Harlequinade, […] called us from our co-laterals out, to dance the Funeral Games of the Great Mammalia, as long, long, long before, these danced out the Dinosaur?' (*Ana.* 63). He plays off the concept of the 'green room' as a preparatory zone, anterior to performance, by opening it into natural space that is 'floriate', but is nevertheless 'room', functional space, for 'us' to dance in.

Second, Jones's projection into the past is a staging of one among any number of dramatic possibilities presented by the meanness of the fossil and archaeological record. Beginning, 'What, from this one's cranial data, is like to have been his kindred's psyche […]?' (*Ana.* 61f), a litany of questions precedes the invocation of a primeval theatre, and this creates a context in which we are prepared to entertain possible palaeo-environmental scenarios. The rhetorical, call-and-response quality of the questions emphasises the writer and reader's mutual, ritual imagination of prehistory, marking itself as hypothetical; or fictional, in the sense of Stevens's projections into nature. Jones's metaphor of changing environmental scenery anticipates the kind of staging considered by Ulrich Beck, where hypothetical scenarios of environmental collapse are drawn into the present in order to prevent their occurrence:

> only by imagining and staging world risk does the future catastrophe become present – often with the goal of averting it by influencing present decisions. Then the diagnosis of risk would be 'a self-refuting prophecy' – a prime example being the debate on climate change which is supposed to prevent climate change (10).

Beck continues that 'the staging of global risk sets in train a social production and construction of reality. With this, risk becomes the cause and medium of social transformation' (16). Jones both offers a model for attempting this in literature, in a performative rather than declarative mode, and instructs us in the art of dramatising premises for the present, instead of supposing or requiring them to be objectively true.

Botkin attests to our need for such understandings of the world in spite of the findings of science. 'We need to see mythology—in the sense of a story about how the world came about and how it works—as still a necessary part of human existence. It is deep within us, like it or not; it is

[6] See *As You Like It* (Arden Shakespeare: Third Series) 227.

not a bad thing, it is just what we are' (xvi). He suggests that science is a complement of and not an alternative to our mythologising because 'even today, in this age when we seem to have persuaded ourselves that we have risen above mythology, most environmental policies, laws, and ideologies are consistent with (to say the least) and arguably a restatement of the beliefs about nature in th[e] Judeo-Christian tradition' (Botkin xvii). We therefore do science a disservice if we regard it as sufficient in itself to fulfil our need for narrative. Botkin emphasises that our engagements with the world persist in having a sacramental quality even when devoid of an explicitly theological context, and *The Anathemata* affords scope for considering the relation between science and religion comprehensively as a deliberate framing of particular data. We need Jones's breadth of vision when tracing the emergent networks of phenomena that climate change entails, instead of a narrow imposition of linear order. As Nancy Tuana remarks:

> material agency in its heterogeneous forms, including irreducibly diverse forms of distinctively human agency, interact[s] in complex ways. Agency in all these instances emerges out of such interactions; it is not antecedent to them. Our epistemic practices must thus be attuned to this manifold agency and emergent interplay (196).

To give these phenomena full expression, we should respond to rather than resist the potential in language's irrationalities. Szerszynski argues that '*Writing itself* (as the condition of im/possibility of meaning) is always aberrant, and reading the climate is thus always already subjected to the vagaries and aporias of writing' ('Reading' 22; author's italics). Because *The Anathemata* is itself 'produced from a simple formula (paradox, duality, aporia)', that results in 'a highly complex organism which repeats itself through each strata of its form' in Paul Stanbridge's analysis ('The Making of David Jones's *Anathemata*' 294), Jones's poetics capably anticipates Szerszynski's account of climatic contingencies.

Szerszynski maintains that while 'it may seem scandalous to divert attention away from the task of a causal analysis of climate change, and instead to try to understand it in terms of semiosis and meaning', he wants 'to argue, it is the dominant technological framing of climate change that ultimately constitutes a more radical evasion of responsibility' (22) because rational instrumental analysis of climate presupposes that it will respond in predictable or manageable ways to our intervention. He continues, 'standardized forms of measurement, and […] conventional practices of aggregation and modelling' function by 'bringing the weather indoors', and this 'tempts us to imagine that we can discern a "divine writing" in nature' (22–3).[7] We become peculiarly susceptible to the illusion of mastery over an objective reality once we have abandoned the notion of God, because by placing faith in scientific accounts, rather than by valuing them as experimental readings of the world, we make them into sacraments. We thus overload our interpretations of climate by investing humanity's position with an unacknowledged divinity. It is this misreading of our relation

[7] Szerszynski refers to 'divine, natural writing, *langue*' ('Reading' 20), citing the concept of 'divine inscription' as opposed to 'technique' from Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (17).

to the science that can lead us to a 'confident belief in the human ability to control Nature[, which] is a dominant, if often subliminal, attribute of the international diplomacy that engages climate change' (Hulme 351). Unlike this technocratic scientism, which supposes to shear mythology and ideology from its narrative, Jones's poetic engagement with the emergence of civilisation is explicit about its mythical, sacramental status, expressing the impossibility of sharply distinguishing human activity and prejudice in the physical and cultural construction of nature.

The fractal form

Where scientific discourses attempt to streamline the data of history into cause-and-effect progression, *The Anathemata* is in contrast all too aware of the multiple and various potential inflections and directions that narrative can take, particularly in the form of signs. Formally central to the work is an opening out from narrative into resonance with an environing culture. Jones creates a form contingent on his understanding of the world, rather than fitting the data to a presupposed narrative of progress, engaging more imaginatively with the implications of environmental change. In *The Sense of the Past*, Charles Tomlinson proposes an artistic analogy for *The Anathemata*'s pattern with forms of early Celtic writing. He cites Gwyn Williams's characterisation of such writing as 'like the inter-woven inventions preserved in early Celtic manuscripts and on stone crosses, where what happens in a corner is as important as what happens at the centre, because there often is no centre' (*Welsh Poems* 11).[8] Jones's use of Celtic form contributes a digressive quality to *The Anathemata*, and the pre-modern narrative on which he draws enacts an understanding of the world distinct from the expectations of a modern, scientifically literate readership. One such text that Jones cites is the collection of Welsh folktales *The Mabinogion*. Gwyn Jones's 1974 introduction to the Everyman translation clarifies the tales' original context:

> Many of the so-called structural imperfections […], such as the abrupt introductions and dismissals of characters, the overtaking of one theme by another, the apparent changes in a story's direction, and the frequent (and frequently inaccurate) explanations of place-names, cannot have been regarded as faults by the author or by his audience. The tellers of the native tales knew no foreshadowings of nineteenth-century critical logistics; their hearer had not heard of the 'well-made' novel; and it is in the nature of wondertale to transcend factual consistency (xxxviii).

The tenth of the eleven stories of *The Mabinogion*, 'Peredur Son of Efrawg', contains for instance a folding-in of narrative that seems alive to the sense of the multiple in the particular. Charged with reaching the Dolorous Mound to slay the Black Worm, Peredur faces a journey in three stages, in which he must defeat the mythical beast the Addanc, visit the Lady of Feats, and encounter the knights in the three-hundred pavilions that surround the mound (209–14). On the first stage, Peredur is offered a further choice of 'three paths' (211), and yet he eschews two of these to face

[8] The 'Lindisfarne plaited lines' that illuminate the Holy Island's gospels likewise both inform the shaping of, and are imaged in, *Briggflatts* (Bunting *Complete* 68; see also Chapter 4, p.131 of this thesis).

the Addanc directly. The nesting of three routes within one of three stages is a simple example of the kind of self-similar fractal patterning Jones will create in *The Anathemata*. For example, part V of the work, 'The Lady of the Pool', opens with a mariner's arrival in London, before recounting the song of a lavender seller whom he may have heard, nested within which is the florist's vernacular inventory of local churches (*Ana.* 124–7; author's italics). The different speakers resume their respective relations as the section continues.

This technique of loading each episode with unexplored possibilities creates room in narrative for considering consequences in several vectors at once, as Jones's notes also do with our reading of the text. As a way of reading the world, the technique can also enable us to account for the multiple relations and impacts our relations with the environment entail over different scales. This becomes a formal problem in the writing of climate change: we can recall, for instance, that Elizabeth Kolbert has consciously to limit the scope of *Field Notes from a Catastrophe* claiming that she 'could have gone to hundreds if not thousands of other places […] to document' the effects of climate change (2; see Chapter 1, p.32 of this thesis). A form of narrative that accommodates and even depends on such exigencies is a better expression of the risk society of climate change, in which causes accumulate over time and space into emergent and unexpected effects, than genres akin to the 'well-made' novel that Gwyn Jones cites, such as journalistic or popular science accounts with linear narratives like Kolbert's or Diamond's. Structurally, literary modes are capable of enacting the unexpected and multiple phenomena of climate change and their connections, as the elaborate labyrinthine structure of *Briggflatts*, for instance, contains its own monstrous hybrid of human and natural agency. Indeed, disjunctive structure is one of the earliest features that Howarth cites as being typical of modernist poetry: 'Without syntax to restrict the fragments' meaning to their immediate context [...] they can now connect to each other in multiple and unexpected ways' (6). Poetry that encourages us to think about multiple associations fosters a sense that each of our engagements with the proximate, experiential world entails a relation at other scales, too – an awareness that by eating a peach we might disturb the universe, which is paradoxical for realistic or rationalist modes.

To assess the implications of this form for the work, we can consider Paul Stanbridge's 'proposed analogy for *The Anathemata* – the fractal' (392). Among the 'main characteristics of fractals', Stanbridge explains, are that 'they are self-generative from within themselves as a result of their iterativity' and 'self-similar in a hierarchized set of scalings' (398). This quality of self-generating resemblance across different scales means that *The Anathemata* presents the possibility of reading various motifs or themes as dominant, recurring as they do throughout the work. Dilworth regards the mass as being formally central to the work, evident in the Lady of the Pool's 'lyrical celebration of the redemptive acts of Jesus, which the Eucharist sacramentally makes present' (177; citing *Ana.* 156–7). However, the concept of fractal form also enables the work to be read eccentrically, and ecocentrically, with the changing environment of 'Rite and Fore-Time' as its

thematic as well as its formal starting point. Such a reading makes the work's own contingency, and that of civilisation, more apparent. So although Stanbridge still asserts that there is a pattern to *The Anathemata*, he does not regard it as predetermined. His study of the drafts leads him to conclude that the form emerged as Jones responded to and revised what he had already composed: 'Jones's text was generated by itself. Reading over his work, a fragment suggested a free-associational chain of other fragments' (136).

The fractal itself is an emergent form in material phenomena. Scientists Giuseppe Cello and Bruce Malamud explain in the preface to *Fractal Analysis for Natural Hazards* that 'Self-similarity and fractals [represent] the idea that an object's pattern will approximately repeat itself at multiple scales'. They add that 'In the Earth Sciences, the concept of self-similar scaling (scale invariance) and fractal geometry over a given range of scales is well recognized in many natural objects, for example sand dunes, rock fractures and fold, and drainage networks', and they want too to 'emphasize the role of fractal analyses in natural hazard research'.[9] We can infer from Stanbridge's use of the term 'fractal' that he considers Jones's composition process as organic or phenomenal rather than rationalised, a contrast we also observe between the pre-modern tales of *The Mabinogion* and popular science narrative. *The Anathemata*, then, offers a new kind of spatial model that transcends scales but finds similar patterns at those different scales. Applied fractally and unintentionally to the wider environment – terrestrial, maritime and atmospheric – to map anthropogenic environmental change, that model demonstrates the complication and entanglement of human and natural agency. In 'Ecology as Text, Text as Ecology', Timothy Morton claims that '"Text" is precisely the word for th[e] fractal weaving of boundaries that open onto the unbounded' (2). *The Anathemata* is, like *Briggflatts*, a site where these fractals interact at a scale visible to the reader, gesturing ever outwards at their repeated phenomenal formations.

I suggested in my analysis of Stevens's work that poetry's ambiguity and movement towards abstraction is also its adaptability, because it permits us to convey natural process in a more sophisticated manner than mimetic reproduction of nonhuman entities (see Chapter 3, p.82 of this thesis). It also indicates the quality of mind with which we might better comprehend the complexities of processes that are not amenable to human management, particularly contemporary climate change. In this context, Jones's preface and footnotes may seem like an unnecessarily restrictive attempt to direct the reader's interpretations, rather than allowing for the ambiguities of the literary text. For instance, Jones asks in the preface to *The Anathemata*, 'If the poet writes "wood" what are the chances that the Wood of the Cross will be evoked?' (*Ana.* 23). This complaint framed as question is problematic for the ecocritic, who will want to attest to the manifold biological and ecological associations of wood, rather than its significance in a particular religious tradition. Jones's annotation and exegesis suggests that he is willing to acknowledge

[9] Stanbridge notes that 'Fractals have been applied to many phenomena in many disciplines in the past thirty years; for example, the structure of the universe, the structure of matter at the subatomic level, coastal and cloud formations, the stock market, weather systems, Brownian motion, turbulence, the growth of cities, neuroscience, and so on' (400) – an impressively hybrid selection of phenomena.

poetry's power of association only so far as he is required to restrain that power and direct it in particular interpretative vectors. As his prefatory argument continues, though, it is clear that Jones is not so much channelling our response to language as (re)introducing another current in it. If readers do not pick up on the religious connotations of 'wood', then

> that particular word could no longer be used with confidence to implement, to call up […] the mythus of a particular culture […]. It would remain true even if we were of the opinion that it was high time that the word 'wood' should be dissociated from the mythus and concepts indicated. The arts abhor any loppings off of meanings or emptyings out, any lessening of the totality of connotation, any loss of recession and thickness through (*Ana.* 23–4).

That is, the project of poetry is for Jones a way of ensuring that language remains associative.

This is taken up in *The Anathemata*'s second section 'Middle Sea and Lear-Sea', for example. Jones uses the terms 'mast-tree' and 'steer-tree' (*Ana.* 102) to describe parts of the boat undertaking the voyage from the Mediterranean to Britain. Summerfield explains that these terms stand, respectively, for 'the pole of the mast (perh[aps] the poet's coinage)' and 'the beam of the tiller (obs[cure])' (67). The poet's neologism and archaism aim to evoke the wood of the Cross, as per his preface, and the ship's timbers operate through the poem as a reminder of Christ's sacrifice, bearing humanity across the world's waters through time. The elision of 'wood' with 'tree', however, points up the biological constitution of those timbers, alluding to Christ's life-giving power and his vernal resurrection, just as the trees re-foliate in the spring. What seem to be awkward or esoteric synonyms deployed for mast and tiller actually redirect attention from their human instrumentality and remind us of their organic origins. Indeed, in *The Anathemata*'s seventh section, 'Mabinog's Liturgy', Jones opens this out to question: 'd' sawn-off timbers blossom […] Can mortised stakes bud?' (*Ana.* 190). This offers a further instance of the trees already regarded in this thesis (see, for example, Chapter 1, p.23 and p.45). Jones takes a view of the tree through time that is closer to Wood's understanding of the 'temporally extended persisting, growing tree' (Wood 152) than Lawrence Buell's 'grove of second-growth white pines' (*Environmental* 10), and his extension of the individual image through time into its own past and possible future fractally resembles the reappearance of wooden motifs across *The Anathemata*. Throughout the work, Jones seeks to revivify language through the resonance of the symbols he chooses.

Futile utility

The tensions between functional and living language are further explored by Jones in the essay 'Art and Sacrament'. He comments on 'the etymology of the word *religio*', noting that 'a commonly accepted view is that a binding of some sort is indicated' and 'it is in this sense that I here use the word "religious". It refers to a binding, a securing […] it secures a freedom to function' (*Epoch & Artist* 158; author's italics). This attempt to rebind extra-utile significance in language can usefully be described by Robert Pogue Harrison's discussion of 'a tree whose existence cannot be accounted

for' by our rational 'efforts to reduce the world to intelligibility through mathematics or history' (*Forests* 147). The process of rendering intelligible through instrumentalising language is read by Harrison as symptomatic of the post-Enlightenment world. It is also complicit in the process where forests are 'stripped of the symbolic density they may once have possessed', before 'an even more reified concept' came into play: 'the forest as a quantifiable volume of usable (or taxable) wood. The usefulness of the forest becomes measured in terms of a quantifiable mass' (*Forests* 121, 122). There is a common root to the thinning out of language and nature's reduction to its resource value. We neglect the resonances and histories of language to value its denotative qualities in the same way the use of "natural resources" neglects both their organic existence and the unutilised output from their combustion, such as carbon dioxide. The latter has then to be downplayed as a side effect, imagined into a non-existent exteriority rather than recognised as a necessary consequence of power generation. As Beck explains, 'the "side effects", which were wilfully ignored or were unknowable at the moment of decision, assume the guise of environmental crises that transcend the limits of space and time' (19).

In contrast to this reduction of significance, *The Anathemata* deploys specific references to give them a wider resonance, whether cultural, national or religious, and images exceed a single function, as in Jones's example of 'wood'. The work thus exemplifies Howarth's characterisation of modernist poetic form, in which 'ordinary material [is] given artistic charge by being poetically framed by structures in which no item or sound is ever subordinated into mere detail' (25). Indeed, Jones's notes continually reinforce the wider associations of what he instances, and Tomlinson describes the work as being 'sprawling', 'peppered with notes on every page and perhaps calling for more' (15). Yet while much has been made critically of the status of *The Waste Land*'s notes, those in Jones's work are by contrast little discussed – even though they are considerably more substantial than Eliot's and run throughout *The Anathemata* as constant companion to the composition. They represent another strategy in Jones's re-association of connotation. Rather than suppress irrational associations, he attends to the material agency of language.

Where Maud Ellmann characterises *The Waste Land*'s notes as 'a kind of supplement or discharge of the text that Eliot could never get "unstuck"', representing the 'invasion' of the poem by its own 'disjecta' or waste matter (98),[10] Jones's practice more deliberately constitutes an inclusion of the excluded in the work. This is clear from his choice of title:

> I mean by my title as much as it can be made to mean […]: the blessed things that have taken on what is cursed and the profane things that are somehow redeemed […]; things, or some aspect of them, that partake of the extra-utile and the gratuitous; things that are the signs of something other (*Ana.* 28–9).

[10] Ellmann is citing Eliot's 1956 remarks on the poem: 'I have sometimes thought of getting rid of these notes; but now they can never be unstuck' ('The Frontiers of Criticism' 109–10).

Jones's concept of the 'extra-utile' bears productive resemblances to Bonnie Costello's understanding of superfluity in relation to Wallace Stevens, and the double status of waste in poems such as 'The Plain Sense of Things' or *Briggflatts*. Costello reads superfluity as 'central to the principle of change in nature and culture' ('What to Make' 569).

Considered this way, Jones's transubstantiation of anathematised material into venerated text is a celebration rather than a suppression of material agency, akin to the 'productivity [that] puts us in touch with the fluency of the universe' ('What to Make' 569). Rather than rationalise these forces into a progressive model of history, in which events are oriented largely or wholly towards development, the extra-utile, the superfluous, is replete with unrealised and renewable potential, as is the literary text itself. By opening continually out into signification, the text enacts the 'end of externality' proposed by David Wood:

> Now there is no outside, no space for expansion […] no slack, no 'out,' or 'away' as when we throw something 'out' or 'away'. […] Yet so much of our making sense, let alone the intelligibility of our actions, still rests on being able to export, exclude, externalise what we do not want to consider. When that externality is no longer available, we are in trouble (172–3).

In a review of *The Anathemata*, W. H. Auden is sensitive to the work's acknowledgement of nonhuman creativity and our human response to this: 'The "creatures" of the rite are bread and wine, the existence of which presuppose both a nonhuman nature which produces wheat and grapes, and a human culture which by thought and labor is able to convert these natural products into human artifacts' (12). Auden's observation anticipates the concern with the co-productive agency of the nonhuman and the human in material ecocriticism, although he sees it here directed into culture rather than out if it, intentionally rather than accidentally. Considered in this context, where the extra-utile or superfluous are a source of creativity, Jones's own notes then represent an obsessive recovery and recycling of associations that civilisation has attempted to rationalise away, restoring an excessive quality to his references.

In the past two decades, we have begun to pay attention to our own kind of atmospheric 'anathemata' such as CFCs and CO_2, accounting for their associations with human economic and industrial activity and their ungovernable agency. Nevertheless, the extent to which we have begun to quantify these and other greenhouse gas emissions as a negative natural resource is an explicit process of quantification, continuing rather than challenging the instrumental approach in which climate change originated. This instrumentality is not only implicated in attempts to manage the climate itself, that 'confident belief in the human ability to control Nature' that Hulme identifies (351); it also conversely enables our too-ready acceptance of climatic exigencies for economic exploitation in the belief that we can account for and thus handle them.

Jones attends to this exploitative opportunism at one point in section IV, 'Redriff'. He mythologically renders the transition from winter to spring on frozen northern seas as 'when Proserpine unbinds the Baltic', and his note to this line reads 'The Rotherhithe timber-trade was

particularly brisk in the spring when the ice melted and freed the ships in the Baltic' (*Ana.* 119). The possibilities for such economic opportunism have increased in the time since Jones wrote in line with the increased melting of the Arctic in recent years. In a *New Scientist* article of October 2012, Fred Pearce writes: 'a major rush on resources […] will transform the Arctic as surely as the loss of ice'; this 'loss of ice, brought about by burning fossil fuels, is opening up the once-remote top of the world to industries keen to extract oil and gas, minerals and more' ('Laying Claim to the Wild, Wild North' 8). Pearce observes that 'a combination of global shortages, rising prices, technical advances and the exposure of wide areas of the Arctic Ocean during summer melts, are triggering an explosion of activity' (10).

Our awareness of this qualifies a 'permanent mythus' of human opportunism in *The Anathemata*. No longer do we simply take advantage of seasonal change, but we exacerbate the differences between Arctic winter and summer and would, as a civilisation, rather exploit than reflect on them. Given that *The Anathemata* charts the emergence of culture as a result of conducive landscape and climate, human environmental opportunism is inevitably part of the process it describes. However, it is evident in the work that we are not to take favourable terrestrial conditions for granted. Jones's suspicion about instrumental views of the natural environment is seen for example in the paragraph: 'the slow estuarine alchemies had coal-blacked the green dryad-ways over the fire-clayed seat-earth along all the utile seams' (*Ana.* 72). As with the earlier passages about Tal-y-Ilyn and the Combroges, the prehistoric past is here described in relation to subsequent civilisation. However, Jones refers to the coal seams disparagingly as 'utile', in contrast to the 'alchemical' processes that led to their formation. Civilisation has neglected the gratuitous, excessive quality of the fossilisation, and hence disregarded the emission of greenhouse gases that results from their combustion,[11] underscoring Jones's critique of their 'utility'. These emissions are anathemata in the negative sense, offsetting the positive organic quality of the forests that become fossil fuel over geological time.

This reaction to instrumental perception of the environment situates Jones in a post-Romantic tradition that seeks to revivify rather than rationalise our experience of the world. Donald Worster describes this tradition when he discusses twentieth-century environmentalism as part of a history that includes 'many biocentrists, Romantics, and arcadians' (333). All of these groups responded to the way that, following the Enlightenment, 'Nature had been abruptly exiled by the scientific mechanists from the realms of value, ethics, and beauty' (318). Jones, too, participates in this project of restoring to the world the qualities of enchantment and signification by refusing to reduce terms to a single function. Instead, he places language in a context where it creates resonant symbols. Discussing his work, Peter Howarth writes 'Jones saw art as a kind of gathering-in of present and past times into symbolic shape; [... *The*] *Anathemata* begins with [an] image of art like the Mass, transforming daily bread into the ever-living body of Christ, fusing individual and common' (196–7).

[11] See also Chapter 4, pp.122–3 of this thesis.

This intensification of experience with wider resonance can be seen in the Lady of the Pool's retelling of another sailor's voyage. In her relation, she mediates from his technical reading of the weather as 'behaviours of water-spheres and atmospheres, as: incidence of tide and peculiar pressures of the upper air' to her own more evocative terms, 'Shifts of unshaping mist', 'muffle of grey fog' and 'Thicks of rain' (*Ana.* 139–40). Sandars reads these lines as 'marvellous physical description […] imperceptibly lifted and removed to a quite other height' (66), and they continue the trend of bringing the weather into personal relation begun in the Lady's earlier lines: 'Come buy my sweet lavender / that bodes the fall-gale westerlies / and ice on slow old Baldpate' (*Ana.* 125). In that vernacular 'boding', the plant signifies weather to come and is not commodity alone.[12] *The Anathemata*'s capacity to 'convey' the reader 'imperceptibly from the shallows of our own experience of wind and weather onto quite different levels' (Sandars 67) is enabled because an individually textured voice such as the Lady's is also associative, becoming typical in the context of the work's globality. It is not the identity of individual figures that unites, but the continuity and repetition of their motifs, with the Lady's story enfolding a nautical narration. Similarly, Hague observes that 'the shipwright [of part IV, Redriff], like the skipper in this and the preceding parts, is both individual […] and typical: thus he can serve to reflect the poet's shifting viewpoint' (148–9).

Jones achieves this conjunction of character and context by multiplying the specific references that rehearse the liturgy, in fractally self-similar fashion, until the reader is inundated with them. Such globalising of individual significance is an important consideration for Morton. He suggests that the fractal commonality of text and ecology entails an 'absence of background' because the same principles generate both. 'Moreover, the globally warming Earth is similarly disturbing: there is no longer any background ("environment", "weather", "Nature" and so on) against which human activity may differentiate itself' ('Ecology as Text' 5). An ecology of text creates personae such as Prufrock, terrified by the uncertainty of their independent existence; but in Jones it affirms a trans-historical order based around Catholic rite, the subservience of the self to a greater order. Tomlinson identifies Jones's practice with 'what, in Biblical interpretation, is called typology', finding 'a whole structure of typologies' in his work (11). He nevertheless challenges what he considers 'the faults of over-reference' in *The Anathemata* (12), attesting that 'one remains uncomfortably aware that any given insight is likely to be crushed by imaginative over-crowding, by relentless typological parallels' (15). Even the apologetic Sandars suggests that Jones was 'always rather unhappy about the long, necessary, notes which he added to his writings. He would so much have rather that we all had his amazing knowledge, and were all able to take the allusions without help from him' (62–3). If this quality does mark one of the failures of Jones's writing, it still reminds us of what needs to be at stake in a poetics of climate change: the expression of inordinate, disordered global associations in every individual act.

[12] The lines, Jones explains in a note, were inspired by his 'maternal grandmother [who] was saddened by the [lavender-seller's] call, because she said it meant that summer was almost gone and that winter was again near' (*Ana.* 125 n.1).

The critic must be conscious of this quality of resonance in approaching a work of *The Anathemata*'s scope, because context – whether the religious tradition in Jones's writing or anthropogenic environmental change in my reading – produces discomfiting disjunctions between immediate experience and global significance. So even when Jones is dealing with the geological timescale of prehistoric climate change rather than bad weather in London, he scales these processes to historic human time to make the transitions between them legible. This technique is valuable to our comprehension of the telescoping timescales of anthropogenic climate change. Whether this change is gradual or abrupt, it collapses two centuries of industrial civilisation's combustion, forest clearance and so on into material manifestation. Each of those two hundred years in turn telescopes a greater order of prehistoric time into it, as Tim Flannery indicates: 'over each year of our industrial age, humans have required several centuries' worth of ancient sunlight to keep the economy going. The figure for 1997 – around 422 years of fossil sunlight – was typical' (77). In the context of this wealth of associated emissions, it falls to the critic of climate change to determine whether a writer successfully communicates these disjunctions of scale – indecorous or irrational as they may be from a managerial perspective – or whether that writer fails to match their poetics to the metier. This is part of what Kerridge requires should be the 'scrupulously' attentive attitude of the ecocritic ('Ecocriticism' 5).

For Jones, poetry necessarily affirms the associations of material substance. This is more tellingly chemical when his preface takes water rather than wood as that substance, and

> whether the poet can and does so juxtapose and condition within a context the formula H_2O as to evoke […] further, deeper, and more exciting significances *vis-à-vis* the sacrament of water, and also, for us islanders, whose history is so much of water, with other significances relative to that (*Ana.* 16–17; author's italics).

What a 'knowledge of the chemical components of this material' can evoke (17) is an apt enough criterion for a poetics of climate change, even when H_2O remains our object of concern. It is much greater if we substitute CO_2 into Jones's formulation, because then its significance extends to the whole planet's future rather than British history (that of 'us islanders'). Our responsiveness to language's evocations can in turn foster a greater environmental literacy, by encouraging us as readers to be aware of our position within material networks and gauge the full extent of relations with them.

Beyond symbolic association, another strategy for extending language's reach in *The Anathemata* is Jones's shifting parts of speech from noun into verb, which transforms them from object or state into ongoing process. For example, he exploits a typical association between the female and the generative when he says of the landscape 'She must marl […] she must glen […]' (*Ana.* 70). That 'she' may ambiguously refer back to the previously mentioned 'dim-eyed Clio' or 'naiad Sabrina' (*Ana.* 68, 69), drawing together the emergence of human history, in the form of its muse, with its physical geography in the form of its associated water-sprite. On the other hand, Jones may be

using 'she' to refer to a generic, generative female quality in the same way 'he' is the type for the male craftsman or artisan, because he uses pronouns to similar effect across the work to allude to more than one figure, in the same way as the Lady and the sailor are both individuated and typical. Hague explains that Jones 'frequently […] uses "he" or "his", "him" etc., to indicate that, while he has an individual in mind, that individual is to be regarded as typical' (11). This makes instances of individual agency both cultural in their resonance and collective in their effect, responding to the difficulty of expanding lyric's intense individuality into cumulative, unintentional action and global-scale physical phenomena With the ascription of subjecthood and agency to landscape in 'She must marl' and 'she must glen', then, Jones invokes an environment as process 'the noun being used here, as so often, as a verb' (Hague 66). By not regarding landscape as given, Jones here satisfies one of Lawrence Buell's four criteria for an 'environmental text', exhibiting a '*sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given*' (*Environmental* 8; author's italics). Similarly, in evolutionary terms rather than geological, 'the mammal'd Pliocene' (*Ana.* 74) makes noun into verbal participle, transforming taxonomic construct into contingent, evolutionary process in a particular geological epoch.

These techniques expand the range of reference beyond human terms, and the tension between the two scales is a theme Jones revisits throughout *The Anathemata.* With the 'groping syntax' of the opening line proper, humanity is already attempting to come to terms with terrestrial time. The disjunction between the two scales is evident again soon after:

> By intercalation of weeks
> (since the pigeons were unfledged
> and the lambs still young)
> they've adjusted the term
> till this appointed night (*Ana.* 51)

Jones explains in his note that

> The conditions determining the exact time of the Passover were that the moon must be at the full, the vernal equinox past and the sun in Aries. The fixed date of the feast was the fourteenth day of the first month […] and if that date was due to fall before these conjunctions the necessary number of days were inserted into the calendar in order to postpone it (*Ana.* 52 n.1).

That is to say, human measurement of time did not always prove sufficient to determine the elapsing of terrestrial cycles. A 'term' of weeks – a word whose lexical significance suggests the 'groping' syntax of the work is both verbal and temporal – has therefore to be generated to bring the culture back in line with the progress of the seasons. Although Jones's interest here is chiefly sacramental, it is still by indicator species such as the pigeons and lambs that discrepancies in the religious calendar are resolved. The need for human terms to accommodate disruption to or rethink the seasonal cycle persists today, but with greater urgency because the continued welfare of human existence depends on our ability to interpret nonhuman signs.

We have witnessed in Wallace Stevens's work the need to continually re-appraise human imaginations in their effort to approximate the world. But where for Stevens the cycle of interrogation comes from a lyric impulse, for Jones it is prompted by an expression of history more akin to the epic mode. Jones also differs from Eliot, because while in *The Waste Land* the disrupted seasons draw attention to culture's implication in them and their trans-historical significance, in *The Anathemata*, they become a way of negotiating from human calendars into geological time. We see this in the parenthetical passage (*Ana.* 55–8) that opens with reference to 'Great Summer' and 'Great Winter'. These are glossed by Jones as a 'Greek guess as to the cosmic rhythm […] largely verified by modern physical science' (*Ana.* 54), also drawing on Dawson (4). Within the first few pages of *The Anathemata*, the seasons are thus fractally scaled up into human epochs and ultimately, the 'cosmic rhythm', again suggestive of Soper's nature as underlying physical principles. With regard to a seasonal arrangement of longer timeframes, Jones comments that: 'I have no idea if at some remote geological time from now, there is any possibility of a similar glaciation. In the whole passage in square brackets I am merely employing such a possibility as a convenient allegory' (*Ana.* 58). Because the 'possibility' of a changing climate is now actual rather than allegorical, our locus of reading shifts from Jones's central sacrament to his preliminary, climate-changing groundwork in 'Rite and Fore-Time'. This reading emphasises the way Jones puts civilisation in a climate-contingent position by speculating about a further ice age, rather than imagining, as Dawson does, that civilisation renders us 'independent of the changes of climate' (Dawson 6). The poet's imagination entertains the possibility of negative change rather than progress.

Human terms are further entangled in the geological in a subsequent verse-paragraph that discusses the creator of the Willendorf Venus, the prehistoric figurine of a woman:

> Who were his gens-men, or had he no *Hausname* yet
> no *nomen* for his *fecit*-mark
> the Master of the Venus?
> whose man-hands god-handled the Willendorf stone
> before they unbound the last glaciation
> for the Uhland Father to be-ribbon *die blaue Donau*
> with his Vanabride blue (*Ana.* 59).

Tomlinson comments on these lines that 'already in the Venus master, we have the essentials of man-the-maker, in this pre-Teutonic world before the Uhland Father […] – himself a pre-figuring of the Christian god – and the melting of the glaciers into the blue Danube' (12). His reading distinguishes and juxtaposes human artifice and the melting of the glaciers. In Jones's formulation, however, the agency of the two parties is elided in 'they', which 'unbound the last glaciation'. The pronoun seems to refer anaphorically to the 'man-hands' that 'god-handled' the Willendorf Venus into being, entangling the emergence of human creation with environmental change. Dilworth reads the passage as 'the Sky Father melted Danube ice' (124), yet the question of exact responsibility for the changed climate remains open because of the third-person openness of

Jones's poetics, which identifies the creative power of God with that of early humans. Man the maker as a 'type' for God in *The Anathemata* emphasises humanity's power to de-create the natural world as well as put it to productive use. Human agency is anathematic itself, in that it can be both positively and negatively inflected. In the association of divine and human agency, Jones makes a typological resemblance; the material emergence of anthropogenic climate change subsequently certifies that resemblance through causal connection. Humanity changes the planet on a divine scale, instigating the Anthropocene,[13] but lacks a theology of itself that would enable it to comprehend this role.

Within the theological schema of *The Anathemata*, activities can be both sacramental and utile, which is to say, anathematic in the positive sense. When 'Cronos […] breaks his ice like morsels, for the therapy and fertility of the land-masses' (*Ana.* 69), he foreshadows the mass and creates aquifers; while human agency, in the form of 'poor Hobs with aid-fires' (*Ana.* 221), aims to 'help the sun survive the winter', Summerfield explains (134). Once these activities become regarded as solely utile for the purposes of agriculture, heat or power generation, however, we neglect their anathematic qualities, and they assume a negative value. By ignoring their consequences, we ironically reaffirm a cycle of positive feedback in which combustion intensifies the solar radiation received by the earth and the breaking of ice. Similarly, the third-person possessive in the following lines depends on the shared purpose of man and God: 'And now his celestial influence gains: / across the atmosphere /on the water-sphere' (*Ana.* 95). 'His' is used by Jones to suggest the spread of Roman civilisation and Christianity's influence around the globe. However, emptied of its theological significance, 'his' acquires a more utile, human reading. In this context, 'celestial' reads more materially and suggests the unintended influence of human activity on and in the sky. Jones writes 'the build of us / patterns dark the blueing waters' (95) to figure the fleet's passage across the sea, and this too resonates now as an image of civilisation's projection of an environmental shadow. Where *The Anathemata* enables a wider, theological reading, it also enables future, secular readings where humanity occupies the sphere vacated by absent divinity. Scientism alone does not empower us to make this transition responsibly.

The spread of humans across the planet is an effort of exploration, moving beyond bounds, yet there is a contrary human tendency to contain, reduce and limit the imagined scope of our impact on the world. Jones's poetics recognises as much. His verbalisation of nouns to enact the processes of landscape in 'Rite and Fore-Time' is extended into the corresponding human field of cartography in 'Angle-Land': 'the greyed green wastes that / they strictly grid / quadrate and number on the sea-green *Quadratkarte*' (*Ana.* 115). Summerfield points out that Jones uses 'grid' as a

[13] Behringer indicates that 'With the beginnings of agriculture' around 12 kya,

> Neolithic man intervened in the natural environment. Palaeolithic hunters already probably used fire for hunting purposes and brought about extensive changes in the landscape […] Clearance by fire released large quantities of carbon dioxide – although it is impossible today to determine the ratio of 'natural' forest and bush fires to those deliberately started by humans. Neolithic encroachments in the landscape reached a new dimension as fresh areas were permanently cleared for settlement and for arable land or pasture (47).

verb, meaning to 'cover with a grid', and 'quadrate', or 'divide into squares', in the preparation of the *Quadratkarte*, glossed as 'a map marked with a square grid' (Summerfield 75). This verbalisation indicates the process of mapping rather than the map itself, the contingent rather than definitive quality of human quantification of nature. It responds to the changeable quality of what is being mapped, in this case the sea itself. It thus shares a premise, if not a technique, with Stevens's perpetual re-examination of the world, exemplified by 'Sea Surface Full of Clouds'. The transition from prose to verse through these three lines of *The Anathemata*, where 'they strictly grid' establishes the iambic pattern for the hexameter line that follows, audibly demonstrates the play of cartography from irregularity into order. Jones's own comments on the lines, cited in Hague, in part support and in part give the lie to such a reading:

> 'probably "grid, quadrate and number" would be better running on in one line, but I know how it was that I broke the line at "grid". I wanted a slight pause at that word, because I wanted quadrate-and number-on-the-seagreen-*Quadratkarte* said very much in one breath but somewhat sharply rapped out, but almost as one word.' (Hague 146)

The author's intention that the words be 'said very much in one breath […] almost as one word', would be at odds with a measured, metrical reading, although 'sharply rapped out' suggests the lines' delivery as a command, requiring clearer intonation. Jones implicates a sense of military order in this process of mapping.

In 'David Jones and the Survey', an account of the poet's work for the Field Survey Company in the First World War, Peter Chasseaud picks up on Jones's concern with mapping. He finds it telling of the tension between multiple and single significations in geographical terms:

> Jones was interested in the opposition between the Celtic view of the living land […] and the Roman (i.e. modern) view of the land as an exploitable resource, to be measured, gridded, parcelled up, carved through with straight roads, and so on. He understands and accepts the utile technology […] but is also disgusted by it. His sympathy is elsewhere, with the extra-utile, the sacramental, the mysterious (30).

It is in acknowledging the importance of science to our understanding, while refusing to accept its sufficiency as an account of the world, that Jones's poetics is valuable to the writing of climate change. In *The Anathemata* he attends to the discrepancy between human impositions of order and recalcitrant, excessive natural phenomena. By finding a way to express their interplay with human agency, he anticipates the relations that are speculatively identified in material ecocriticism.

Anathematised animals, contingent creatures

We have seen a transition in terms of both narrative and form from teleology to contingency in *The Anathemata*, and an opening of linear, rational modes into associative, fractal forms through the use of symbol. Jones offers a way of reading prehistory and history that does not make humanity

central, but positions us within and makes us contingent on a network of nonhuman forces. This is again evident at the end of 'Rite and Fore-Time' when a crucial role is afforded to an animal often regarded as one of the lowliest: 'the essential and labouring worm', who 'saps micro-workings all the dark day long / for his [God's] creature of air' (*Ana.* 82). God prepares the environment to support and nourish the existence of humans, 'creatures of air', through the activity of the worm, into whose niche Jones's lines give us an insight. Jones cites Darwin's *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms* as the source of this passage (*Ana.* 82 n.2). This work takes 'The share which worms have taken in the formation of the layer of vegetable mould, which covers the whole surface of the land in every moderately humid country, [as] the subject' (Darwin 1). In his conclusion, Darwin emphasises the worm's essential quality in preparing the earthly environment for humans, proposing:

> The plough is one of the most ancient and most valuable of man's inventions; but long before he existed the land was in fact regularly ploughed, and still continues to be thus ploughed by earth-worms. It may be doubted whether there are many other animals which have played so important a part in the history of the world, as have these lowly organised creatures (139).

Darwin's work is taken up by Jane Bennett in *Vibrant Matter*, where she divorces it from Jones's theological context. She writes: 'Darwin does not claim […] that any divine intention is at work' through the worms, and 'the exertions of worms contribute to human history and culture[, which] is the unplanned result of worms acting in conjunction and competition with other (biological, bacterial, chemical, human) agents' (96). Read in the light of her observations, Jones's passage can still be seen to reveal the unintentional agencies that contribute to human existence.

The fractal form of *The Anathemata* emphasises this quality, eschewing a linear narrative of progress for an extra-utile epic. Jones organically discovers his form, as Stanbridge suggests, rather than imposing it in advance, and as such he matches the shape of the work to the mode of evolution itself. There is, indeed, a lack of function common to both the practice of art and evolution, as Morton comments: 'Evolution shares pointlessness with art, which at bottom is vague and purposeless' (*Thought* 44). This makes art the expression of contingency, akin to Jones's notion of the extra-utile or Costello's of superfluity, rather than an anthropocentric co-option of teleological narrative forms. Morton therefore asserts that 'Humans are not the culmination of anything; they aren't even *a* culmination of anything' (44; author's italics). So although Jones sets his understanding of evolution in a Catholic context, he is not co-opting it to justify a presumed human superiority. He recognises, like Morton but unlike Dawson, that 'The theory of evolution transcends attempts to turn it into a theological defense of the status quo' (*Thought* 37).

This understanding enables Jones to engage imaginatively with our relation to, and evolution from, the animal kingdom. At the nub of his rhetoric is a series of characteristic questions:

> Who was he? Who?

> Himself at the cave-mouth
> the last of the father-figures
> to take the diriment stroke
> of the last gigantic leader of
> thick-felled cave-fauna? (*Ana.* 66)

In essentially asking 'Who was the last leader of Ice Age men to be slain at his cave-mouth by a beast?' (Summerfield 45), Jones invites us to consider what constitutes human identity and how far back in time it obtains, but he leaves it an open question. He allows evolution a theological role, and does not depend on making rigid distinctions so much as finding a continuity of resemblances, one which enables an extension of grace into prehistory. This means he can explicitly set himself in opposition to essentialist accounts of what constitutes humanity, as in his note: 'Although Neanderthal man of 40 to 60,000 BC appears not to be regarded by the anthropologists as a direct ancestor of ourselves, nevertheless, it would seem to me that he must have been "man", for his burial-sites show a religious care for the dead' (*Ana.* 61). Sandars takes Jones's inclusive gesture a stage further by suggesting the Neanderthals 'belong to the *family* story', and on this ground she feels entitled to refer to them as 'Our forefathers of 40,000 years ago' who Jones 'treat[s] with the same courtesy as "the men of Bronze" in the Aegean a mere four thousand' years ago (Sandars 53; author's italics). Compare this to Dawson's consideration of Neanderthals as 'a side path or blind alley' (10): humanity for Jones is defined by what it does, rather than its genetic or physiological make-up. The impulse to read genes as defining particular characteristics is an instrumental, rather than imaginative, interpretation of human identity; Alaimo for instance comments that 'Genes—imagined as discrete, mechanistic, agential entities […] have become invested with the power of life itself' (*Bodily* 106), whereas she reads material phenomena as emergent qualities resulting from the action of numerous agents. The continued and instrumental decryption of genes can therefore count among the 'mutable' scientific findings we can contrast with Jones's more generous 'mythus'.

In its prehistoric reach, Jones's extension of grace not only takes in Neanderthals, but tentatively includes the nonhuman. Summerfield points to the way in which 'Fish sanctify the seas and their fossils the Devonian rock-beds with an ancient Christian sign' (20), while a dinosaur even substitutes for a lion in the Biblical allusion 'for Tyrannosaurus must somehow lie down with herbivores' (*Ana.* 74) thanks to the confusion of strata through geological upheaval. Catholic rite gives Jones an organising schema for the work, so that animal and elemental motifs, beyond the scope of human civilisation, simultaneously represent and are contained by a divine pattern, although one that is complex and cumulative in its detail rather than reductive. Indeed, Summerfield maintains that 'the animal kingdom is touchingly shown to share in the benefit of the Incarnation' (26) in Jones's work; and even though Paul Hills notes in 'Making and Dwelling Among Signs' that the poet 'denied that animals can act gratuitously, truly play, be artists, or participate in the world of sign and sacrament, this was not to diminish their dignity', and his 'instinct as an artist was to celebrate animals as co-presences in history' (88). Jones is

sympathetically aware of the world beyond the human, even when Catholic dogma rules out full acknowledgement of the commonality of experience.

Jones's perspective of animals is indicative of the way *The Anathemata*'s structure more broadly repositions humanity by incorporating environmental agency into our view of culture. Humans and animals are put on equal footing in his work, and subject to the same forces. Jonathan Burt cites the experience of trench warfare in the poet's earlier epic *In Parenthesis* (1937) to argue that 'Soldiers and rats became interchangeable as humans shared with rats the underside of civilization' (83). Hills elaborates on this in discussing an illustration in pencil, ink and watercolour made by Jones for *In Parenthesis*: 'In Jones's Frontispiece […], by adroit juxtaposition of foreground and distance, the scale of the rats matches, or rather exceeds, that of the infantrymen in their carrying parties' (82). Jones's rats are our companions, as they are 'roommate' to Bunting in *Briggflatts*, while also affording a new focal point in our vision of the world, as Stevens's rat is in 'The Plain Sense of Things'. That rats have accompanied my commentary on modernist poetry attests to their status as 'one of the totem animals of modernity' (Burt 121), be that on the sullied bank of the Thames in *The Waste Land* or the confused battlefield of *In Parenthesis*. In a broader context, they are equally indicative of a world in which the boundaries of the human and the animal are ruptured: Burt comments that 'Like other dangerous objects, the rat constantly pushes at the edge of the borders set to contain it. Just to make matters worse, it also embodies a certain ambivalence' (12).

Continuities between human and animal in *The Anathemata* become more problematic with Jones's limitation of creative activity to human beings: 'the extra-utile is *the* mark of man' (*Ana.* 65 n.2; author's italics). This is problematic in terms of exegesis as much as it is ontology or aesthetics, because the note specifically closes down interpretative possibilities for the text, in contrast to Jones's effort to rebind connotation to key terms elsewhere. His essay on 'The Utile' defines the eponymous concept as 'the best word to cover the wholly functional works of nature, whether animalic or insentient (e.g. nest-building or mountain-building) and such works of man as tend to approximate these processes of nature' (*Epoch and Artist* 180–1), which reinforces this limitation. His understanding of the 'processes of nature' resembles the level of natural principles described by Soper, but is difficult to align with the idea of superfluous, excessive nature discussed by Costello. Yet his phrase 'wholly functional works of nature' implies a distinction with nonfunctional works or processes. In a more nuanced elaboration of his definition, he writes: 'It is important to observe that the works of animals and of insentient creation, though wholly and inevitably "utile" in the fullest and best senses of that word, are impatient of being "utilitarian"' (*Epoch* 181). I read the differentiation of 'utile' from 'utilitarian' in this context as a distinction between animals working to achieve a purpose and humans working solely and efficiently to achieve a purpose. As such, the former exceeds the latter even when that excess is unintentional. What Costello refers to as 'the purging and renewing functions of superfluity' ('What to Make' 572) are in this context the qualities of art and animal alike. The liberation of both art and evolution from function or teleology gives us

further ecocritical grounding for a revisionist continuity of human and animal, rather than an essentialist distinction.

The Anathemata already tends in this sympathetic direction. The final page of the work instructs: 'Nor bid Anubis haste, but rather stay' at the scene of Christ's birth (*Ana.* 243), and the presence of the canine-headed Egyptian deity, 'a dignified reference to the old dog at the church door' (Summerfield 144), includes both pagan religion and nonhuman animal at a moment key to Jones's Catholic vision. The poet's decision 'not [to] spurn the dog', in Summerfield's words (144) demonstrates that *The Anathemata* is not merely an account of humanity but of creation in its fullest sense, a creation that we share with other forms of life but which we do not control. Animals nonhuman and human alike have evolved in response to, and are subject to, terrestrial environmental conditions. In this, rather than read creatures as humans, I read humans as creatures. Jones recognises humanity's contingent existence on this planet, and as a result, civilisation's dependence on the terrestrial environment.

The ambiguity of humanity's position is reconfirmed by the status of *The Anathemata* as a work in language, in particular literary language. It resists absolute closure or confirmation in its references to the divine, even if these are the author's design. Having created a context in which the ascent of humanity is contingent rather than entirely provident, *The Anathemata* is subject to the same evolutionary forces. Morton makes a productive analogy in this regard between evolutionary processes' lack of direction and language's proleptic quality, asserting that 'The reader is the future of the text […] beyond and above the specific addressees of the specific message' (*Thought* 80). Given that we can no longer read inherited religious stricture in the world, as Jones does, we can still take from his articulation of humanity's relations with the environment a way of reading anthropogenic climate change. In his terms, it can be regarded as a product of the combined superfluity of human artifice – our negatively inflected anathemata – and natural process. The sympathetic, poetic text allows space to identify human anathemata and complicity in environmental change, as well as culture's contingency on that environment. Jones's deployment of modernist poetics in *The Anathemata* is testament to the scope it affords to express the complex entanglement of human and natural agency in climate change. This recognition will be crucial in the chapter that follows, as I consider contemporary poems written in a changing climate.

Chapter 6

'How could it be performed by the mind became the question': Poems of our climate change

I have argued that, by refracting our understanding of contemporary climate change through the lens of modernist aesthetics, we see more clearly that the categories we would conventionally distinguish as the "human" or "cultural" and the "natural" are actually less well-defined, more entangled agencies that influence the state of the planet. This condition exemplifies the concept of hybridity theorised by Bruno Latour, in *We Have Never Been Modern* and subsequent work, because it is the product of a political categorisation of "the environment" as a discrete entity. Latour uses the example of newspaper discourse, where 'hybrid articles […] sketch out imbroglios of science, politics, economy, law, religion, technology, fiction', even when 'Headings like Economy, Politics, Science, Books, Culture, Religion and Local Events remain in place as if there were nothing odd going on' (*WHNBM* 2). I have argued that, in contrast to reinforcing the rigid divisions between culture and nature which promulgate such hybrids, modernist works demonstrate openness to human and nonhuman forces. Modernist poetics much more readily corresponds to our present climate than does early ecocritical insistence on the primacy of the natural environment. By refusing to be absolute or definitive, modernist works are instead characterised by their precise articulation of uncertainty, lending themselves to continual re-examination and re-interpretation. They help us to identify that our characterisations of the world are contingent.

By explicitly advocating a modernist ecopoetics, I have assumed that the prevailing understanding of climate change's multiple phenomena in contemporary culture is, by contrast, largely reductive, operating from false premises about Nature. Lawrence Buell recognises the persistence of these premises as long as ago as *The Environmental Imagination* (1995), when he suggests that this outdated vision of 'nature's prominence in the literature of the United States might be seen as only too conspicuous: as the inertial effect of the time lag between material conditions and cultural adjustment' (*Environmental* 14; see Chapter 2, p.56 of this thesis). From the perspective of an ecological scientist, Botkin elaborates: 'our laws, policies, beliefs, and actions continue to be primarily based on nature as a still life. This is all the more ironic in a society immersed in movies, television, and computer games that are dynamic, and cell phones that can take moving pictures' (8). While I concur with Botkin that Nature is too often reified,[1] it is not ironic that we separate Nature from culture but apposite, because it enables us to project a longed-for stillness and harmony on to it in contrast to the pace of modern lifestyles.

[1] This reification extends into commodification for Timothy Morton, who writes: 'Wilderness embodies freedom from determination, the bedrock of capitalist ideology. It is always "over there," behind the shop window of distanced, aesthetic experience' (*EwN* 113).

Writing that retains a vision of, or aspiration for, Nature in harmony is thus problematic. But it has nevertheless developed in a tradition of its own in the twentieth century. That tradition dates from around the same period as modernism, but represents a very different response to the problems with which modernism also grappled. Terry Gifford claims that

> retreat [into Nature] can also offer a temptation to disconnection, an escapism from complexity and contradiction. The contemporary sense of pastoral as a pejorative term perhaps resides in the Georgian poets' lasting effect upon English culture. […] Following the horrors of the First World War, these poets sought refuge in rural images that did not disturb a sense of comfortable reassurance (71).

By fostering a vision of Nature both separate – and, because separate, reassuring – more recent poetry written in this vein is inevitably going to have problems when it comes to dealing with the multiple phenomena that contribute to climate change, because it retains the vestiges of the outdated ideas critiqued by Botkin and Buell.

I will proceed by considering the implications of this still-life view of nature for climate change discourse; this is followed by a survey of how different kinds of poetry have emerged within that discourse, and the range of forms and modes they adopt. I will then analyse in detail work from two key texts, *Feeling the Pressure* and *Sea Change*, that exemplify the different tendencies I have outlined, reflecting on creative achievements in the light of declarations of poetics. Throughout, I will emphasise the more nuanced possibilities of experimental, modernist-influenced literary writing over other genres.

Climate change discourse: Forms and frames

The poem I discussed in my Introduction, 'The Sorcerer's Mirror', typifies the sort of pejoratively pastoral writing that Gifford describes. Its narrator seeks comfort in the shade of 'the spacious mulberry tree', which 'spread[s] its big hands / above [his] head', before the abrupt transition marked by 'now the sky gulps abruptly' (1.9–12). In response to accelerated change in the natural world, Motion's poem seeks to stabilise a vision of Nature against which that change can be measured. Botkin writes, 'As long as we could believe that nature undisturbed was constant, we had a simple standard against which to judge our actions' (324). But as Nature becomes more fixed and certain in such a vision, so climate change also crystallises into a particular entity, reduced to one of the "topics" that constitute the media category of "environment". 'The Sorcerer's Mirror' borrows wholesale from the climate discourse of other media, such as 'the already famously lonely polar bear' (4.12). Each is an instance of the 'persistent use of visual icons' of climate change to which Hulme refers (13).

Climate change attracts a plethora of ulterior concerns according to the frame we unconsciously or intentionally position around it. The poetic practice of writing climate change into particular traditions, of composing ecopoetry as 'a subset of nature poetry' in J. Scott Bryson's terms (5),

associates it with modes such as the (pejoratively) pastoral. In this respect, poetry as a cultural practice represents a broader tendency for climate change to be attached to preconceived theoretical or ideological frameworks. These biases are, for Mike Hulme, the basis of *Why We Disagree About Climate Change*. He remarks that 'the idea of climate change has been constructed in such a way as to ensure that it possesses th[e] quality of plasticity. Such an attribute allows [… it] easily to be appropriated in support of a wide range of ideological projects' (xxviii). He goes on to describe the concerns that appropriate climate change as four Biblical themes: 'Lamenting Eden', 'Presaging Apocalypse', 'Constructing Babel' and 'Celebrating Jubilee' (340–55). The first represents a nostalgic longing for a lost Nature; the second a warning about the imminence of environmental collapse; the third the human attempt to master the forces of nature, with its implicit hubris; and the last, the opportunities climate change presents to break down hegemony and progress towards social justice. Motion's poem, for example, is largely characterised by the first, elegiac mode, articulating a change from Natural sublime to chaos as it moves towards the second mode, 'Presaging Apocalypse'. It does not use its position in the tradition to *advance* that tradition, or to articulate a fresh or engaging conception of climate change.

Contemporary poetry has had difficulty in treating climate change meaningfully because its understanding lags behind both scientific and popular discourse on the matter. It has not led the innovation in language that would take the complexities of the changing climate into account. This is one of the cultural strategies Richard Kerridge refers to in the environmental humanities, the 'formal experimentation that, in response to new theory, attempts to change fundamental concepts' ('Ecocriticism' 10). T. S. Eliot remarks that innovation or development fulfils part of what he entitles 'The Social Function of Poetry': 'there is always the communication of some new experience, or some fresh understanding of the familiar, or the expression of something we have experienced but have no words for, which enlarges our conscience or refines our sensibility' (18). 'The Sorcerer's Mirror' instead recapitulates existing modes and risks being 'trammelled into certain stock ways of expressing oneself' as Mario Petrucci fears (see Chapter 2, p.51 of this thesis).

Poetry has responded to and developed traditions of writing about other themes and concepts derived from science,[2] but climate change presents particular difficulties. The peculiar timescales of anthropogenic climate change entangle human generational and political time with cultural and geological time frames, and Kerridge suggests that 'To perceive climate change, we need to look back into deep history, using a variety of sources of evidence, and forward into at least the next hundred years, using a variety of ways of making projections' (8). Rather than being seen as a daunting opportunity for re-engagement with the phenomenal world, however, climate change has too often been taken as a reason to retrench, and to confirm cherished, nostalgic views of natural stability. Latour indicates that a similar danger can befall political engagement with ecology: 'People

[2] In his introduction to *Science in Modern Poetry* John Holmes writes 'far from conforming to the critical consensus that poetry and science were antagonistic, poets throughout the twentieth century […] sought to incorporate science into their poetry and poetics' (6).

have been much too quick to believe that it sufficed to recycle the old concepts of nature and politics unchanged' (*Politics* 2). Literature is in a position to interrogate culturally given representations through formal innovation, and indeed, according to Ursula Heise, it must do so, because 'climate change poses a challenge for narrative and lyrical forms' (205). Motion is by contrast too ready to annex climate change to the regularity of a narrative sonnet sequence.[3] Poets have taken a number of different responses to the phenomena and politics of climate change, however, and these have developed alongside scientific and societal understanding over the past quarter of a century. The poetics of this verse shapes its understanding of climate change, and as conventional strategies are increasingly shown to limit that understanding, the emergence of a neo-modernist aesthetics signifies the search for more comprehensive engagement with the phenomena.

Warming to the theme: Poetry responds to climate change

Poems begin to take up climate change as a distinctive topic in the late 1980s and early 1990s, in the wake of the first 'greenhouse summer' in 1988 – the year, when, according to Hulme, 'the idea of climate change penetrated more deeply into popular culture in the West' as a result of 'a convergence of events, politics, institutional innovations, and the intervention of prominent public and charismatic individuals' (63–4). Acknowledging that 'there was no major new scientific discovery about climate change in 1988' (63), Hulme suggests that the date marks instead climate change's emergence on the policy agenda. Its importance was confirmed as one of the key issues discussed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – the Earth Summit – in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

As a result of this topicality, early poems about climate change included politically framed satires such as Les Murray's 'The Greenhouse Vanity' (first appearing in the *London Review of Books* in May 1989; revised for Murray's 2003 *New Collected Poems*) and Simon Rae's 'One World Down the Drain' (collected in *Soft Targets: Poems from the Weekend Guardian*, in 1991, and reprinted in *Earth Shattering* in 2007). But global warming also occupies individual poems of lyrical reflection, such as Steve Ellis's epistolary 'Son to a father, 21st century' and Lavinia Greenlaw's 'The Recital of Lost Cities' (from *West Pathway* [48] and *Night Photograph* [15] respectively, both 1993). Fleur Adcock's 'The Greenhouse Effect', from her 1991 book *Time-Zones*, mediates between lyric and topical response. The lyrical quality is explicitly filtered through the Romantic tradition, as she responds to 'Aerial water, submarine light:' by reflecting that 'Wellington's gone Wordsworthian again'. She adds: 'He [Wordsworth]'d have admired it – / admired but not approved, if he'd heard / about fossil fuels, and aerosols' (reprinted in *Poems 1960–2000*, 204–5). Those chemical references indicate that the experience is also mediated through a more recent text: she 'read in last night's [New Zealand]

[3] His most marked divergence from the form, the addition of a fifteenth line to the second poem, might correspond to the melting of ice 'in deeper currents and quick, chaotic flow' (2.15), or it might be a requirement of the sequence's musical setting. But this slight variation cannot be said to present a formal or modal innovation, and indeed depends on the form remaining otherwise stable to achieve what minimal effect it has.

Evening Post / that "November ended the warmest spring / since meteorological records began".' Whether in satiric or lyrical modes, these poems are constructing a semiotics of climate change from the science, in particular the imagery of melting icebergs, rising sea levels, submerged cities and human conflict. These poems also mark early appearances by the arctic imagery recycled in 'The Sorcerer's Mirror'. Constituted from these tropes, global warming quickly becomes a given that allows poets to talk about much more conventional concerns, such as political ineffectiveness in Rae's poem or intergenerational responsibility in Ellis's. Without innovation of technique, there is no discovery of anything about climate change per se.

The trend for climate change to be addressed in individual lyrics has continued over the subsequent twenty years. Drawing on his work as a poet of natural encounter, the late Seamus Heaney emphasises a less mediated engagement with the impacts of climate change in a triptych of poems – 'In Iowa', 'Höfn' and 'On the Spot' – from his 2006 collection *District and Circle* (52–4), which attest to the global scope of the phenomena by locating their narrator in a Midwestern cornfield, in flight over Greenland and in his garden. Simon Armitage, meanwhile, remains in the Romantic tradition when the narrator of 'The Present' (2010) meditates on an icicle found in an upland English landscape; the literary relationship is confirmed in the poem's receipt of that year's Keats–Shelley prize. Alongside these reflective pieces, climate change has also become more prominent as a theme running through entire collections over the past ten years, through various modes. It is manifested in the postmodern collage of Peter Reading's collection *–273.15* (2005): 'and didya read how them rain forests is burnin 6,000 acres an hour'; the epistolary verse of Derek Mahon's *Harbour Lights* (2005), with its expression of surprise at 'this new century with its bewildering weather' (25); the knowing, ironic elegies of D. A. Powell's *Chronic* (2009): 'nobody said the undertaker would come spanking new in a blinding heat / his crucible searing arctic glaciers [indeed: *summer surprised us*]' (43; author's parenthesis and italics); the close rendering of scientific process in Michael McKimm's *Fossil Sunshine* (2013): 'We are waiting for results from Sheffield / on the sample taken from the horizontal / borehole';[4] or the glacial fables of Matthew Sweeney's *Black Moon* (2007) and Hilary Menos's *Berg* (2009). Among these, Reading's collage technique and Powell's allusion to *The Waste Land* indicate the development of alternative, more self-reflexive modes that begin to engage with the complexity of the phenomena. Reading is also ambivalent about the value of adopting Romantic nature in the face of climate change: 'The school mag. *Juvenilis* piece, "Bonfire", a puerile Keatsesque thing, proved microcosmic after all'.

The intensification of interest all these poems represent corresponds with an increased attention to climate change beginning in the middle of the last decade, prior to the credit crunch and economic recession. This concern is certainly prompted by debate around the causes of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, and is also likely to have been influenced by the publication of the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change in the UK, and the Intergovernmental Panel on

[4] The citation comes from a preview of the poem 'Poem with Horizontal Borehole' on McKimm's blog, *Written in the Rocks*.

Climate Change's Fourth Assessment Report on Climate Change (2007–08), as well as the films *The Day After Tomorrow* (Roland Emmerich, 2004) and *An Inconvenient Truth* (Davis Guggenheim, 2006). The proliferation of cultural responses to the phenomena and politics of climate change also includes several poetry anthologies that take up environmental topics.

One typical example is *Earth Shattering: Ecopoems* (2007), whose editor Neil Astley comments in his Introduction that he intends 'to bring together a range of ecopoetry reflecting more closely 21st century thinking about nature, the planet, and our threatened environment' (18). Although Astley interprets 'ecopoems' fairly broadly, this formulation suggests that the subject can only be addressed through the self-confirmatory genre of 'ecopoetry'. He situates this in the tradition of nature writing as the opening section, 'Rooted in Nature', includes examples from 'The Wilderness Poetry of Ancient China' and Wordsworth, as well as excerpts from *Walden*. Prefacing the later section 'Force of Nature', Astley signals the clear direction he has in mind for the 'poems showing the effects of global warming and climate change': 'The warnings given in these poems presage disaster in the book's final section' (190). This seeks to locate all such poems in Hulme's apocalyptic mode.

Another relevant anthology, *The Ground Aslant* (2011), is by contrast more open in its response to the twenty-first-century environment, exploring rather than restricting generic possibility. '[T]his is a book of radical landscape poetry, some of which may also be motivated by environmentalism. Although some landscape poets may be ecopoets and some ecopoets may be landscape poets, the two are by no means interchangeable', explains editor Harriet Tarlo (11). She thus acknowledges that poetic relation to the environment is not unique to ecopoetry. Her selection also emphasises the value of poetic form and literary engagement rather than specifically reacting to issues: 'poetry within the experimental tradition could be particularly powerful in its contribution to the necessary mental and emotional adjustments to environment that we need, urgently, to make' (10). In this context, Tarlo can assert that references 'to coastal erosion […] to global warming' in the poems are 'uncompromising' (10), as we are not necessarily instructed in advance to read them as "ecopoetry".

A further context for climate change discourse that *Earth Shattering* indicates is its institutionalisation. Robert Hass's poem 'State of the Planet', for instance, is written 'On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Lamont–Doherty Earth Observatory' (210). The Acknowledgements for *Earth Shattering* also record that 'The sequences *Indian Summer* by Patience Agbabi and *Certain Weather* by John Burnside, and the poem "The Diomedes" by Matthew Hollis, were all commissioned by *Poet in the City* and Lloyd's as part of the *Trees in the City* collaboration, designed to raise awareness of the need for action on climate change' (246; italics in original). This associates the poems with particular agendas, political or corporate, just as 'The Sorcerer's Mirror' was a commission with a public function. A similar association hangs over Andrew Motion's successor as poet laureate, Carol Ann Duffy. The cover of her 2011 collection *The Bees* is prominently branded with her role, and contains a number of pieces dealing with climate change

among other environmental issues, such as the eponymous poem, 'The English Elms' and 'Parliament' (3, 40–1, 50). The institutional role of these poems confirms rather than challenges the constitution of climate change as a political issue.

Meanwhile, Nick Drake's 2012 book-length sequence *The Farewell Glacier* (2012) 'grew out of [a] voyage' with the Cape Farewell project, 'inviting [him] to join their expedition to Svalbard' (6). Charitable involvement enables the poet's personal experience of the Arctic environment; but if polar experience is necessary for climate action, then we risk making the Arctic a latter-day Lake District, with all the environmental impact this tourist trade would generate. If on the other hand the poem's role is itself to conjure Arctic presence for us without us being there, to champion the artist's creative response, the poem disavows its own potency to engage us when a personified version of the future protests: 'I wish I could entertain you / With some magnificent propositions and glorious jokes; / But the best I can do is this: / *I haven't happened yet, but I will*' (*Farewell* 49; author's italics). This is not to fault the motives of any of these poems or sponsors, but to indicate how their commission reinforces a political framing of climate change, as though it is rightly the preserve of institutions. The poetry seems to be co-opted to a public policy agenda: topic precedes poetics. Opportunities for experimentation and exploration are subsidiary to coverage of the issues.

These remarks are intended as an indicative survey of the poetry on climate change, rather than a thoroughgoing examination: that will require the work of a separate study. The discussion is designed to frame the context of climate change poetry and the need for more innovative poetics. To conclude this thesis, I will critique work from two volumes that are representative of the tendencies I have discussed. The first is an anthology of climate change writing, *Feeling the Pressure*, and the other is a collection by Jorie Graham, *Sea Change*. From the former book, I compare two pieces: the first of the pair exemplifies responses to climate change that eschew conscious engagement with the literary tradition, treating it as a pre-formed topic; the second articulates climate change with a clearer sense of literary, and in particular modernist poetic, heritage. *Sea Change*, meanwhile, is a collection that makes a fuller engagement with modernist poetics to articulate the multiple, hybrid phenomena of contemporary climate change. I share Kerridge's and Tarlo's understanding that there is greater potential in experimental literary forms such as neo-modernism for untangling our present situation, as I do Mario Petrucci's contention that poetry is more successful when it works against assimilation of climate change into traditions of nature poetry and recognises the value of modernist artifice and uncertainty of identity.

The commission of climate concern

The British Council's anthology *Feeling the Pressure: Poetry and Science of Climate Change* (2008) makes a specific project of climate change, framing the book as a public intervention. The anthology presents the work of twenty-four poets,[5] organised into five sections – Trends, Extremes, Impacts,

[5] Motion is among these, contributing a sequence of haiku, 'Here and Now' (*Feeling* 18).

Actions and Complicities. Each section is prefaced by a summary of relevant science, a poem by editor Paul Munden, and a cartoon. The format allows us to read different authors responding to climate change while foregrounding the imagery and practices common to their work. I will compare Munden's own 'Glacier' with 'The Kingdom of Water is Coming' by Michael Symmons Roberts, representing two of a range of poetic modes deployed in the book.[6] Munden's introduction to the volume, which outlines his own poetics of climate change, frames the function of climate change poetry in a particular and self-confessedly limited, way. Roberts's poem, and a prose piece by him from a separate context, offer a way of reframing Munden's poetics.

In his introduction, Munden regards climate change as a political category, rather than as a range of complex, interdependent phenomena. He refers to 'Climate change, as a topic,' and relates that he 'relished the chance to invite poets to make their particular contributions to this *fairground-attraction debate* that is also the most pressing issue of our time' (*Feeling* 3; my italics). This comprehension of climate change is lifted wholly from superficial political rhetoric rather than constituting a literary questioning of it. Whereas I have argued throughout this thesis that poetry can and will be read meaningfully outside its historic context, and that modernist poetics marks a particular engagement with the possibility of its own future rereading, Munden conceives of climate change poetry as dependent solely on its relevance to the present moment. 'If I had thought of [the volume] as making some kind of forecast, I would have got it all wrong', he writes; 'This collection […] is more of a weather report, a British snapshot of intellectual and emotional reaction to things as they stand at the end of 2007' (3). It resists deeper engagement with the complexities of the phenomena.

Munden's understanding of poetry is equally time-bound. He writes that, 'In making [his] selection', he has 'not attempted to dwell on the tradition of ecological writing which is so strong both here in the UK and abroad', openly deferring to *Earth Shattering* in this regard. On this basis, poets become a species of newspaper columnist, charged with providing 'an intellectual and emotional reaction' to climate change, rather than a considered literary engagement with it. Munden explains what he considers is the role of poetry in response to climate change: 'Politicians and policymakers are quick to borrow writers' tools in making their arguments, but it is perhaps writers themselves who can help us to explore the issues without invoking a desensitised or dismissive response, creating instead a movement for real change' (3). This attempts to give political charge to the poems anthologised, and recognises the danger of discourse that prompts a 'desensitised or dismissive response'. But Munden's effort is squandered by a return to clichéd political rhetoric in the closing phrase, 'a movement for real change'.

Poetry has scope instead to respond to the way our understanding changes as the climate changes rather than directing itself towards particular political goals. To consider poetry as a way of knowing and understanding the world rather than as a versified version of politics or science is to

[6] I give a fuller discussion of the volume in the seminar paper 'Why We Don't Write Poetry About Climate Change' (available online via SoundCloud).

suggest that it need not be reduced to consideration in terms of the others. Such a consideration also enables a fuller appreciation of the science, because it does not imply that its complexities simply require literary rendering to become affective. Munden reluctantly acknowledges that poetry has this scope when he notes 'It's noticeable how many of the poets have adopted a rather oblique approach, almost seeming to shy away from direct statements about the predicament we face' (3–4). Nevertheless, he then seeks to make capital from this obliquity by contrasting it with a political target, celebrating the poets' 'refusal to jump on the bandwagon of self-satisfaction like those corporations preening themselves on account of their ever so slight "green" credentials' (4).

Yet the anthology itself participates in a kind of market transaction as Munden preens himself on its green credentials. It performs a variation on the function that Timothy Morton envisages for ecological writing:

> Literature about the environment takes on various roles within consumerism. One function is to soothe the pains and stresses of industrial society, as national parks assuage our weekday world. […] Ecological discourse is also about collectivity: how to share this earth with other humans, animals, plants, and inanimate things (*EwN* 114).

Feeling the Pressure adds a further function to Morton's list by seeking to stimulate 'a movement for real change'. The difficulty lies in the readership it seeks. If we read *Feeling the Pressure*, we opt to feel worthy for having read poems about climate change; if we prefer not to engage with climate change, prefer to deny human complicity in it or dispute its existence, we can just as easily choose not to read the anthology. Its function is framed and constrained by its institutional sponsorship and the project of anthologising: the choice to read or not to read something branded as the 'Poetry and Science of Climate Change' confirms our existing ideologies rather than challenging them. If the work does not specifically consider how climate change alters our preconceptions, then it fails Eliot's criterion for poetry's social function.

Ice loss and eco-elegy

Munden's poem 'Glacier' (*Feeling* 11), like 'The Sorcerer's Mirror', exploits another 'persistent […] visual icon' of climate change (Hulme 13), and is thus indicative of how far the imagery of climate change comes pre-formed from other discourses. Munden identifies his glacier with the commonplace idea of Mother Nature, and what force this conceit has comes from the suggestion that she is in her dotage and we have failed in our duty of care to her as we 'witness' the ice melt, 'soiling the sheets / with drool from your speechless gums'. But this characterisation demonstrates little novelty, since it simply reinforces the trope Hulme labels 'Lamenting Eden', in which 'humans believe they are diminishing not just themselves, but also something beyond themselves' (344). The nostalgic drift of the poem is demonstrated when the narrator decries that the glacier's 'natural eloquence / is deserting you', because this suggests that there was an earlier time when nature's message would have been clear to us. The play on 'natural eloquence' seeks a correspondence

between 'natural' or innate 'eloquence' as a human characteristic and a Nature eloquent in expressing itself in human terms. Yet the notion that we can readily recover a "voice" from nature as though it were human is fraught with difficulty, as I have argued throughout this thesis. Munden gestures at this incommunicability when he says we await a signal in our vigil and 'see nothing, hear only / a deafening silence'. However, this silence in the poem is implied to be the result of a recent process rather than an abiding paradox.

In addition to its anthropomorphised glacier, the poem attempts to engage us with the scale of the glacial melt with its casual, almost conversational tone. At the same time, the resignation of the voice is ill-matched to the enormity of the phenomenon, defeated before the attempt to convey it is even made. This presents an interpretative problem regarding Munden's expectations for his reader. If we agree with him, we share his resignation; if we disagree, we dismiss his depiction of the process. So if Munden aims to stimulate a previously sceptical reader into action, it will be one who has already chosen to read the anthology in spite of that scepticism. The poem's weary, elegiac quality also stands in contrast to Hulme's observation that 'positive messages tend to be more attractive and effective in motivating behaviour change than negative ones' (234–5). Already institutionally framed by the process of anthology, however, 'Glacier' is further framed by the despairing tone in which it is written. Confirming existing responses to climate change, it is familiar to the point of banality. Because the poem rehearses generalities rather than finding an incisive mode or tone of its own, it renders even the personified glacier and identifiable tone of voice impersonal. Although it aspires to broad appeal with the use of third- and first-person plural pronouns, 'They', 'We', 'Some of us', it also aspires, problematically, to a position with 'an aestheticized distance toward everything', in Morton's words (*EwN* 101). As Bill McKibben indicates in *The End of Nature*, no such point now exists: 'By changing the weather, we make every spot on earth man-made and artificial' (54). Munden thus has no strategy for articulating human participation in the exacerbation of climate change.

By containing the glacial sublime in an image of human decline, the poem instead sidesteps the complexities of climatic phenomena. To portray us as the neglectful carers of Mother Nature implies that grieving for a planet is akin to grieving for a parent. As such, Munden reinforces our sense of resignation about climate change, asking us to come to terms with it as a private, familial loss rather than a collective, global one. In his essay 'The Dark Ecology of Elegy', Timothy Morton points out how difficult it is to deal with environmental crisis as a kind of grief, because 'Ecological elegy asks us to mourn for something that has not completely passed, that perhaps has not even passed yet' (254). His conclusion is that 'The really difficult elegiac work would consist in bringing into full consciousness the reality of human and nonhuman interdependence' (256). That is to say, if literature is to serve as an engagement with climate change, it cannot be written in a way that is bound up in the process of helping the bereaved, however painfully, move on. Climate change persists as multiple phenomena, and cannot be consigned to a mental graveyard once we have

finished reading. In attempting to make us feel guilty, Munden's poem actually lets us off the hook: it attempts to elicit a particular response in us and prompt 'a movement for real change' (*Feeling* 3), yet its only protagonists 'drift away' or keep silent 'vigil', doing nothing to spur such action.

Transubstantial water

Michael Symmons Roberts's 'The Kingdom of Water is Coming' (*Feeling* 30–1) adopts a similarly casual tone and first-person plural inclusivity in its vision of future deluge: 'Sure it was there all along […] We should have seen it coming'. In contrast, the Christian connotations of the title suggest that the poem will correspond with the second of Hulme's genres, 'Presaging Apocalypse'. The tension between tone and mode, however, is crucial to Roberts's articulation of the human relation to climate change. In Munden's poem the familiarity of negative voice and imagery confirmed a superficial engagement with the phenomena, whereas Roberts juxtaposes a quotidian indifference to environmental change with the potential for catastrophe. This dramatises the psychological process of 'Splitting', which Kerridge glosses as 'the social and individual phenomenon of explicit acknowledgement accompanied by tacit disavowal of that knowledge' ('Ecocriticism' 16). Roberts effects a reconnection between the two extremes, from the scale of the human to that of the planet, through the elemental, mutable significance of water as an image. In the lines 'it was there all along, / in the air and of it, a freight / of ocean in our lungs', there is a transition from water's general presence in our environment, 'in the air', to the physicality of 'freight', then the expanse 'of ocean', to the bodily sensation of 'our lungs'. Rather than stage a future catastrophe, as the apocalyptic title suggests he might, Roberts develops his scenario incrementally out of the present moment, so 'that glass of water by the bed' is 'more full than when you left it'. This gradual increase anticipates a symbolic materialisation of emotional states as 'More people cried more, / and their tears were bulbous'. By letting anxiety manifest itself in the world not just as tears but as tears that expand with the increasing amount of water, Roberts develops a distinctive way of associating human activity with a change in the environment, rather than rehearsing a commonplace opposition of humans and Mother Nature.

The passage from the human to the environmental in the poem is accompanied by a shift from more to less closely rhymed quatrains: the first is patterned 'along'/'freight'/'lungs'/'weight', the second 'coming'/'carnations'/'morning'/'saturation' and the third 'bed'/'left it'/'beat'/'restive'. By the time of the eighth, the A-rhyme is no longer sonic but semantic: 'sea'/'sure'/'oceans'/'forever'. Where 'sure' has a loose echo in 'forever', 'sea' only corresponds to 'oceans' in terms of referent. The breakdown in the containing structures of rhyme enacts a breakdown in previously held distinctions – 'we thought land and sea /were opposites' – while the collocation of 'land and sea' on the same line separates them from the enjambed concept of opposition itself. The poem shares with 'The Idea of Order at Key West' a concern about the difficulty of humans imposing patterns on the world, although Roberts's allusion to 'those hands that parted oceans' gives this a more

clearly Biblical significance than Stevens's poem. Whose 'hands' these are remains ambiguous. Read with Stevens in mind, they may signify the conceptual force of human imagination, as in the 'voice that made / The sky acutest at its vanishing' (Stevens *Collected* 106), creating the boundaries by which 'land and sea' were formerly distinguished; or, the hands may represent the power of a creator who physically separates land and sea, as in *Genesis* 1:9–10. With this ambiguity, Roberts reprises the uncertainty over human or divine agency I attribute to David Jones's lines, 'whose man-hands god-handled the Willendorf stone / before they unbound the last glaciation' (*Ana.* 59; see Chapter 5, p.162 of this thesis).

That Roberts is conscious of the modernist tradition as he develops such ambiguity is apparent in his essay 'Poetry in a Post-Secular Age' (2008). In responding to the question: 'How can contemporary poets explore religious faith and experience in a secularised language and culture?' (69), he tackles a problem similar to the one I have formulated here, of how poetry finds a language fit to describe an experience at odds with its more frequent usage. Roberts draws on Jones's arguments from the preface to *The Anathemata* to make his case: 'Atheist, agnostic or believer, all should − Jones argued − feel a sense of loss when our language looks thinner. He wasn't suggesting that baptism or the cross should be the primary reference for water or wood, but that they should keep a place among many connotations' (69). Jones himself dwells in his preface on how 'A knowledge of the chemical components of this material water' can, 'ideally, provide us with further, deeper, and more exciting significances *vis-à-vis* the sacrament of water' (*Ana.* 17; see Chapter 5, pp.160–1 of this thesis), and Roberts draws on these significances in 'The Kingdom of Water is Coming'. He breaks down the 'formula H_2O' mentioned by Jones (*Ana.* 16) to isolate its life-supporting oxygen:

> […] lovers
> lay in bed and blew the letter
> O like smoke rings *over and over*
>
> O as in love, in H_2O, in soul (author's italics).

He plays on the sound 'O' to produce a range of associations – visual, auditory, romantic, chemical and spiritual – rather than limiting it to 'fount' and 'drool' as Munden does in characterising his 'Glacier'. In the process, the 'O' of oxygen is recombined with 'H_2' midway through the list, and with this chemical formation of water from its elements, Roberts metaphorically snatches the breath from the poem's recumbent lovers, rendering them 'half-adapted but half-drowned'.

These lines make explicit the poem's play with different states of water. The compression demanded by the lyric form makes the arrangement more apparent and less structural than the variations of state I read as patterning *The Waste Land* or *Briggflatts*. The scope afforded by Roberts's ten quatrains is insufficient to give the sense of change over larger, less immediate scales that Eliot's and Bunting's forms make available. Nevertheless, the repetition of 'O' by the submerged lovers is

reminiscent of the dreamy, erotic context of Prufrock's 'linger[ing] in the chambers of the sea / By sea-girls' (Eliot *Complete* 17) or Bunting's 'submarine Amalfitan kisses' (Bunting *Complete* 67). By creating a context in which transitions between the lyric and mythic are possible, Roberts reduces the certainty of individual experience while emphasising its sensory quality, as Jones does in *The Anathemata*. Roberts's lines 'when ice-caps felt as sure / as stars' allude contrastingly to Keats's 'Bright star! would I were stedfast as thou art' (*Major Works* 325); as a result, they may seem to hark back to the Eden before anthropogenic global warming that informs both 'The Sorcerer's Mirror' and 'Glacier'. But the key word in Roberts's poem is 'felt', the way we as individuals recreate our experience of the environment, even when that environment is as remote as the poles. It intimates the provisionality of a process that Munden instead makes into an uncomplicated analogy with human experience. Roberts's choice of verb, to feel, is an articulation of the way climate change prompts us to change our conceptions about the world.

Roberts's consideration of the context of the 'post-secular' also offers a possible re-framing for the poetry of climate change in his exploration of the contexts of composition and reading. In the essay, he paraphrases a passage from Eliot's 'Religion and Literature' (1935), where the earlier poet argues that a qualifying term, such as 'religious', is perceived as limiting the possibilities for poetry. Eliot posits a putative 'lover of poetry', for whom, 'when you qualify poetry as "religious" you are indicating very clear limitations.' Such a reader considers that "'*religious*" poetry is a variety of *minor* poetry: the religious poet is not a poet who is treating the whole subject matter of poetry in a religious spirit, but a poet who is dealing with a confined part of this subject matter' (98–9; author's italics). Roberts regards this as analogous with a modern suspicion about non-literary agendas that come to bear on writing. He observes, 'One of the concerns about "grand narratives" of any sort is that the poetry may be imprisoned or used by them', arguing that 'this myth has left us with a terror of the imagination in thrall to a belief. Surely this could limit the scope of the work, may even reduce it to a thin preconceived outworking of doctrine or argument?' ('Poetry' 71–2). The urgency of environmentalist discourse likewise participates in the grand narrative of climate change as though this itself were the phenomena, rather than representing a particular framing of them. Motion and Munden thus seem willingly to 'imprison' themselves in climate change because they are 'in thrall to a belief' of it. In contrast, Roberts argues that the 'fear' of a preconceived commitment taking precedence over literary form 'was always unfounded. The counter examples are obvious, including great twentieth century innovators like Eliot, Jones, Auden, Moore, Berryman, Bunting' (72). His invocation of a modern canon of innovation, including three of the authors I have already discussed, attests to the value of literary engagement with, rather than subordination to, a particular agenda. Climate change poetry then has the chance to 'treat the whole subject matter of poetry' in the light of the phenomena, rather than confining itself to the existing tropes and topics of a politically constituted grand narrative.

Poetic exploration of climate change phenomena need not then be an imitation of that political discourse. Roberts, however, characterises his post-secular age as having greater certainty than a preceding era of relativism, and he credits increasing environmental consciousness with this:

> [O]ur exit from the hall of mirrors is driven by ecological concerns. Relativism simply collapses in this context. The climate is changing or it isn't. Species are dying out or they aren't. Humanity is responsible for this or we aren't. There's no possibility of global warming being true for you but not for me ('Poetry' 71).

In contrast, I have argued, the material emergence of climate change cannot be disentangled from our framings and interpretations of it. Anthropogenic climate change is by definition a hybrid of numerous human practices as individuals and societies, and a range of physical phenomena, so it is not simply the case that 'Humanity is responsible for this or we aren't'. Nancy Tuana's 'Viscous Porosity' offers a more nuanced reading of this dispersal of agency (193; see also Chapter 1, p.33 of this thesis). Roberts's attempt to bring science and religion into alignment is likewise strained: 'Far from being opposites, science and religion are at heart both concerned with truth and falsehood, both are grounded in narratives, and both search for meaning and purpose in the world. Both are also constantly shifting and contested' (73). While this reminds us that science has a narrative context as much as religion does, the types of truth, meaning and contestation with which both are occupied are very different, as I argued in my previous chapter, and Roberts's attempt to reconcile the two does not recognise the value of that difference. As a mode of understanding, poetry offers a way of negotiating between competing narratives or maintaining them in tension. Robert Crawford identifies this quality in his distinction between science and poetry: 'To attempt to collapse the differences is to weaken science and poetry; to recognise differences but also similarities and possibilities of mutual nourishment is to strengthen both' ('Poetry, Science and the Contemporary University' 80). Poetry does not have to commit to a scientific or religious worldview, but can acknowledge the multiple frames through which we experience that world.

What remains valuable in Roberts's conception of 'post-secular' poetry, then, is its qualities, not its direction; for example, the associativity he derives from Jones. But as it approaches its end, 'The Kingdom of Water is Coming' thins its associations by adopting a more evidently religious tenor, as Roberts's essay does. Images begin to presage a more conventional, Christian apocalypse – 'Cathedral candles fizzle out'. The line 'Noah's [flood] was a dry run' gives Biblical precedent for this apocalypse while punningly suggesting that the 'Coming' kingdom will make the Old Testament deluge seem 'dry' by comparison. Nevertheless, by situating his poem in a scriptural tradition, Roberts retains its mythical quality, as an imagined engagement with climate change rather than a straightforward mapping of political concerns onto conventional tropes. We may not share this pattern of belief, but at least we recognise its use of and relationship to generic expectations as it articulates our situation.

The forcing of form

Roberts's loosely metrical lines, organised by ABAB rhymes of differing fullness, are part of this demonstration of artifice. This may carry a suggestion of our artificialisation of terrestrial, atmospheric or aquatic environments, but the form's relative straightforwardness and the subtlety of its lost rhymes does not represent a striking departure from convention. After the pattern reaches its most strained, with 'sea'/'sure'/'oceans'/'forever' in verse eight, it returns to closer rhymes in the final two stanzas: 'breaks'/'cold'/'neck'/'cloud' and 'streetlights'/'spill'/'out'/'steel', affirming its resolution as a more religious poem. It therefore risks being read simply as a gesture 'Presaging Apocalypse', although it is not nearly as forthright in doing so as Munden's piece laments Eden.

Roberts explores the possibility of both religious and climate change tropes in his poem, and only at the end does he resolve the tension into a trope of apocalypse common to both. However, that resolution might prompt Eliot's putative reader to dismiss the poem, for all its deftness, as irrational or irrelevant because of its religious context. Nevertheless, as I have demonstrated through my analysis of Wallace Stevens's poetics, there is no engagement with the world that does not draw on the imagination: to dismiss Roberts's poem on the basis that it foregrounds that imaginative work is to overlook the inevitability of such interpretative frames. Botkin identifies such a presumption in our expectations of climate change science. 'Isn't the issue of global warming simply one of science and therefore rationality?' he asks. 'It seems to surprise us moderns when we discover there are debates about climate change that are charged with emotion, opinion, political and ideological biases' (xi). As a result, when we look at computer models of possible environmental scenarios, we are wont to read them as real states, when their real value lies in shedding light on 'the implications of what we know (the facts) and what we assume about a system that interests us, such as a forest or the biosphere. This', Botkin argues, 'is the best use' (277).

To provide a similar mechanism in literature, which acknowledges the simultaneous need for and provisionality of our engagement with climate, and which prevents us from accepting it as a neutral account of nature by emphasising its fictive quality, we can work with a kind of modernist difficulty that reminds us of the interpretative frames rather than ignoring them. By making us conscious of modernist traditions, a work can acknowledge the role played by human culture in creating the world, both imaginatively as cultural conception, and phenomenally through our impact on the physical environment. Rather than adopt a smooth and direct style that eases our reading of difficult material, by using elegiac or prophetic modes that are already assimilated into our culture, the poetry of climate change can benefit from making its engagements more explicitly and more strikingly. Paul Sheehan's remarks on modernist aesthetics, that its 'formal irregularities' and 'Brokendown narrative [are] insidiously disquieting in ways that troubling story-content cannot match' (15–16; see Chapter 2, p.57 of this thesis), remain relevant, then, in a contemporary context. Climate change represents the 'troubling story-content' that is contained by media and political

discourse, and then re-contained in elegiac or prophetic literary modes. But, so framed, it lacks the 'insidiously disquieting' quality that Sheehan identifies with 'introducing formal irregularities'. The modernist work I have examined in Chapters 2 to 5 makes its own formal innovations; I now turn to contemporary work that draws on these influences to shape its engagement with climate change.

Sea Change*: Modernist poetics and climate change*

Feeling the Pressure presents a range of other poems making more striking use of both form and experimentation than Motion, Munden or Roberts.[7] To explore more sustained formal innovation that engages with the modernist tradition, however, I will look at half a dozen poems from Jorie Graham's 2008 collection *Sea Change*, focusing on the title poem. Graham adopts a distinctive style of versification in the book: poems throughout begin with a line ranged left, sometimes extending across the width of the page but on occasion finishing before halfway. This line is followed in most instances by between one and nine shorter lines that keep a consistent left-hand margin about forty per cent of the way across the page. These are followed by another long line ranged left, then more, shorter lines maintaining the secondary margin at roughly two-fifths of the page width. There are no stanza breaks, but the long lines visually organise the poems, which extend over two or three pages, into loose stanzaic units. Syntax is continuous and most lines are enjambed.[8]

The stretching of the gaze across the page that these first lines require as we read them, or the sustaining of breath when we read them aloud, make the poems provocatively rather than evocatively sensory. If we actively "read" the regular white space before each indented line and the irregular space that follows it, there is a sensation of long breaths alternating with a series of shorter breaths.[9] The effect of moving from long lines to short is not unlike some of the transitions from prose to verse in *The Anathemata*. Graham can be read productively according to Jones's methodology of reading, which he outlines in *The Anathemata*'s preface: 'I intend what I have written to be said. […] You can't get the intended meaning unless you hear the sound and you can't get the sound unless you observe the score' (*Ana.* 35).[10] Graham's principle resembles Jones's because it emphasises the distinctive sonic qualities of her form, and represents an engagement with the material rhythms of language that she develops throughout her career. Commenting on Graham's earlier work, Helen Vendler writes in *The Given and the Made* that the poet's realisation of

[7] Robyn Bolam's 'Out of Sync Haiku' (*Feeling* 16), Carrie Etter's 'The Weather in Normal' (19) and Patience Agbabi's 'Death by Water' (46–7) make use of the formal conventions of haiku, pantoun and sestina respectively. As with 'The Kingdom of Water is Coming', however, these forms imply to a greater or lesser degree that climate change is a deviation from an existing cycle or pattern. Graham Mort's 'Drought' (28–9), Harriet Tarlo's 'summer solstice, manchester UK, 2007' (48–9) and Mario Petrucci's 'today i could go' (50–1) move away from individual, lyric experience with more experimental forms; Petrucci's demonstrates the influence of William Carlos Williams's and e. e. cummings's poetics, for instance. I discuss these pieces in 'Why We Don't Write Poetry about Climate Change'.

[8] There is a resemblance between Graham's poems and those of Henry Vaughan such as 'The Morning-Watch' and 'The Waterfall' (*Selected Poems*, pp.77 and 159–60). Although Graham's poems lack the rhyme and metre that pattern Vaughan's, they share the latter piece's association with flowing water.

[9] This is reflected in Graham's own measured performance of the poems: see for example the clip 'Jorie Graham and Yusef Komunyakaa at the 92nd Street Y', in which she reads 'The Violinist at the Window, 1918 (after Matisse)' from *Sea Change* (available online via YouTube).

[10] Jones's remarks are echoed by Bunting in the preface to the 1968 edition of his *Collected Poems*, when he writes: 'I have set down words as a musician pricks his score, not to be read in silence, but to trace in the air a pattern of sound' (*Complete* 21).

'a primacy of the material over the spiritual' is marked by her making 'form mirror the unstoppable avalanche of sensations and the equal avalanche of units of verbal consciousness responding to those sensations' (106). The result is that 'Formally speaking, "smooth," uninterrupted, unproblematic narration can no longer, for Graham, represent experience, which is forever probing, tentative' (112). This corresponds with Jones's 'groping syntax' towards representation (*Ana.* 49).

While Graham's work has increasingly tended towards a 'probing, tentative' structure in Vendler's reading, the particular form sustained throughout *Sea Change* is original to the collection, an innovation that enables various effects. In the title poem, with which the collection opens (*Sea Change* 3–5), this form signifies an uncontainable meteorological potency and agency:

> One day: stronger wind than anyone expected. Stronger than
> ever before in the recording
> of such. Un-
> natural says the news. Also the body says it. Which part of the body—I look
> down, can
> feel it, yes, don't know
> where. […]

Against the strength of the wind, the force of which is suggested in a blowing-back of sense at the first few line breaks, the poem asserts a sense of containment through human narrative. The opening 'One day' is the poem's indication of its fictive quality, a "once upon time" whose abbreviation communicates urgency. Our need for framing discourses is reinforced by more explicit reference to 'the recording' of weather data and 'the news' that interprets it. Notably, these occur prior to a tacked-on sensory confirmation, 'Also the body says it'. The priority of media over physical experience signals the ubiquity of discourse in our construction of the world. It represents a marked contrast to Wordsworth's encounter with the wind early in *The Prelude* as his weather instigates a sympathetic internal response: 'For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven / Was blowing on my body, felt within / A correspondent breeze' (1850 *Prel.* I.33–5), which itself transforms the classical invocation of the muse into inspirational meteorological phenomenon. Graham's versification in these lines confirms that our accounts of weather are only contingent and provisional: the forced enjambment of 'Un- / natural' signifies the effort to which we must go to maintain the dualism of unnatural and natural, while the break after 'don't know' enacts the failure to locate sensation by holding 'where' back until the start of the next line.

Graham's use of form, then, enacts a tension between uncontainable material phenomena and the human attempt to contain them.[11] Where Motion begins 'The Sorcerer's Mirror' with a pastoral moment of stillness, the momentum of Graham's poem prevents such calm.

[11] Vendler notes that the wind serves a similar function in Graham's 'Of Forced Sightes and Trusty Ferefulness' (*Dream of the Unified Field* 95–6), where irregular stanzas show how 'the poet attempts to join her law of song […] to the unstoppable destructive hurry of the cosmic wind' (*Given* 114).

[…] And how the future
takes shape
too quickly. The permanent is ebbing. Is leaving
nothing in the way of
trails, they are blown over, grasses shoot up, life disturbing life, […]

The enjambed lines create breaks where we do not syntactically expect them, at the same time forcing us to read through them to enact the sense of a future 'taking shape' too quickly for us to control. In several instances, there is a jarring shift in sense or tone; 'how the future / takes shape' by itself reads with a sense of contented observation, but the words 'too quickly' snatch that moment from us. Meanwhile, 'leaving' shifts from intransitive to transitive verb over the line break, only for its object to be 'nothing'. The processes of nature cannot be contained by form or syntax. The attempt to do so simply prompts further change:

[…] & it
fussing all over us like a confinement gone
insane, blurring the feeling of
the state of
being. Which did exist just yesterday, calm and
true. Like the right to
privacy— […]

Conventional categories are exceeded by the enjambed lines. As a result, the insistence that a 'calm and / true' state 'did exist just yesterday' reads as another projection of human order rather than as an affirmation of former certainties, further undermined by its improbable precision.

Graham's subsequent comparison of this calmness with 'the right to / privacy' thus casts doubt on its validity too. The 'right' represents a public assertion of individual selfhood, but this is also subject to the same tension that characterises human understanding of natural processes. The attempt to contain or delimit selfhood engenders disorder: 'a confinement gone / insane'. The poem pursues this tension between human conceptualisation and the phenomena that outrun it, because the phenomena's excess incite a human will to order them. Graham even alludes to our process of reading in this regard later in the poem, with the 'huge breaths passing to and fro between the unkind blurrings'. The bodily rhythm of breathing is at odds with the length of the unpunctuated line, while the 'blurrings' are 'unkind' because they complicate the distinction between different kinds, the categories of human and natural.

In 'Sustainable This, Sustainable That', Stacy Alaimo quotes Graham's lines beginning 'And how the future / takes shape / too quickly' to take up discussion of human failure to impose order on the world. Alaimo comments that these lines 'evoke anxiety about unpredictable futures that arrive too soon, in need of repair. The abrupt departure of a sense of permanence may provoke the desire to arrest change, to shore up solidity, to make things, systems, standards of living "sustainable."' (558). In 'shoring up', Alaimo suggests that we make an Eliotic attempt to patch together fragments that sustain our view of the world and our position in it. In Graham's poem, by contrast, this

process of artifice is absolute rather than fragmentary, but it has become a performance we cannot direct – her participles carry us forward, 'submerging us, / making of the fields, the trees, a cast of characters in an / unnegotiable / drama'.[12] The attempt to perpetuate human forms of understanding and negotiation of the world, as in this instance drama, puts us into the position of acknowledging what Alaimo calls 'The human-centered discourses of sustainability' (452). The term 'sustainable' is more conventionally associated with concern for the nonhuman world and its phenomena, but Alaimo points up here its self-serving quality. Graham shares this understanding, emphasising emotional rather than environmental states in her gloss: 'Also *sustained*, as in a hatred of / a thought, or a vanity that comes upon one out of / nowhere' (author's italics).

Graham's preoccupation with human attempts to preserve an anthropocentrically defined world is sustained throughout the collection. The 'vanity' which Graham refers to in 'Sea Change' is more explicitly the concern of 'Belief System' (*Sea Change* 45–7). This poem also opens with an indication of our fictive engagement with the world, and its provisional quality. 'As a species / we dreamed. We used to / dream'. The qualification of tense, which until the second line break seems to be a continuation of sense rather than a circling of it around the same terminology, dispels the finality of the preceding sentence but re-affirms the loss of our capacity to dream. Part of that dream was an anthropocentric exceptionalism: 'By *the mind* we meant / the human mind. Open and oozing with / inwardness' (author's italics). Again, the sense seems to be progressing before a line break that drops from 'Open and oozing with' to 'inwardness'. This syntactic circularity engenders a cultural solipsism, where the reduction of the environment to its category in media and politics forever defers our implication in it:

> […] —we shall put that
> off the majesty of the mind
> said, in the newspapers, walking among the blessed,
> out in the only
> lifetime anyone had—in that space—then in the space
> of what one meant by one's
> offspring's
> space. The future. How could it be performed by the mind became the
> question—how, this sensation called tomorrow and
> tomorrow? […]

The first of the longer lines quoted here attempts to prolong an individualistic solipsism, thinking in terms of 'the only / lifetime anyone had'. But the momentum of the lines and the syntactic continuity move from isolation, first into 'that space', parenthetically stalling for time, and 'then' on

[12] Graham exploits tension between form and phenomena to a greater extent than Roberts, while Motion in 'The Sorcerer's Mirror' fits phenomena *to* form. In *Feeling the Pressure*, Carrie Etter's pantoun 'The Weather in Normal' (19) and Patience Agbabi's sestina 'Death by Water' (46) both show the formal potential for climate change poetry with, respectively, repeated lines or line-ending words. Such a continual reshuffling of common elements might be interpreted as signifying the perpetual changeability of climate, and thus avoiding the straightforward myth of a decline. But the pattern may also suggest a cycle invented and imposed rather than observed. A third possibility is that these forms signify more rigidly than Graham's a limited textual context or environment, and the necessity of having to keep within bounds and recycle resources.

into 'the space / of what one meant by one's / offspring's / space. The future'. Only after we have attempted to formulate time as 'space' and a full-stop do we move into the definite 'future'. The stop–start rhythm of the lines sets this hesitant attempt to manage our transition into the future against the forward arrow of time. But the arrival of the future prompts a further turning to human 'inwardness', 'How could it be performed by the mind became the / question'.

The incommensurability of the future with human experience, as attested to by Tom Cohen's observation that, in climate change, 'a new network of catastrophics arrives not accessible to archival memory or social history alone' (*Telemorphosis* xxii), is also marked in Graham's 'Summer Solstice' (27–9):

> […] how you
> cannot
> comprehend the thing you are meant
> to be looking
> for
> now, & you are weighing something you are out under the sky
> trying to feel
> the
> future, there it is now in your almost invisible
> squinting to the visible, […]

In 'Summer Solstice' as in 'Belief System', Graham identifies a need for the unknown to be known in human terms – 'this sensation', 'trying to feel'. In the questions that pattern the end of the passage I have quoted from 'Belief System', 'How could it be performed by the mind became the / question—how, this sensation called tomorrow and / tomorrow?', she addresses Ulrich Beck's question about 'the staging of global risk' (16), doing so by using David Jones's technique of repeated and reformulated interrogatives. Graham's allusion to *Macbeth* (5.5.19) in 'Belief System', 'this sensation called tomorrow and / tomorrow', suggests that our engagement with the future is enabled by an engagement with the 'performance' of the past.[13]

Putting the past to use: Recycling modernist poetry in Sea Change

As a poem, and throughout the book to which it gives its name, 'Sea Change' stages a number of references to the canon that help organise and inform Graham's response to climate change. The title's quotation of *The Tempest*, also alluded to in her poem 'Full Fathom' (30–1), signal her engagement with the future through literary tradition. In particular, she recognises the way that the tradition itself changes through time. In a *Guardian* review of the collection, M. Wynn Thomas remarks 'Significantly, this volume's title points us not to the redemptive vision of *The Tempest* but to [it] as ominously refracted through Eliot's *The Waste Land*' (3 May 2008). Graham's adoption of Eliot sees a further adaptation of this tradition.

[13] See *Macbeth* (Arden Shakespeare: Second Series) 153.

Sea Change shares with my reading of *The Waste Land* a tension between the human imposition of order and vital, persistent material forces. When 'the future / takes shape / too quickly' in 'Sea Change', it is figured as 'grasses shoot[ing] up, life disturbing life'; these echo the 'Lilacs' and 'dull roots' from the start of 'The Burial of the Dead' (*Waste* lines 1–3). Eliot manages to half-contain natural energies with the present participles that end the first three lines of his poem: 'breeding', 'mixing' and 'stirring'. He creates a cyclical pattern from processes that go beyond the containment of the line, keeping growth temporarily in check. By the twenty-first century, even this momentary equilibrium is impossible, and Graham's form signifies the runaway character of natural processes.

The force of the wind images this quality in both poems as well. In 'A Game of Chess', the wind remains beyond a door, figuring the disturbance of the narrator's interlocutor: "'What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?" / Nothing again nothing' (lines 119–20). As order increasingly disintegrates throughout *The Waste Land*, however, its final section is exposed to the elements, and we hear 'What the Thunder Said' rather than shutting it out. The wind in Graham's poem consciously resembles Eliot's thunder in that it cannot be shut out, and also speaks. Its voice refutes the claim that we are unaware of our participation in worldly phenomena: 'consider your affliction says the / wind, do not plead ignorance'.

Following Latour's analysis in *We Have Never Been Modern*, our protestation of ignorance actually makes us complicit in change, because the imagined separation of human affairs from meteorological phenomena, the distinction between politics and nature, is what paradoxically creates hybrid, anthropogenic environments. Graham's poem 'Sea Change' marks, as *The Waste Land* does, civilisation's attempt to create a distinct "now", a modernity that suppresses its contingent past. This condition is then forced to confront its own artificiality:

> […] & farther and farther
> away leaks the
> past, much farther than it used to go, beating against the shutters I
> have now fastened again, the huge mis-
> understanding round me now
> so still in
> the center of this room, listening— […]

In *The Waste Land*, the attempt to bury the past beneath ground and ice is met with the recurring reassertion of its presence; in Graham's poem, the past is imagined not as the dead but as the weather, 'beating against the shutters'. Nevertheless, our resistance to it is still marked by a failed enclosure of human domestic space apart from nature, though we respond to its 'beating' with repeated attempts to shut it out, 'the shutters I / have now fastened again'. In the form of the 'huge misunderstanding round me now', Graham places in our contemporary climatic wasteland the 'dirty house in a gutted world' of Stevens's 'A Postcard from the Volcano', with its 'spirit storming in blank walls' (*Collected* 129).

The wind in 'Sea Change' asks 'consider your affliction', and that imperative is repeated later in the poem:

> […] Consider
> the body of the ocean which rises every instant into
> me, & its
> ancient e-
> vaporation, & how it delivers itself
> to me, how the world is our law, this indrifting of us
> into us, a chorusing in us of elements, […]

This recalls the last line of 'Death by Water', which asks us to 'Consider Phlebas' (*Waste* line 321). Graham's lines mark a crucial shift in emphasis from Eliot's, however. In Eliot's poem, 'Consider' is not attributed to a speaker, but assumes the authoritative tone of a disinterested observer. The instances I have cited from Graham are in contrast spoken respectively by an external 'wind' and by a seemingly autonomous 'hissing' thought. The tonal shift between the two poems is reflected in the way Graham puts a first person as object, 'me', at the mercy of the elements, rather than Eliot's symbolic Phlebas. Graham's key image is 'the body of the ocean which rises every instant into / me', a 'body' of water rather than a human corpse, marking a further breakdown in self-definition from the objectified Phlebas who 'rose and fell' in the oceanic currents. Graham brings her 'Sea Change' into personal proximity, where Eliot arranges through the use of symbol.

The transgression of boundaries in Graham's poetry is characterised by this trespass of the environmental on to the territory of the personal. There is only a versified – that is, artificial – boundary between 'ocean which rises every instant into' and 'me'. With this attention to the personal, Graham enacts Alaimo's 'recognition not just that everything is interconnected but that humans are the very stuff of the material, emergent world' (*Bodily* 20). Graham's poetics before *Sea Change* already tended in a materialist direction, as Vendler indicates: 'The self must now portray itself *in* primary matter; [...] Yet the indifference of the material universe to our fate makes us hesitate to appropriate the phenomena as adequate symbols of ourselves' (*Given* 125; author's italics). Our existence depends on water, but water's significance exceeds this function. Graham creates a context where water is a signifier of multiple states, elemental and psychological, as it is in the poems of Eliot, Jones and Roberts.

Sea Change's allusions to *The Tempest* are further developed in Graham's poem 'Full Fathom' (30–1) to evidence a comprehensive breakdown in categories.

> […] those were houses that are his eyes—those were lives that
> are his
> eyes—those are families, those are privacies, those are details—those are reparation
> agreements, summary
> judgments, those are multiplications
> on the face of the earth that are—those are the forests, the coal seams, the
> carbon sinks that are his—
> as they turn into carbon sources—his—

and the festering wounds that are— […]

This 'his' could, ambiguously, refer to 'the / upstairs neighbor you did not / protect—they took him / away' mentioned earlier in 'Full Fathom', although a page elapses between this abduction and the passage quoted above. But the neighbour's rendition from text into world – 'he stopped reading and looked up / when they came in' – is recapitulated by Graham through the fractal syntax of the later lines as they trace connections across scales from personal to global. She proceeds from the enclosing 'houses' to their inhabiting 'families', 'privacies' and 'details', to the institutional arrangements of 'reparation / agreements, summary judgments', through our 'multiplications / on the face of the earth' that lead to our impact on 'forests' and 'coal seams', and the 'carbon sinks' that we 'turn into carbon sources' as they exceed their capacity for storing our emissions. As in her poem 'Sea Change', Graham brings these phenomena into personal proximity with the reversal of Shakespeare's formulation: 'Those are pearls that were his eyes' (*Temp.* 1.2.399)[14] becomes 'those were' / 'that are' in 'Full Fathom'. The listed phenomena are then rooted in an experiencing subject, 'his eyes', to become a vision of human entanglement, through society, with 'carbon sinks' and 'carbon sources'. But Graham's reversal is also a rhetorically effective way of directing environmental responsibility towards a symbolic individual: 'they turn into carbon sources—his'. If these instances of 'his' indeed refer back to the removed neighbour, then the poem also suggests a domestic complicity in neglecting the chain of environmental consequence she has traced. Rather than 'protect him', the 'you' accused by the narrator 'went on with your / day' as the abduction took place.

To stress the physical implication of human beings in the climate, Graham also redeploys *The Waste Land* in the poem 'Positive Feedback Loop'. One of Eliot's key symbols is used by Graham to freight contemporary personal experience with the environmental processes that are beyond our grasp, both physically and mentally, when she invites us to use his 'handful of dust' (*Waste* line 30) as a tactile model for ocean circulation. She makes the dust's original spiritual connotations materially manifest. The awkwardness of the transition from one element to another, from 'dust' to 'water', is suggested by the instruction 'try to':

In Hell they empty your hands of sand, they tell you to refill them with dust and try
to hold in mind the North Atlantic Deep Water
which also contains
contributions from the Labrador Sea and entrainment of other water masses, try to hold a
complete collapse, in the North Atlantic Drift, in the
thermohaline circulation, this
will happen, […]

The lines run across the page in a manner that demonstrates the difficulty of being able to follow the instruction 'to hold [them] in mind' as we have done in the hand. Terms such as 'thermohaline

[14] Ariel's song (1.2.396–403) can be found in *The Tempest* (Rev. ed., Arden Shakespeare: Third Series) 200.

circulation', or 'convective chimneys' used earlier in the poem, make a more deliberate attempt to get to grips with the physical phenomena of climate, rather than depending on polar tropes. At the same time the conceptually difficult, 'try / to hold in mind', becomes what is physically impossible, 'try to hold a / complete collapse', as the sequence of clauses edges further away from the initial imperative, eliding 'in mind' to reflect the elusiveness of even a few named climatic phenomena. The placement of the technical terms, neither glossed nor anticipated, exemplifies what Michael H. Whitworth, in '"Strange Synthetic Perfumes"', calls 'the aesthetics of discordance and difficulty […] a poetics wherein legitimate effects can be worked through the non-assimilation (or partial assimilation) of materials into the poem' (99). In Graham's poem, the introduction of the terms furnishes a scientific context by gesturing at the oceanic and atmospheric mechanisms that participate in climate. Because these terms are not assimilated into the poem, though, they create a necessary poetic and conceptual difficulty.

Another sequence of imagery in *Sea Change* can be productively read in response to the modernist canon to tease out the implications of the entanglement of human sense with climate. 'Full Fathom' opens in a coastal context with the lines:

> & sea swell, hiss of incomprehensible flat: distance: blue long-fingered ocean and its
> nothing else: nothing in the above visible except
> water: water and
> always the white self-destroying bloom of wavebreak &, upclose
> roil, &
> here, on what's left of land,
> ticking of stays against empty flagpoles, low tide, free day […]

The sea's 'incomprehensible' hiss, and its aerial complement of 'nothing […] except water' signal the difficulty faced by human interpretative systems in engaging with the world. By describing the 'hiss' as 'incomprehensible', Graham suggests we conceive of the tidal noise as something that should be amenable to understanding, while by failing to find anything other than water 'visible', we are forced to identify the absence as 'nothing', as in Stevens's 'The Snow Man'. The world's intractability persists in the poem's deferral of syntactic closure. The repetition of colons and ampersands in these lines continues throughout the poem, which is also strung through with em-dashes to put off a full-stop until the end of the final line. As a result, the poem accumulates as reformulated statements, stacking up repeated attempts to engage with the world, from which narratives emerge hesitantly and divergently. The intellectual grapple to express the sea's ineffability revisits the theme of Bunting's Ode 3 and more particularly, in its continued recapitulation of engagement, Stevens's 'The Idea of Order at Key West' (see Chapter 4, pp.134–6 of this thesis).

In the latter poem (*Collected* 105–6), Stevens acknowledges that the sea has an ineffable identity, a 'genius', 'beyond' which the singer sings, and though she is 'the single artificer of the world', it is only the 'world / In which she sang', a solipsism enacted with his line break. The tension between 'The maker's rage to order' and 'the words of the sea' persists throughout the poem, which ends

with its narrator straining to hear 'Words of the fragrant portals' and 'ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds'. In contrast, the sea's noise in 'Full Fathom' is 'incomprehensible', while in 'Sea Change' Graham can only find 'syllables untranscribable'. The sea is beyond human description, rather than involved in Stevens's dialectic of imaginative and phenomenal experience. Where Stevens worries away at the human 'rage to order', Graham asks us to 'Consider' in 'Sea Change' 'how the world is our law'. Our response to this must be ironic or parodic. The 'world is our law' not because of our rage for order, but because its present state, the Anthropocene or McKibben's end of nature, results from our intentional interventions in the environment and their unintended consequences. Science has discovered 'laws' by which nature works, but we have failed as a civilisation to realise their implications, instead assuming that knowing them amounts to mastery.

Graham communicates our own material contingency by describing water as 'a chorusing in us of elements' in 'Sea Change'. The metaphor is a reversal of the personification of the world as a self through song in 'The Idea of Order at Key West': 'when she sang, the sea, / Whatever self it had, became the self / That was her song'. Graham is closer to Bunting in Ode 3 in making the human entirely contingent on the sea for its identity. The terminology of music that runs through *Sea Change*, such as this 'choursing in us', or 'Who is one when one calls oneself / one? An orchestra dies down' ('Positive Feedback Loop') and 'The dead gods […] turn the page for / us. The score does not acknowledge / the turner of / pages' ('Belief System'), figure the self as one of many in a concerted musical effort. Like the orchestra, humanity can create a harmonious, if transitory and imaginative, world. The extension of the musical image across separate poems enacts that context of mutual and multiple creation. It takes the effort of a collective, however, rather than Stevens's solitary singer, to create this fictive harmony.[15] When we revert to the conception of ourselves as individuals, the orchestral effect goes unrecognised: the individualism of 'calling oneself one' in the former example means the music 'dies down'. Having shown individualism to be implicated in environmental change throughout the book, Graham intimates that we aggravate that change when we behave as individuals, rather than engaging with it through an orchestral understanding of human behaviour.

In 'The Idea of Order at Key West', Stevens proposes that music is our best attempt to engage with the world, but because the world always exceeds our songs of it, we are required to recapitulate these engagements. Graham uses parataxis to recapitulate her projections of the imagination in 'Full Fathom'; and in 'Sea Change' this repetitive syntax allows her to pursue environmental consequences:

> […] wonder is also what
> pours from us when, in the
> coiling, at the very bottom of

[15] Although singing alone, the singer in 'The Idea of Order at Key West' is not solitary because Stevens-as-narrator and 'Ramon Fernandez' are also present. The narrator's mediation of her song is another instance of what George Bornstein describes as 'double consciousness' (198).

the food
chain, sprung
from undercurrents, warming by 1 degree, the in-
dispensable
plankton is forced north now, & yet farther north,
spawning too late for the cod larvae hatch, such
that the hatch will not survive, nor the
species in the end, in the right-now forever un-
interruptible slowing of the gulf
stream, […]

The line breaks signify human imposition on the flow of environmental process, the only way in which we can render the 'indispensable' dispensable, or the 'uninterruptible' interruptible. The emphatic momentum of these lines signals the processes that drive through them, so when Graham invokes 'undercurrents, warming by 1 degree,' we cannot linger on them but proceed directly to their effect. As these lines see the only deployment of conventional climate change terminology in 'Sea Change', occurring some fifty lines into the piece, Graham signals a context for the poem without topicalising it. Instead, she concentrates on following the implications of climate change in the use of form. Climate change is thus something that demands our consideration because is entangled in all of our other concerns, not something separable from them.

As the poem 'Sea Change' draws to a close, it marks a movement from environmental to personal. Graham writes 'so that I, speaking in this wind today, out loud in it, to no one, am suddenly / aware / of having written my poems, I feel it in / my useless / hands'. Such a concentration into natural observation and bodily experience is a strategy that marks several of the poems I've discussed; 'Summer Solstice', for example, closes with the image of a dove alighting in an acacia, 'making its nest again this year […] as if all time / came down to this'. The conditional 'as if' here marks the fictive quality of the resolution. In 'Sea Change', the fiction is intentional human agency itself, the individual rendered powerless by 'useless hands'. The poem instead subtly insists that there are other creative agencies at work, in the form of the wind and water; hence the writing process has been unconscious, and the narrator is 'suddenly aware of having written [her] poems'.[16] The invocation of the act and context of composition is, as I have shown, an ecocritical trope rehearsed by Lawrence Buell and Timothy Morton (see Chapter 1, pp.23, 44–5). But Graham's poem differs because rather than describing her surroundings, she gives them a voice: 'quicken / me further says this new wind'. The verb dramatises the process of 'quickening' as bringing to life in language, but also implies human responsibility for accelerating and intensifying weather patterns, and their 'uninterruptible' course. Graham shares Kerridge's recognition that 'Lyric poetry that uses an "I" persona also has difficulty with these perspectives, having to bring them within the

[16] Graham's setting is reminiscent of Ariel 'glad he had written his poems' in Stevens's 'The Planet on the Table' (*Collected* 450). There is a comparable attempt to represent climate change as occurring in the context of writing in Jo Shapcott's 'Composition': 'the tea cups / wanted washing and the Gulf Stream / was slowing and O my hips / ached from sitting'. Shapcott's poem seeks a more lyrical than experimental reconciliation with the phenomena, however, in its emplaced movement from its first lines, 'And I sat among the dust motes, my pencil / (blue) sounding loud on the page,' to its last, 'and then there was this' (*Of Mutability* 51).

frame of a dramatized personal consciousness' ('Ecocriticism' 8). As a result she includes but does not centre the poem around such a persona. 'Sea Change' also makes a Stevensian acknowledgement of the limitations of lyric selfhood, because that self is characterised by its repeated failure to manage the world.

The narrator of 'Sea Change' makes a final attempt at order, as with her earlier re-closing of the window shutters, but the world is beyond her control. The wind observes 'your / best young / tree, which you have come outside to stake again'. Like Motion in 'The Sorcerer's Mirror', Graham returns to her garden at the end of the poem, having situated it in a problematic global climate. However, her formal innovation marks a much stronger attempt to 'Consider' the implications of climate change than simply re-arranging its tropes in traditional verse structures, as Motion did. Motion turns away from the environment as his narrator returns to the house at the end of his poem, but Graham situates a pointed example of such turning away in its environmental context in 'Positive Feedback Loop': 'us in The Great Dying again, the time in which life on earth is all but wiped out / again—we must be patient—we must wait—it is a / lovely evening, a bit of food a bit of drink'. The bathetic movement from extinction to dining arrangements communicates both the simultaneity of everyday living and ecological collapse and the ineffectualism of the sensual lyric self in that context. In 'Ecology as Text, Text as Ecology', Morton describes 'The gratifying illusion of immersion in a lifeworld provides yet another way to hold out against the truth of global warming' (10). The poems of *Sea Change* pursue the recognition of Graham's earlier work, where, Vendler writes, 'The instabilities of matter must now be assumed by the self; and so any poem spoken in the voice of the material self must be an unstable poem, constantly engaged in linguistic processes of approximation. The material self is limited, and must enact that limitation' (*Given* 128–9).

'No Long Way Round'

The final poem of *Sea Change*, 'No Long Way Round' (54–6), marks some subtle departures from the form that characterises the other poems. The syntax still circles and qualifies, 'Evening. Not quite. High winds again', but the full-stops make it terser than the earlier pieces. This evokes the resistance and stop–start pace of there being 'No Long Way Round', connoting our need to live through what is coming rather than evading it. In this context, Graham explicitly confronts the paucity of prior meaning-making systems, recognising their obsolescence in the context of a changing climate:

> […] We
> liked
> the feeling
> of it—truth—whatever we meant by it—I can still
> feel it in my gaze, tonight, long after it is gone, that finding of all the fine discriminations […]

The 'finding of […] discriminations' echoes Stevens's lines in 'Variations on a Summer Day' that 'The difference between air / and sea exists by grace alone' (*Collected* 215).

A more striking formal divergence from the pattern of the rest of the book demonstrates what it means to live without these 'fine discriminations'. In two passages of the poem, the verse clumps into a pair of paragraphs resembling prose. The first of these reads:

> […] It is an emergency actually, this waking and doing and
> cleaning-up afterwards, & then sleep again, & then up you go, the whole 15,000 years of
> the inter-
> glacial period, & the orders and the getting done &
> the getting back in time and the turning it back on, & did you remember, did you pass, did
> you lose the address again, didn't the machine spit it up, did you follow the machine— […]

The day-to-day routines are already described as an 'emergency', but their rhythm carries us through the verse paragraph, 'waking and doing'. The transition represents Frederick Buell's titular movement *From Apocalypse to Way of Life*, as the discourse of 'emergency', or indeed, crisis, becomes normalised in the everyday. Graham builds up momentum in the first verse-paragraph before suspending it in the elongated line break. Should we mark that gap with silence, it reminds us of the brevity of the current interglacial;[17] if we instead mark it by holding the reading breath, we realise the physical difficulty of even one unspoken line. In either event, the effect reminds us of our physical implication in the world. Graham's resumption with a further prose-like stanza creates an illusion that things are close to normal, but the interruption serves to render the contingency of our quotidian lives.

As with the preceding poems, 'No Long Way Round' draws in with a moment of lyrical meditation.

> […] You have your imagination, says the evening. It is all you have
> left, but its neck is open, the throat is
> cut, you have not forgotten how to sing, or to want
> to sing. It is
> strange but you still
> need to tell
> your story— […]

The image of the cut throat is more violent than any of Stevens's; nevertheless, it doubly affirms, as his poems do, a failure to articulate an imagination that is adequate to the world, and our continual drive to employ it in our engagements with that world anyway, the 'need to tell / your story'. Graham shows how that 'story' is confined to its profoundly human significance, because it comprises

> […] how you met, the coat one wore, the shadow of which war, and how it lifted,
> how peace began again

[17] Graham's 15,000-year time frame for this is at odds with the 10–12,000-year period I have suggested earlier in the thesis. If nothing else, this variation indicates the range of scientific theories about the duration of our window for civilisation, without denying that civilisation depends on it.

for that part of
the planet, & the first Spring after your war, & how "life" began again, what
normal was—thousands of times
you want to say this—normal— […]

The story begins personally, and even when it attempts to broach a more global scale it tries to contain it, at first with 'the coat', then limiting it to 'that part of the planet' and 'your war', the self-consciousness of what constitutes "life" – which echoes the underground stirrings of spring in *The Waste Land*, written in 'the shadow of' its own 'war' – and finally the desperation to restate normality. If our fictions remain local, however, then they end with us. Our definitions and declarations will be meaningless, as the final lines of Graham's poem remind us: 'there are sounds the planet will always make, even / if there is no one to hear them.'

Conclusion

Climate changes it all: Ecocriticism reads modernism, modernism reads ecocriticism

This thesis began by considering a particular climate change poem and reflecting on the traditions it invoked. My introduction identified a Romantic vision of nature that has characterised the poetry of environmental emergency, and at the same time limited that poetry's ability to engage intellectually with climate change because it is at odds with the hybrid material and cultural phenomena. The persistence of natural harmony as a trope in contemporary writing prompted my recognition of two under-researched themes in environmental literary criticism: first, the discipline's limited coverage of climate change; and second, the high modernist writing that 'the ecocritical tradition has largely ignored' (Holmes 6).

I argued in my first chapter that the first oversight is the result of early ecocriticism's selective misreading of Romanticism, which emphasises Romantics' topical concern with physical, emplaced Nature rather than the extensive character of our entanglement in wider nonhuman phenomena. This tendency is exacerbated by second-wave ecocriticism's concentration on texts with explicitly environmentalist themes, what Lawrence Buell calls 'toxic discourse' (*Writing* 30), however broadly their scope is defined. By valorising wild nature and the socio-political category of the "environment", respectively, the first and second waves of the discipline have been unable to engage convincingly with the radically hybridised and unsituated phenomena of anthropogenic climate change.

Consideration of modernist literature, then, can do more than simply make good an ecocritical oversight, because by rereading it we can respond to the limitations of the first and second waves, as I began to argue in my second chapter. In terms of first-wave preoccupation with the wild, the modernist poets I have studied engage more incisively with the Romantic tradition in their creative interrogation of it than do those critics seeking to recover Romanticism for a paradigm of our relation with nature. This is because modernist poets, in particular Wallace Stevens and Basil Bunting, are concerned with the way that relation alters over time, rather than nostalgically making it a locus to restore us to an idyllic wild world. Our understandings of nature are drastically modified by the complexities and contingencies of urban living as these intensify in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and these processes are addressed in the poems of both Bunting and T. S. Eliot. They bear witness to the strain that the city, as an embodiment of civilisation and capitalism, places on the relation with nonhuman phenomena, and how human culture cannot resist the materially deleterious effects of exacerbated natural change. Yet David Jones's imaginative scope in *The Anathemata* shows that we needn't reject Romanticism out of hand when considering twentieth-century poetics; rather, that we need to situate it in a context problematised by nineteenth- and twentieth-century scientific findings. Because modernist writing occurs at a

historical moment between Romanticism and ecological emergency, the traces of literary past and climatic future are entangled and exposed in its work.

There is also a second benefit in rereading modernism from an ecocritical perspective, because it continues the second-wave expansion of ecocriticism's canon of consideration. By tackling texts not topically related to environmental crisis, we begin to understand how far our patterns of thought have to alter if we are to confront the full implications of climate change. As John Lanchester indicates: 'I suspect we're reluctant to think about it [climate change] because we're worried that if we start we will have no choice but to think about nothing else' (3). Reading climate change into the preserve of canonical modernism shows how extensively climate change can destabilise our patterns of thinking. This is concomitant with a recognition that contemporary climate change, as an exemplar of anthropogenic environmental intervention, is entangled with all our cultural practices: it cannot be reduced to its iterations in the topical discourses of politics or environmentalism, neither, entirely, to its scientific models or analyses. Not only the causes but the effects of climate change are entangled in human practice, and by entertaining those consequences in climatic fictions we can develop the imaginative resources that will inform our cultural adaptation.

My analysis of modernist work has doubly illuminated the poetry itself, by supplying a new theoretical context, and ecocriticism, by taking it out of preconceived zones of relevance. Modernist poetics has particular further value in the consideration of climate change because it enables us to read the increasing complexity of unsituated environmental risk identified in the sociology of Bruno Latour and Ulrich Beck, as further discussed in Chapter 2. Modernism's engagement with burgeoning globalism is evident in Eliot's and Bunting's metropolises, in Stevens's multiply situated visions of 'The Planet on the Table' and in the temporal and geographical scope of *The Anathemata*. The more innovative and open forms employed in much of this work can be read as expressing an understanding of human implication in forces beyond our ordering or control, forces which are yet sensitive to our interference. Even the formally cautious Stevens is elliptically restive in his poems and refuses to endorse a stable sense of self or of the world. The modernist use of motif accentuates the resonance of the objective particular within the abstract general, attuning our imaginations to the environmental significance of our individual experiences. As such, they give expression to the theoretical tenets of material ecocriticism. The poetry becomes various sites of interaction between intentional and unintentional agencies – cultural and phenomenal, conscious and unconscious, authorial and futural. By not being topicalisations of "environmental crisis", the work can explore the forces and principles that contribute to its emergence across the twentieth century, rather than its symptoms. The work's reception in a changed climate also marks its material persistence, its resistance to determination by the criteria of historical context, as an aesthetic modelling of unintentional phenomena.

Scope remains for a more historicist reading of the modernists' own understandings of and engagements with ecology, which I have not sought to explore. Although I have referred to the

weather's bearing on *The Waste Land* and *The Anathemata*'s engagement with Darwinism, as well as to Jonathan Bate's discussion of Stevens and Bunting, a comprehensive ecocritical contextualisation of modernism has still to be written. Such an account might build on the work of Alexandra Harris in *Romantic Moderns* (2010) to explore the relevance of the landscape and engagements with nature for the canonical writing of the early to mid-twentieth century. What instead I have been developing in this thesis is a modernist ecocriticism, reading the discipline through the poetics that began to emerge one hundred years ago. My re-interrogation of key modernist texts in a contemporary context has thus brought out different qualities of the hybrid phenomena of climate change. The plethora of responses reflects our multiple vectors of entanglement with the phenomena, and the range of agendas or fictions to which we assimilate it, according to Mike Hulme's mythography of climate change (340–55). I now summarise my analyses.

In the second part of Chapter 2, I argued that, as the repressed past haunts *The Waste Land*, anthropogenic climate change has a similarly troubling presence today. It represents an accumulation of unresolved consequences from the emissions sidelined by civilisation, and more intensively in the industrial age. Climate change's material manifestation is a challenge to human presumptions of rational order, and throughout *The Waste Land* the contingency of civilisation on the earth is repeatedly demonstrated. The situation of the poem on a faultline between seasonal renewal and cataclysm – indeed, seasonal renewal *as* cataclysm – prefigures our present uncertainty about future terrestrial conditions. Text and phenomena both break down previous certainties and expose the multiple agencies at work in shaping metaphorical and literal climates, as per Latour's actor-network-theory.

Once the fallacy of human intentionality is revealed, our actions are situated in a wider context, which Eliot figures mythologically. In Wallace Stevens's work, which I analysed in Chapter 3, mythology is more unassumingly branded 'fiction', but that fiction is still necessary to establish the limit of the terms by which we understand the world. Climate resists determination by any individual context so it demands a way of writing that simultaneously questions the world and itself, as Stevens's does. His poems are engagements with the imagination, and engagements with the world *through* the imagination. The added charge of rereading Stevens's work today is that civilisation has worked from an assumption that he and Eliot challenged – that is, the sufficiency of human understanding to match and master material force – and we have intervened physically, if impalpably, in the phenomenal world. Stevens persists in telling us that we need poems of our climate to engage with that climate, but that these poems remain provisional fictions because natural forces perennially exceed human accounts of them.

The dispersal of selfhood in *Briggflatts* and the doubly distinctive and typical quality of individual figures in *The Anathemata* offer ways of reading that more complex situation of intentional, individual activity within multiple, expanding scales and contexts, according to the criteria of material ecocriticism. As I discussed in my fourth chapter, Bunting's work charts the diminution of

organising accounts of selfhood in response to environmental upheavals. The discrepancy that Stevens identifies between imagination and phenomena becomes in Bunting the zone in which natural forces operate, transgressing conceptual, spatial and temporal boundaries. Human action is seen to be just one agency among forces on numerous scales, from the grounded rat and slowworm to the life-cycles of stars. When humanity neglects these other scales and seeks to maintain the transgressed boundaries, it exacerbates a universal tendency towards entropy by failing to recognise the shadows of its rationalised economies.

I argued in Chapter 5 that Jones's *Anathemata* makes these shadows and implications central to its poetics, with each of its motifs resonating gratuitously across the work. Through the eponymous concept, Jones attends to that which humans set aside as having more than physical significance, but being doubly inflected these anathemata also entail a recognition of negative implication, with which we must contend. Jones is cognisant of this in his fractal organisation of seasonal time in the work, which enables it to entertain futures beyond civilisation as well as its preconditions. The poet's decentring of humanity from the history of the earth achieves on an epic scale what Bunting does for Romantic selfhood, by exposing civilisation's sensitivity to its terrestrial environment. The divine displaces the human as the culmination of *The Anathemata*; but the emergence of climate change gives us grounds for a further displacement of the divine by the environmental in our reading of the work. Jones's aesthetic emphasis on environmental contingency means *The Anathemata* can be read fractally with 'Rite and Fore-Time' rather than Christ's incarnation as establishing its themes, to present the possibility that progress is no more than an atheistic theology of history, with humans taking the place of the divine. Without the reassuring mythology of scientism, we cannot depend on our place in or ability to impose order on the world.

These readings together represent three qualities of my ecocritical account of modernism: first, modernist work offers a fuller and more engaged reading of Romantic relations with nature as they are altered in the industrial era than does first-wave ecocriticism; second, a consideration of this work moves ecocriticism beyond its reliance on texts that are concerned with nature or environment as topics, providing it with greater nuance and unexpected insights; and third, it offers us a way of reading our environmental entanglements as they become increasingly complex with anthropogenic climate change. There is one further quality a reading of modernism then offers, which I have explored in my sixth chapter: specifically, that is, how modernism represents an alternative, unconsidered tradition for the writing of environmental entanglement, a modernist poetics of climate change. I have begun to trace the implications of my critical findings in the twenty-first-century poetry that responds thematically to climate change, arguing that modernist poetics provides a valuable way of tracing the complexities of climate change and resisting its reduction to a collection of tropes. I contend that neo-modernist modes enable poetry to engage with the extent and difficulty of climate change phenomena. However, poetry still needs to consider

and respond to other modes to resist Robert Crawford's charge that incorporating scientific phenomena into poetry

> can be presented as an avant-garde strategy, but also a ghetto strategy which assumes an almost apartheid-like divide between our scientific age and earlier ages, between our sense of being human and theirs, so that our 'post-human' information age is held […] in absolute opposition to traditional lyric and so to stand apart from all but a carefully filtered version of the history of modernism ('Poetry, Science' 74).

Further work remains to be done in this regard, and most helpful would be a comprehensive survey of climate change poetry to ascertain the full range of modes deployed; this could be modelled on the survey of climate change in Anglophone novels conducted by Adam Trexler and Adeline Johns-Putra, 'Climate Change in Literature and Literary Criticism' (2011). They comment that they are 'deal[ing] here with climate change in fiction, as, although [they] anticipate that there will be more research on poetry and plays about climate change, thus far there does not seem to have been much work in these areas' (186). In the course of researching this thesis, I have made an initial survey of such poems, presented in Chapter 6, and I would welcome the opportunity to expand on this with a more thoroughgoing analysis.

At the last, we should bear in mind that climate change is not simply the transition from one fixed state to another but a continuous process, exacerbated in the past few centuries by human activity. The readings I have made in this thesis will therefore be themselves subject to change. Indeed, accommodating this process of change should be constitutive of ecocriticism, on Richard Kerridge's analysis:

> Ecocritical responsibility consists in accepting that the existence of a large expert majority for a view constitutes a form of probability that the view is correct—the only form of probability a non-scientist ecocritic can scrupulously acknowledge. If the majority view changes, then the ecocritic has a responsibility to change accordingly, without needing to feel guilty of previous misjudgement, since to do so would imply a capacity to make expert judgements upon the data ('Ecocriticism' 5).

Kerridge's remarks can help us distinguish the role and responsibility of a climate change criticism from a climate change poetics. My readings here are necessarily contingent on the network of critical and scientific understandings contemporary to the researching of the thesis, and these will change with time, as Kerridge observes. As a work of criticism, this thesis is an act of explication and interpretation, communicating my particular understanding. It is therefore designed to have clarity and to eschew connotation for denotation, so it is contingent on the climate of criticism and research that produced it.

The poetics of climate change, however, consists in both the poetry and climate change, the hybrid that the two terms represent. In these are entangled the forces and phenomena, and criticism's respective task remains, in Hulme's words 'to reveal the creative, psychological, ethical

and spiritual work that climate change is doing for us' (326). Climate change poems must be abstract enough to change with the climate, outrunning critical pronouncements on them as the phenomena themselves do. The poems I have studied, along with those that are being and have yet to be written, will then remain articulations or sites of interaction between the forces described, exposing the networks of agency, and making legible the entangled processes of climate change.

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