

CHAPTER 5

Storiation: Holding the World

Introduction

In the previous chapter we examined how Correlational onto-epistemologies draw upon the capacities and affordances of islands in order to develop non-modern approaches to sensing and registering environmental change. Correlational onto-epistemologies work indirectly, grasping entities via the affordances of other entities upon which they are registered. Thus, they are dependent upon regular patterns of interaction and inter-relation, and operate to produce generalisable forms of calculation, measurement and comparison. An important analytical focal point on the other end of the onto-epistemological continuum is that which we conceptualise as Storiation. Central to the onto-epistemology of Storiation is how islands and islanders are engaged as registers of effects and relations in ways which are disruptive of modernist conceptions of space and time.

Often to the fore in these forms of knowledge generation are the ongoing afterlives and effects of such significant forces as global warming, nuclear radiation, waste production and colonialism (Sharpe, 2016; King, 2019; Barad, 2019; DeLoughrey, 2019; Farrier, 2019; Wang, 2020; Clark and Szerszynski, 2021). As we examine,

How to cite this book chapter:

Pugh, J. and Chandler, D. 2021. *Anthropocene Islands: Entangled Worlds*. Pp. 141–178. London: Ubiquity Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/book52.e>. License: CC-BY 4.0

Storiation registers this by employing tropes such as ‘traces’, ‘the uncanny’, ‘quantum’, ‘speculation’, ‘hauntings’ and ‘spectres’ (Morton, 2016a; Wolfe, 2017; Mathews, 2017; King, 2019; Barad, 2019; Neimanis, 2019). In Storiation, relations continue to reverberate in time and space in ways that are not separate from, but very much constitutive of, life in the Anthropocene.

This chapter is organised in three sections. The first section provides a detailed analysis of the underlying logic of Storiation. It foregrounds how work with islands is playing a particularly productive and generative role in the emergence and development of this onto-epistemology in Anthropocene thinking. The second section turns to Storiation work drawing upon islander life and island scholarship. The last section analyses what we call Storiation ‘without the subject’ which pushes further the speculative openings generated by island work and island imaginaries as productive of future and alternative possibilities beyond the world bounded by modernist or mainland epistemic concerns.

The Analytics of Storiation

One way to think about the importance of the onto-epistemology of Storiation is the following. In modernity, entities or products are available to us (for example, at a supermarket or on the internet) independent or autonomous from the relations involved in their production or marketing. They may have been produced through a multitude of different means and relations, with parts sourced globally and the final products perhaps manufactured far from the origins of their components (Read, [1958] 2019). If you are buying a mobile phone, for example, there is very little to indicate the components, raw materials and their sources, just as packaged food products do not reveal the stories behind their production on factory farms and slaughterhouses. In modernity, most entities that we come across are ones we find on supermarket shelves or are delivered direct to the door via internet sales – this means that the relational and feedback effects are lost to us (Kimmerer, 2013). This lack of access to or awareness of relational entanglement and its rationalisation in the modern episteme,

is precisely what Anthropocene scholarship seeks to bring to light and to foreground (Yusoff, 2018; Cyphers, 2019; Arnall and Kothari, 2020; Sheller, 2020).

In the Anthropocene, feedback effects of human impacts become much more readily apparent, disrupting reductionist understandings which fail to track unintended or unexpected consequences. Authors are quick to stress that there is no 'away' and no past, there are no avenues for escape in the Anthropocene (Ghosh, 2016: 26; Morton, 2013). Modernist thought sees very little of this reality. Thus, Anthropocene scholars, drawn to working with islands as mediums of Storiation, seek to use feedback effects, marks, signs and registrations to provide greater access to this relational richness via speculative openings for thought (Marland, 2014; Morton, 2016a; Sharpe, 2016; King, 2018; Barad, 2019; Clark and Szerszynski, 2021; Perez, 2020a). Islands are understood as potential amplifying sites which hold differences and relations often in tension or contradiction: thus, the traces, hauntings and spectres disrupt easy separations between pasts, presents and futures.

David Farrier's (2020: 5–6) *Footprints: In Search of Future Fossils* provides an example of what we are calling Storiation as an approach. He opens his book with the famous example of Friday's footprint on the island in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*:

It happen'd one Day about Noon going towards my Boat, I was exceedingly surpriz'd with the Print of a Man's naked Foot on the Shore, which was very plain to be seen in the Sand: I stood like one Thunder-struck, or as if I had seen an Apparition; I listen'd, I looked round me; I could hear nothing, nor see any thing. There was exactly the Very Print of a Foot, Toes, Heel, and every Part of a Foot; how it came thither, I knew not, nor could in the least imagine. (quoted in Farrier, 2020: 5–6)

It is the particular message Farrier takes home from this passage which is important for clarifying the approach of Storiation we will develop in this chapter:

After enduring the solitude of his deserted island, he suddenly sees hints of human presence everywhere, 'mistaking every bush

and tree, and fancying every stump at a distance to be a man' ... The discoveries of Friday's footprint and the footprints of early humans have such a vivid claim on our imagination because we have all lived a version of it at some point: the sudden feeling of being accompanied by an unseen other. Although you are alone, the air seems somehow closer, or an empty room is still thick with the presence of one only just departed. Someone or something has passed through already. (Farrier, 2020: 6)

Key for the analytics of Storiatio is how older modern and Cartesian frameworks of reasoning adopted an impoverished ontology of presence, where any sense of 'withdrawal' is understood as an incidental feature of being. For commentators such as Farrier, we need a different onto-epistemology, or way of knowing, in the Anthropocene; where the footprints of humanity suggest that what can seem to be temporally and spatially distant or 'withdrawn' – such as global warming, waste production, nuclear fallout, the legacies of pollution, or colonialism – are also intimately 'close' and 'present'. In other words, 'The things we touch, touch us back' (Farrier and Dickenson, 2020). Here, Storiatio seeks to materially reveal and register forms of relation and interconnection which modernist framings are necessarily blind to.

Storiatio enables objects and events, which a modernist episteme would understand as over and done with, to hold and to exist for the present. We know from Marxism that the violence of primitive accumulation, dispossession and enclosure lives on under capitalism in relations of market contract, and the coercion of those without capital by those who possess it and can thereby put the labour of others to work. We learn from Foucault, that the violence of war lives on in the peace that is enforced by the state as a body that secures the circulation of power and interest despite the granting of rights and freedom. We know from Afropessimism that the violence of chattel slavery lives on in systems of liberal power which reproduce practices of white entitlement and black subordination and expendability (Hartman, 1997). In the Anthropocene, there is no 'away' and no 'over', no 'finished business' and no 'before and after'. The materiality of Storiatio

tells different truths about time, space and agency than the narratives and myths of a modernist imaginary.

Perhaps the most emblematic of all the islands of the Anthropocene is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a floating gyre of plastics, 'roughly the size of Texas, containing approximately 3.5 million tons of trash. Shoes, toys, bags, pacifiers, wrappers, toothbrushes, and bottles too numerous to count' (Alaimo, 2016: 130; Somerville, 2017). As Alaimo (2016: 130) states: '[e]veryday, ostensibly benign human stuff becomes nightmarish as it floats forever in the sea. The recognition that these banal objects, intended for momentary human use, pollute for eternity renders them surreally malevolent.' Objects and items can play fundamentally different roles – have very different lives and afterlives – but these cannot be separated from each other; the key point is that they are intimately connected in the analytical approach of Storiation.

Here we can see that unexpected and untimely afterlives may well be destructive rather than productive. But Storiation, even as 'death work', as Deborah Bird Rose stated (2011), is still productive of ways of thinking about how our actions are inserted into time and space in unpredictable and 'strange' or 'weird' ways. Thus, what were useful and reusable products assume other lives and other forms of agency as the detritus of consumerism, which, like colourful plastic bottle caps, pass from one more-than-human assemblage to another:

One bottle cap – such a negligible bit of stuff to humans – may persist in killing birds and fish for hundreds (thousands?) of years. There is something uncanny about ordinary human objects becoming the stuff of horror and destruction; these effects are magnified by the strange jumbling of scale in which a tiny bit of plastic can wreak havoc on the ecologies of the vast seas. (Alaimo, 2016: 130)

In Farrier's work discussed above, Storiation is not only marked by the idea that there is no 'away' in the Anthropocene, but also by the 'weird' and the 'uncanny' – footprints, hauntings, ghosts and traces of human and nonhumans: 'The Anthropocene binds together human history and geological time in a strange loop,

weirdly weird’ (Morton, 2016b: 8). Timothy Morton (2016b) opens his *Dark Ecology* with examples of the way that catastrophic climate change brings out connections in time and space beyond the apprehension of individuals as agents. For an individual shovelling coal into a steam engine in 1784 it is not easy to think about the material afterlives of the processes within which their action is embedded. In fact, it is impossible because these processes are perceived differently across relations in and of time and space. This action is both part of the initiation of the industrial revolution and also of anthropogenic climate change.

Events, no matter how brief or how small, through their relational embeddedness, can have infinite ‘afterlives’, with different paths, traces and entangled processes (Wolfe, 2017). As Morton highlights, this is not just true in time but in space as well. Even something as minor and statistically meaningless on its own, such as turning the key in a car ignition, when scaled up to include billions of key turnings, creates an agential force of huge environmental destruction. This gap between the given appearance of things, events or objects and their legacies and afterlives means that Storiation becomes a more important way of knowing – through effects – than a positivist approach which understands objects purely at the level of the ontically given (Morton, 2016b; Farrier and Dickenson, 2020).

What we want to stress in this book is just how prominently the island – as a figure of relational entanglements in the Anthropocene – features for these contemporary approaches.¹ Farrier’s *Anthropocene Poetics* (2019), for example, critiques the modern utopian tech of Singapore island’s famous ‘Supertrees’; a combination of giant solar panels and vents for heat generated from the city’s waste biomass:

Different expressions of human-inflicted deep time flow through the scene: in the panoply of products entombed in the containers, in the patina of carbon residue from the forest fires in neighbouring Borneo that might find its way into an ice core thousands of miles away, or in the soundless crashing of tropical diversity. The skies are clear, but in recent years, for much of June through

October, the island has been enveloped in a thick smog blown in from illegal and uncontrolled fires, used to clear Indonesian rain forests and make way for giant palm oil plantations. The Garden City is a node in a vast network of extraction and consumption, linked to countless shadow places across the planet ... (Farrier, 2019: 126)

For Farrier (2019: 125–126), standing in the artificial canopy of the island’s Supertrees is not a celebration of modernity, but is ‘an encounter with a rather different kind of Anthropocentric moment ... It is a moment thickened by the collision of countless species’ flight ways and intra-acting “stories of matter”. Farrier focuses upon what we could call ‘the thickness of the now’ on the island, where the island registers countless material traces and hauntings of the past and protentions of a possible future. Farrier’s work switches the register of attention away from concepts of graspable inter-relations, which could be coherently registered or read (as in Correlational logics), towards the interplay of material hauntings and traces of ongoing effects.² What is needed is a ‘defracted poetics’ which holds together the traces, hauntings and afterlives of the relational ‘entanglements’ of the Anthropocene (Farrier and Dickenson, 2020).

The onto-epistemological approach of Storiation we find is particularly well expressed in Barad’s (2019) work on the Marshall Islands, where island life is storiated via the effects of the atom bomb in ‘quantum’ ways. As in the work of Wolfe (2017) and Farrier (2020), for Barad, the island is a key figure for registering differences and relations of becoming; the traces of relations that destabilise a linear understanding of past and present. Barad (2019: 540) focuses upon the ostensible ‘void’ of the concrete insulating shield installed by the US military, in an attempt to contain and control nuclear contamination on the islands. But, for Barad (2019: 540–541), there is no ‘away’ in the Anthropocene and this concrete slab is:

A tomb inhabited by ghosts, material traces of the violence of colonial hospitality. The void as archive: the structured nothingness

that is far from empty or de-void of meaning. This covering over, this attempt to dress up the naked infinities of the layering of violence upon violence, the incalculable brutality of superpositions of nuclear and climate catastrophes, the effects of militarism, colonialism, nationalism, scientism, modernism, racism, and capitalism, speaks to the specific structures of nothingness in their entanglement; in this case, a void within a 'void' at the 'end of the Earth' (in space) that signals the 'end of the Earth' (in time).

The island itself is an archive for speculatively storying the quantum nature of the world and the material traces of relations. Working with the already widely heralded relational affordances of islands in this way tells us that '*hauntings are material ... hauntings are the ontological re-memberings*' (emphasis in original), and that what 'the world calls out for is an embodied practice of tracing the entanglements of violent histories' (Barad, 2019: 539). Central here is also Barad's attention to the artifice of modernist constructions of space-time as a container for the causal interaction of already existing entities.³ For this reason, she stresses the importance of *intra-*, rather than *inter-*activity for the generation of alternative ethico-onto-epistemological accounts and understandings.

*Intra-*action clarifies that the cuts and separations between subject and world, the distinctions between entities and those separating the past, present and future are products of the human or subject-centred modernist episteme, rather than their pre-existing relation. When Barad talks of justice or responsibility to what she speculatively stories about islands, the key point she makes is that it is impossible to separate the materiality of islands themselves from the human subjects speculating upon them. Storiatio is a process of infinite depth and possibility, in which the quantum level holds, suspends and pre-exists the cuts and separations imagined by a modernist epistemology of fixed grids of time and space.⁴ Thus, approaches of Storiatio engage islands to disrupt or put a break on those who would seek to more coherently grasp or know a world imagined to be framed in separated and segmented grids of time and space.

Key to the knowing of the disruptive onto-epistemology of Storiation then is that there is much less emphasis on temporal lines of ‘progress’ or increasing individuation and complexity. Approaches to Storiation invoke this particular interest in and imaginary of islands as key sites for understanding relational entanglements. In Storiation, everything is always already here in quantum superpositionality – meaning that Storiation works as a ‘hold’ in two ways. Firstly, as a way of holding or keeping together aspects that are separated or cut in order to be brought into or actualised for a modernist episteme. Secondly, Storiation works as a hold or a barrier to the modernist demands that everything should be revealed, so that it can be ‘known’ in accessible or instrumentalisable ways that can then be generalised or scaled up. Islands thereby are imagined speculatively and worked with to produce more ‘chaosmotic’, less systematising and ordering approaches. A question which might arise at this point is why disruption is seen positively, rather than merely as a destructive or negative force, in the analytics of Storiation? The response is that we need disruption. If humanity is responsible for the ‘death work’ of the Anthropocene – the forces of nuclear fallout, global warming, rising sea levels, the ongoing legacies of colonialism, and other transforming conditions – then we need to somehow grasp what it means to be an entangled being.

Morton’s *Dark Ecology* (2016b) develops an approach we would also frame through the analytic of Storiation. To see our relationally entangled being – the starting point for ecological thought, for Morton – we need to step outside the problem-solving universalist ‘one world’ mind-set which is so essential to modern frameworks of reasoning. Morton (2016b) explains that, as individuals, we appear in many ways; as parts of associations, families, professions, states etc., including as part of a species with species-effects. None of these manifestations is under our control – even our appearance to ourselves or to friends or lovers: every manifestation is entangled within many other networks of interconnection with emergent effects, yet we contribute, intentionally and unintentionally, to all of them.

Whilst this can appear rather abstract when discussed in this way, as we have seen, such approaches are given particular purchase through how the figure of the island is put to ‘work’ to ground the development of Storiation as an onto-epistemology or way of knowing in the Anthropocene (Morton, 2016a). Here global warming is understood to unfold through vast spatial and temporal forces – from the more immediate and intensified violence of hurricanes on a small island, to large-scale sea level rises, complex changes in atmospheric conditions, and the hundred thousand years or so it takes for increased levels of carbon to dissolve in the surrounding oceans. Yet, at the same time, all islands in the world already exist *within* global warming, there is no isolated island, just over there, beyond the horizon (Morton, 2016a). Global warming is thus what Morton calls a ‘hyperobject’: both intimately close and infinitely withdrawn, in that we cannot literally see it beyond its presence via its effects. If we can understand islands as part of such strange and shifting manifestations or appearances, all partially ‘looped’ or interconnected, and operating across infinite scales of time and space, then, for Morton (2016a), we can begin to see what it might mean to think and work in ecological rather than modernist ways.

Leading Anthropocene scholars like Wolfe, Farrier, Barad and Morton regularly turn to islands as significant figures for helping us work through the central problematic of relational entanglements in the Anthropocene. Morton’s (2016a) island essay *Molten Entities* begins to do this by drawing upon the work of the widely acclaimed Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson, who displayed a large block of ice from Greenland at the Paris Climate Change Conference (COP21). Using this work, called *Ice Watch*:

Eliasson was hoping to show how the ice invites us humans into something like a dialogue or dance. The ice is not simply an unformatted surface waiting for us humans to make it significant. The molten edges of the ice block, displaced in a Paris square, become a way to think about how beings are *intrinsically in motion* because they are intrinsically melting, fragile. (Morton, 2016a: 71, emphasis added)

For Morton (2016a: 71), Eliasson's high-profile artwork reveals how we can approach the 'ambiguous edges' of entities in the Anthropocene, rather than assuming entities as neat and self-contained essences prior to relations in spatially extended assemblages and networks. As Morton says, whilst the 'idea that "No man is an island" is obviously very popular right now as a progressive concept' (2016a: 71), '*Relating* isn't some wondering way to fasten islands into chains to make them more exciting. *Relating* is how a thing is, all by itself' (2016a: 73, emphasis in original). For Morton, working with islands is an invitation to think differently, to see entities as infinitely relational, 'all the way down':

If you look at the coastline of an island from space, you will see something fairly regular – perhaps it's rather triangular. When you look close up, say from a hang glider, you will see all kinds of curves and folds that you didn't see from space. And when you crawl around the surface of the coastline as an ant about three millimeters long, you will find something very different again – not just impressionistically different, but extensionally different: the circumference will be a different length. Indeed there may be circumstances – ways of measuring that island – that cause its circumference to be infinite. This is rather like what happens when you examine something like a Koch Curve, the fractal shape in which triangles are populated with smaller versions of themselves to infinity. One ends up with a shape that is bounded yet infinite. The Koch Curve is strangely 'more than itself' at every point. An island is a cornucopia, or TARDIS, that contains more of itself on the 'inside' than it appears to have on the outside. This is because they always exceed how they appear, even to themselves. They melt out of themselves, without moving *in* space or time and without being pushed by anything. (Morton, 2016a: 71–73, emphasis in original)

Morton thus switches the register of island imaginaries by way of Storiation to speculate beyond the *impassable rift* which opens up between island relations in their ontological reality and the capacity of humans to register this totality.⁵ Of course, there has been a much longer history in which islands have often been thought of as sacred spaces for speculation; the difference being that,

for Anthropocene scholars like Morton, ‘*sacre*’ (Gillis, 2004: 26, emphasis in original) now does not mean a place that is separate or apart. Contemporary debates are not about isolated and insular islands that people can escape to, away from the overwhelming busy-ness of the world; they are precisely the opposite. Islands, as sites of relational entanglements, can develop our awareness that we exist within vast multidimensional forces, such as global warming, which ‘means to approach, then diminish, from a certain fullness’ whose total reality is fundamentally inaccessible to humans (Morton, 2013: 74).

If reality is withdrawn and we only perceive signs, signals or effects, never reality itself, then this can appear to make Storiatio similar to Correlation, except that, for Storiatio approaches, the signs are not indicators of fixed or stable relations and therefore open up, rather than close down, *speculative* possibilities.⁶ This point is crucial for drawing out the analytical distinctions between Correlation and Storiatio. For Correlational onto-epistemologies, signs require stable assemblages of other actants to maintain them. As examined in the last chapter, it is these regularities which enable Anthropocene thinking to work with island life as an important way of registering underlying planetary changes. This is not the point for Storiatio approaches. As Morton argues, every ant sees differently, every hang-glider and every grain of sand on the beach of an island is individual. For Storiatio approaches then, Correlational insights turn out to be just as reductionist and essentialising as linear causal imaginaries.⁷ Thus, Storiatio approaches that work with the evolution of island life instead turn their attention to:

the spectral presence of evolutionary time inside the bodies of organisms. Every new species inherits parts of its body plan from earlier organisms. For those who want to admire the diversity of life, the trick is not to imagine this inheritance as teleological progress, the climbing of a ladder toward the sun. Instead, we might appreciate the ghostly presence of ancestors inside us, which makes it possible for us to do whatever we do. (Tsing et al, 2017: G65; Hejnlol, 2017)⁸

Evolution on islands appears not as a teleology of increasingly complex inter-relational efficiencies which can be coherently read or registered (as in Correlation), but rather as a carnival of open-ended potential.⁹ Hauntings, traces and afterlives reverberate in ways which open out to multiple and simultaneous becomings.¹⁰ Storiation is closely linked to the ‘ontological turn’ in disciplines such as anthropology, where the focus is taking ways of knowing beyond human subject-centred approaches (Holbraad and Pedersen, 2017). Thus approaches of Storiation, involving ‘speculation’ and ‘speculative bricolage’, often draw upon the experience of being within distinct ‘islands’ or related ecosystems, widely held to facilitate such understandings.¹¹ As Andrew Mathews (2017: G145) says about the forest ecosystems he explores in Monti Pisani, Italy:

Through my practices of walking, looking and wondering, I have been tracing the ghostly forms that have emerged from past encounters between people, plants, animals, and soils. The ghostly forms are traces of past cultivation, but they also provide ways of imagining and perhaps bringing into being positive environmental futures.

In the Storiation approaches with islands of Farrier, Wolfe, Barad, Morton, the examples we have placed in the notes of this chapter, and here, Mathews, we have a way of approaching the Anthropocene which is not about:

describing the relations between pre-given entities but rather of attending to the multiple forms that emerge from partial relations between different plants, animals, and people. [For example, a] chestnut is not one thing: it can be a gnarled ancient tree that is in a set of partial relations with goats, people, sheep, and terraces; a chestnut can also be a dense forest of pole-sized stems of ‘wild’ coppice/*ceduo*, cut repeatedly to produce firewood for local household consumption or perhaps to produce woodchips for biomass energy plants that produce electricity. New diseases may change social relations, but these diseases may themselves change, as in the transformation of chestnut cancer into its hypo-

virulent form ... Paying close attention to the ghostly forms of past histories in present-day forests allows us to consider the many forms of political and economic life that these forests are or might be connected to, including imagining multiple possible Anthropocene futures. The texture and form of our material surroundings are full of speculative politics and causal accounts ... (Mathews, 2017: G153–154)¹²

In such scenes, which speculate upon simultaneous and multiple becomings and ghostly presences, the language of ‘feedback effects’ fails to capture how, as Mathews points out, entities do not pre-exist feedback effects or communication but, in fact, constitute them. To think in terms of entities adapting to others via feedback, or to pose the problematic in terms of Bateson’s (2000) cybernetic framing of ‘organism plus environment’, would fail to fully grasp Storiatic as a speculative approach. For Storiatic, the materiality of the world is the starting point for thinking differently about the traces, afterlives, ongoing effects and legacies of modernity in ‘weird’ (Morton), ‘quantum’ (Barad) and/or ‘haunting’ and ‘ghostly’ (Farrier and Mathews) ways.

Storiatings: Holding the World Together

‘Storiatic’ is a particular way of approaching the Anthropocene as a problematic which focuses upon how legacies, hauntings and ongoing effects enable the materiality of the world to open possibilities for thought. In many older, particularly European, storytelling traditions, when someone ‘tells a story’ they are the storytelling subject *applying* their interpretation of the world, and often drawing out a moral lesson from an object or event. Storiatic seeks to do something quite different: to speculatively enable the world to ‘speak’ or narrate stories. However, Storiatic is much more than a shift in subject position. The speculative products of Storiatic seek to hold more of the world together, making the world more real, less segmented, cut and divided.

Here the island, both as a significant figure of relational entanglements in the Anthropocene and as liminal space or ‘outside’ of modernity, plays a particularly important and generative role for the development of Storiation approaches. This can be seen particularly effectively in Barad’s attention to the quantum as a speculative realm holding together on islands what modernist epistemologies actualise by cutting and separating. Subjects and objects, and time and space are products of these cuts: they do not pre-exist them. Thus, Storiation draws attention to the violence of modernist epistemic knowledge and is thereby ‘(re)Storiative’, holding together that which modernity seeks to cut and separate, disrupting assumptions of segmented time and space.

Elizabeth DeLoughrey’s (2019) book, *Allegories of the Anthropocene*, foregrounds feminist approaches operating within the Storiation analytic to emphasise the material experience of island existence. Thus, DeLoughrey is concerned with redressing the violence of the modern episteme through her focus upon (re)Storiation by holding, or ‘telescoping’ (DeLoughrey, 2019: 2) together, that which modernity seeks to divide or to cut out.¹³ In developing her approach, DeLoughrey (2019, 192–192) is drawn to the work of Marshallese poet Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, who became ‘an international celebrity since her moving performance at the opening ceremony of the United Nations Climate Summit in New York in 2014’. Jetñil-Kijiner’s work is often held to exemplify islands as spaces that hold together forces of colonialism and climate change (see Faris, 2019; Perez, forthcoming). DeLoughrey examines how her poetry ‘employs allegory to figure the island as a world in ecological crisis, depicts an active, nonhuman ocean agent, and articulates the imperative to both witness and testify to a dynamic, changing Earth’ (DeLoughrey, 2019: 1). Thus, in the poem ‘Tell Them’ Jetñil-Kijiner says, ‘Tell them what it’s like/ to see the entire ocean_level_with the land’ (quoted in DeLoughrey, 2019: 1). As DeLoughrey (2019: 193) points out, here Jetñil-Kijiner’s work ‘does not employ an aerial, god’s-eye view of the tropical island’, one which segments time and space, in a modernist way. On the contrary, her poetry holds, or telescopes together, how the

violence of this god's-eye view is constitutive of the everyday, ordinariness of climate change for island life.

Elaborating the point, DeLoughrey (2019: 194) discusses how Jetñil-Kijiner offered the United States a gift in the form of hand-crafted jewels taken from the ocean and 'placed in hand-woven baskets, products of women's love and labor. Inside this basket is a message, which is an allegory for the poem that we are asked to pass on'. Here *iep jeltok*, in Marshallese culture, 'signifies a basket facing toward the speaker, foregrounding material and cultural exchange in a matrilineal society. The basket is also a major figure for Indigenous women's artistic labor and about weaving together connections and obligations across the Pacific' (DeLoughrey, 2019: 193). It is 'in keeping with Indigenous socialities in Oceania in which, as Marilyn Strathern and others have demonstrated, the center of the social network is not individual but relation itself' (DeLoughrey, 2019: 194). Thus, the act of offering the basket and the poem can be seen as a feminist, (re)Storiative act – it *holds together the disjuncture* between the god's-eye view of islands in the Anthropocene (dominated by the Western, White male) and the ordinary experience of climate change. Key to this act, for DeLoughrey, is how this disjuncture is not presented as separated from, but as constitutive of, everyday experiences of island life.

In *Planetary Social Thought: The Anthropocene Challenge to the Social Sciences*, Nigel Clark and Bronislaw Szerszynski (2021) similarly draw heavily upon the work of another island writer, Katerina Teaiwa (2011, 2012, 2015), concerned with the mineral phosphate mining which has devastated the Kiribati island of Banaba. For Clark and Szerszynski (2021: 146), these islands are 'paradigmatic of the "blast: dump: crush: extract: exhaust" modern mentality'. Clark and Szerszynski are particularly interested in how the ongoing traces, hauntings and legacies of this mining are registered, intra-relationally, in contemporary islanders' embodied movements and dances. Key to this, for Clark and Szerszynski (2021: 146), is how, 'like most other Pacific societies, human life is inseparable from land, just as land and sea often merge into one another'. It is this which opens up the possibilities for Storiation.

More specifically, for these islanders, ‘the concept of *te aba*, or land, in the Kiribati language spoken by both I-Kiribati and Banabans unites the body of the land with the bodies of the people’ (Teaiwa quoted in Clark and Szerszynski, 2021: 146).

As Teaiwa says, ‘[t]he body of the people is in that landscape so when it’s mined and crushed and dug up, you’re not just doing it with rock, you’re also doing it with people, with the remains of people’ (Teaiwa quoted in Theobald, 2018, and in Clark and Szerszynski, 2021: 146). For Clark and Szerszynski, this provides us with a powerful way of ‘knowing’ the Anthropocene – what we call Storiation – where the ongoing legacies and traces of modernity and colonialism are registered, intra-relationally, in these islanders’ embodied movements, dances and performances. These dances are not stories ‘about’ islander life; they ‘Storiate’ through their embodied and bodily movements. As Clark and Szerszynski (2021: 164–165, emphasis in original) point out:

Thinking, writing, speculating *through* the Earth, however, does not come easy to those of us who fledged in worlds that were constituted with the very aim of raising the subject high above any merely material threat to its continued flourishing. It is in this sense that the proliferating earth-beings, telluric spirits and animate objects of Indigenous worlds offer incitements to western thinkers: not just through their demonstration that other ways of composing realities are equally feasible, but because they offer practical lessons in enduring or thriving in the thick of life-threatening threshold events.

In the analytic of Storiation, islands and islanders are holding or amplifying sites which foreground the violent work of the modernist episteme; but are also (re)Storiative of new possibilities, holding together that which modernity seeks to cut out and disavow. Thus, for authors such as Mimi Sheller (2020), Emanuela Borgnino (2020) and Tamara Searle (2019), the (re)Storiation of island life in the Anthropocene not only requires rejecting modern ways of ‘grasping’ the world, and linear imaginaries of progress and development, it also requires opening up understandings of

islands to more speculative possibilities when routed through islanders' own belief systems and practices. Emanuela Borgnino (2020) charts her Storiation of the ongoing legacies of colonialism and environmental degradation on O'ahu, Hawai'i, through Indigenous understandings of land (*'āina*), and Tamara Searle (2020), on Suomenlinna (Finland), through the Saami peoples' folk beliefs relating to land and spirit. In *Island Futures: Caribbean Survival in the Anthropocene*, Sheller (2020) charts her Storiation of Haiti and Haitian life in the Anthropocene by engaging Vodou loa and songs, shamanistic and African-rooted traditions where spirits come into people's bodies, through such practices as dance, music and trance.

As Sheller (2020: 146) says, '[o]utside the genres of academic social science, beyond the conventions of individualistic thinking and linear narrative, without the closure of monotheistic biblical time horizons where redemption await us, the Vodou loa interrupt the scene of human hubris.' They 'remind us that there are indeed other ways of affectively registering the ongoing disaster of human existence' (Sheller, 2020: 146). But to be clear, for the analytic of Storiation, and in the work of Sheller, this is not about generating stories 'about' island life, in the modern sense of the storyteller noted above. Rather, islander life itself, and islander practices, become the mode, force, or pathway of Storiation; which holds or telescopes together that which modernity seeks to cut out, separate and disavow. Thus, Sheller draws upon Kamau Brathwaite's notion of 'psychic marronage', in which Caribbean people maintain alternative patterns, symbols and practices, including 'modes of walking, eating, working, interrelating, musical, artistic, and other [cultural] practices' (Brathwaite, quoted in Sheller, 2020: 152). Islander life and ways of being become key sites of alternative, speculative possibilities and ways of knowing in the Anthropocene.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Kamau Brathwaite has been particularly influential for those working within this analytic (Sharpe, 2016; Hessler, 2018; King, 2019). When Brathwaite (1999: 34, emphasis in original) informs us about the Caribbean woman sweeping the sand on the beach, he understands that colonialism

is ‘held’ in her embodied actions – in ‘*our nanna’s action, like the movement of the ocean she’s walking on, coming from one continent/continuum, touching another, and then receding (“reading”) from the island(s) into the perhaps creative chaos of the(ir) future...*’. What is at stake in Brathwaite’s Storiation then is the working through of intra-, rather than inter-, relations; colonialism and the island condition register *as* her embodied movements as she sweeps. Brathwaite (1999: 34, emphasis in original) famously employs the term ‘*tidalectic*’ to describe this islander psyche which is a product of colonialism and the island condition. He goes to great lengths to distinguish tidalectics from European frameworks which always centre the human subject as storyteller. Thus, Brathwaite’s is not a story about an islander; it is a Storiation which explicitly seeks to work with and think from her islander life and embodied movements themselves; how

[the] ‘meaning’ of the Caribbean was in that humble repetitive ritual action which this peasant woman was performing. And she was always on this journey, walking on the steps of sunlit water, coming out of a continent which we didn’t fully know how to understand, to a set of islands which we only now barely coming to respect, cherish and understand. (1999: 33–34)

Braithwaite’s approach helps us to think through the onto-epistemology of Storiation, an analytic which we read as important for many writers in contemporary Black Studies. These include Christina Sharpe (2019), whose work focuses upon Black lives, lived in the wake of colonialism, ‘holding’ together ‘histories and presents’. Sharpe’s (2016) highly influential book, *In the Wake*, engages Brathwaite as a key figure for registering the hauntings, traces and legacies of colonialism *intra- relationally*. Sharpe (2016: 34) quotes Brathwaite’s *Dream Haiti* about contemporary Haitian refugees at sea: ‘The sea was like slake gray of what was left of my body and the white waves ... I remember’.¹⁴ For Sharpe (2016), as for DeLoughrey (2010: 708), Brathwaite’s material registration is a powerful depiction of ‘a collapse of the space and time separating the contemporary interdiction of Haitian refugees

at sea and the long history of patrolling African bodies in the Middle Passage.’

The past is not over, as in the linear temporalities of modernity, but is constitutive of the islander present; registered, intra- relationally, *as* the Black bodies of the Haitian refugees.¹⁵ For Sharpe, we must reject modern frameworks of reasoning as a way of understanding, or grasping, these bodies. They should instead be registered, or known, onto-epistemologically, as holding spaces of speculative possibilities. Sharpe (2016: 76) is explicit on the matter. Her understanding is that for Brathwaite, as for the more recent work of Fred Moten (2003), the inability to register Black bodies by way of modern frameworks of reasoning ‘is testament to the fact that objects can and do resist’ and ‘blackness – the extended movement of a specific upheaval, an ongoing irruption that anarranges every line – is a strain that pressures the assumption of the equivalence of personhood and subjectivity’ (Moten, 2003: 1; quoted in Sharpe, 2016: 76). This is highlighted in Brathwaite’s poem *Dream Haiti*, where ‘a Coast Guard cutter becomes, in Brathwaite’s hands, a Coast guard gutter – not a rescue or a medical ship but a carrier of coffins, a coffle, and so on. As the meaning of words fall apart, we encounter again and again the difficulty of sticking the signification. *This is Black being in the wake*’ (Sharpe, 2016: 77, our emphasis). For Sharpe, the Black islander’s body is not only a powerful disruptor of modern reasoning, it is also a ‘holding’ space of new speculative possibilities.¹⁶

The work of Moten in critical Black Studies, just noted, is also heavily influenced by Caribbean island writers, and here Jackie Wang (2020) has astutely drawn attention to ‘Moten’s Seaborne Sociality’: ‘a para-ontological mode of being that is literally connected to and produced by the ocean’, where, in the Middle Passage, ‘the sea is that which unsettles being’ (Wang, 2020). Blackness is thus ‘figured as a passage that marks ontological rupture’, and ‘is oceanic insofar as it is not fixed to that particular land base but unsettles the notion of home and is marked by dislocation’ (Wang, 2020). Blackness then, ‘is an uncoded zone of being... a condition of possibility for the creation of ... undercommon sociality’

(Wang, 2020). The sea and the middle passage are ‘used to theorize the fluidity of blackness’ – an experience that ‘exhausts description’ and ‘deconstructs notions of the subject as bounded’ (Wang, 2020). Whereas the onto-epistemology of Correlation, discussed in the last chapter, suborns or subordinates knowing to sensing and registering regular patterns of inter-relation, Storiation is by contrast more liberating; not in the sense of radical or revolutionary political practice, but in the sense of exploring and speculating upon the reality that we are already in: ‘I believe in the world and want to be in it. I want to be in it all the way to the end of it because I believe in another world in the world and I want to be in *that*’ (Harney and Moten, 2013: 118, emphasis in original).

Storiation is affirmative work in the world we are in already; rejecting modern frameworks of reasoning and speculating upon the embodied intra-relational movements that are to hand. For Harney and Moten (2013: 130), this is ‘prophetic’ work but only in the sense that it is about ‘enriching being’ rather than ‘flattening’ it. Storiation approaches provide a relation of depth, of immersion into the world: ‘it’s just a way to think about the already-existing enrichment of being, the already-social quality of time and space’ (Harney and Moten, 2013: 130). This makes the world more ‘generative’, more real and more strange and unstable, than the flattened, or abstract, lifeless world of a modernist or universalist ontology, or that of Correlational onto-epistemologies. Thus, the onto-epistemology of Storiation is about revealing another world in the world, one which is much more obviously unmoored from or ungrounded in modernist frameworks of reasoning.

Another example of how the approach of Storiation could be illustrated is Tiffany Lethabo King’s (2019) *The Black Shoals*. King’s concept of the ‘shoal’, as in Brathwaite’s ‘tidalectics’, is ‘simultaneously water and land’ (2019: 28); which, when contrasted with modernist continental/oceanic divides, ‘presents a site of conceptual difficulty’ (King, 2019: 28). The ‘shoal represents a process, formation, and space that exists beyond binary thinking’ (King, 2019: 28) by registering the intra-relational praxes of Black and Indigenous peoples living on in the wake of slavery and the

legacies of colonialism. King (2019: 28–29) provides many illustrative examples, such as:

where Black and Indigenous speech and grammar share the same tongue; where Black and Indigenous resistance disrupt the master codes and cartographic representation of Man on an eighteenth-century map; where Black porous bodies tell histories of Black and Indigenous survival in ‘uninhabitable zones,’ where Black and Indigenous erotics force an unmooring of the self; and where decolonial aesthetic practices sculpt new epistemologies and sensibilities that shape the contours of humanness in more expansive ways. The shoal offers an analytical site where multiple things can be perceived and experienced simultaneously.

At the heart of King’s (2019: 207) conceptual framework of the ‘shoal’ is how modern, mainland, continental thinking does not enable the Storiating of Black or Indigenous resistances: ‘Rarely does land evoke the kind of flexibility, elusiveness and trickster-like qualities that Black diasporic life symbolizes in the Western hemisphere.’ Thus, it is by turning to other strands of scholarship, such as Brathwaite’s island poetry, holding together land and water simultaneously, that we are able to ‘think about dynamic, fluid, and ever moving Black diasporic subjectivity’ (King, 2019: 207). For King, it is Brathwaite’s focus upon embodied, intra-relational becoming which is absolutely central here. In turn, like Sharpe, King argues that we should not seek to grasp or tell stories *about* Black bodies, but rather speculate *from* their embodied movements. This is key to enabling us to more effectively register the legacies, traces and hauntings of colonialism, and to therefore:

challenge forms of what I am calling ‘applied intersectional frames’ that attempt to discover, connect, or wrangle together experiences and power dynamics that are conceived as emerging independently of one another. The conceptual tools of ‘discovery’ assume a binary that must be overcome or discrete phenomenon that must be connected in ways that occlude their co-constitution or oneness. Part of the methodological contribution of *The*

Black Shoals is its attunement to and disruption of the binaries and chasms that are overrepresented as an epistemological truth. (King, 2019: 28, emphasis in original)

The Black Shoals is a good illustration of Storiation as a speculative approach. There is no reading of correlations to see entities and forces which can be appropriated in modernist, subject-centered frameworks of understanding. The focus is upon drawing out multiple ways of knowing what is, and, like others noted above, King (2019: 29) explicitly employs ‘critical fabulation’ and ‘speculative bricolage’ in order to effectively hold together the traces, hauntings, ghosts and afterlives which enable us to see more and differently in the present; to include entities and relations which would not be noticeable if we constrained ourselves to reductive, modern, linear epistemological frames of space and time. Thus, King (2019: 30) develops her approach:

By assembling, shoaling, and rubbing disparate texts against one another, unexpected openings emerge where different voices are brought into relationship. As new relationships among texts and voices are made, new and ‘transgressive ground[s] of understanding’ emerge where one can begin to notice where rupture and ‘momentary dislodgings’ reveal that the archive is not a closed system that contains only one story.¹⁷

The Black Shoals has been influential for the development of island studies in the Anthropocene. Rebecca Schneider (2020: 201), for example, draws upon King’s method in order to (re)Storiate, speculate and undertake a critical ‘fabulation’ of the 1803 ‘Igbo Landing’ on St. Simons Island, Georgia, ‘in which a group of enslaved Africans mutinied against their captors and ran aground upon a shoal.’ Following King, Schneider (2020: 201) ‘explores not only the littoral fact of shoals in seafaring but also the concept of shoaling for troubling historical narratives oriented to settler colonial plot points.’ As a performative piece of writing, Schneider’s (2020: 201) work ‘shoals together’ such considerations as accounts of sand, drift and ‘accounts of Africans who fly’ associated with

this event. This not only works to disrupt modern frameworks of reasoning, a linear telos and the temporalities of colonial progress, but approaches the island and ‘Igbo Landing’ as a holding space for (re)Storiation and the generation of speculation possibilities. Thus, Schneider (2020: 201) does not draw out a singular argument or tell a story ‘about’ the island, but rather explores, shoals and rubs together ‘the littoral zones among and between ideas, stories, arguments, facts, and fabulations in relation.’¹⁸

Although the empirical focus of King and Schneider’s work is different to that discussed earlier, of Mathews (islands of forest ecosystems), Barad (nuclear fallout on islands), Morton (developing ecological awareness from thinking with islands) and Farrier (the reverberation of the human footprint on an island across space and time), what they share is a central analytical interest in *speculative* approaches which emphasise that thought can move beyond the limits and constraints of modernist forms of representation. Thinking with islands, islanders and/or certain island writers, becomes a very important way of drawing out these concerns and developing these particular approaches. The reason for this is that islands, islanders and the writings of island scholars like Brathwaite, Teaiwa and Jetñil-Kijiner, discussed above, foreground the liminal ‘outside’ of modernity; which is today being repositioned as central for moving beyond the limitations of modernist understandings of ontology and epistemology.

These Anthropocene approaches seek to make the world more alive and real to us by holding and including ongoing effects and legacies, traces and hauntings inaccessible to modern thought. What was excluded from modern mainland thinking – consigned to the past or excluded from linear and reductionist causal relations – is included and brought close and present in Anthropocene thinking. For many contemporary commentators examined in this chapter, the end of the modernist imaginary means that we need to reorient our empirical focus towards a much richer reality. To illustrate this, geographical forms such as islands, and the works of many island scholars, appear readily available for working in speculative ways. If modernity is to be rejected then, the

argument goes, we must adopt other, more sophisticated, speculative methodologies approaches, foregrounding other ways of generating knowledge.

Storiation Without the Subject

The main contention of this book is that Anthropocene thinking frequently draws upon particular island imaginaries, island scholars, poets, artists and activists to engage the key problematic of relational entanglements, awareness and/or feedbacks, and for the stimulation or understanding of different ways of being and knowing. The continuums we have heuristically presented emphasise the development of relational or immanent approaches to ontology (Resilience and Patchworks), and onto-epistemological approaches to the production of thought and meaning (Correlation and Storiation). These illustrate a trend of thought which moves ontological and epistemological approaches increasingly further from modernist assumptions.

Perhaps this is most obvious in the analytic of Storiation, where the modernist distinctions, cuts and binaries which reductively grasped island life are erased in the work of Anthropocene thinking, and islands become worlds ‘in-difference’. By this we mean, as we have said above, that islands become figures whose relationalities are too vibrant to be cut into, or grasped, by modern forms of representation – such as regular relations or coherent boundaries (Teaiwa, 2011; Morton, 2016a; Mathews, 2017; Sharpe, 2016; Barad, 2019; King, 2019; Clark and Szerszynski, 2021; Perez, 2020a). As Burgos Martinez (2020; forthcoming) further reflects on the example of ‘small’ Indonesian islands ‘how can one even begin to understand the convergence of many natures ... when “the island” becomes a place needing to be translated ... ?’ This point, which earlier island scholars such as Glissant (1997) have made – that island life is too rich, too vibrant, to be grasped by modern frameworks of reasoning – has become productive for more contemporary debates in the Anthropocene as islands are increasingly understood as a world of potentialities, yet to be fully realised

or actualised. Our argument is that work with islands, islanders, certain strands of island scholarship, poetry, art and activism does some of the most important work for the development of these debates, and for the analytic of Storiatio; not only in the influential scholarship of Karen Barad, Timothy Morton and David Farrier, but also in the work of critical Black Studies scholars, such as that of Christina Sharpe and Tiffany Lethabo King.

Perhaps it is in the field of anthropology that speculative approaches have been pushed furthest. Working on the basis of the 'conceptual affordances present in a body of ethnographic materials', Holbraad and Pedersen (2017: 294) argue that speculative analytics 'imply a peculiarly non- or anti-normative stance'. Rather than a means to externally defined political ends, Holbraad and Pedersen (2017: 295) claim that this approach is 'a political end in its own right'. This is because speculative approaches of Storiatio attempt to bring the world to life on its own terms and are 'oriented towards the production of difference, or "alterity", as such' (Holbraad and Pedersen, 2017: 296). They (2017: 211) state that instead of starting from the desire to know or to represent 'things': 'Rather, the strategy must be one that is capable of effectively *de-theorising* the thing, by emptying it out of its many analytical connotations, rendering it a purely ethnographic "form" ready to be filled out contingently, according to its own ethnographic exigencies.' This 'is the prime step towards allowing things to dictate their own terms of analytical engagement' (Holbraad and Pedersen, 2017: 211). Allowing the thing or entity to speak, while minimising the role of the human interpretant is thereby an ethico-political goal in itself.

This reworks the anti-mainland or continental mantra of island studies: 'islands speaking on their own terms' (McCall, 1994; Walcott, 1998; Baldacchino, 2008; Depraetere, 2008). Rather than reducing (island) life via abstraction, Storiatio aims to render life in richer, *more concrete* (Holbraad and Pedersen, 2017: 235), ways through speculating upon how things or artefacts 'analyse themselves', inviting new trains of thought (Holbraad and Pedersen, 2017: 234). Here, Storiatio as onto-epistemology without

a representational subject begins to turn islands and island practices into a world that cannot be an object. If the goal of speculative work is to remove the knowing and meaning-making subject – to use the appearances of the world to decentre the human – then the logical conclusion is that island experiences should imagine the subject with/in-difference. The subject in the world without cuts, binaries and distinctions. The subject in the world without appropriating objects to then be placed in grids of time and space.

The ‘return’ of the human to the world in this way would speculatively produce in-difference – neither a new telos of problem-solving awareness of how to manage and direct the world differently, nor a narcissistic feeling of being at one with the world of relational care and enablement. Claire Colebrook (2019: 175) writes:

Rather than think of distinct essences and fixed beings, we now acknowledge that nothing is an island; we – and the things around us – become what they are through encounters, with encounters and relations generating an openness, fluidity and dynamism of life and the world ... [But this can lead to a] moralism that is embedded in a complex metaphysical, aesthetic and theological history that privileges becoming and relations over the horror of something that simply is, bearing no relation to anything.

Colebrook (forthcoming) powerfully articulates the island withdrawn from the world of meaning; the island with/in-difference. If Storiation approaches seek to speculatively leave the subject behind, giving ‘what is’ or alterity its due, and recognising that the world cannot be reduced via modernist forms of abstraction and representation, then Storiation has to work to keep everything together without cuts, without re-presentation. What would it mean to understand an island, or indeed an islander, as in-different, completely withdrawn and not available for ‘us’ in this way? Whilst this goes further than many of the approaches examined so far, this is the question we focus upon in the conclusion of this chapter because it represents a logical end-point to Storiation as a speculative analytics that seeks to give onto-epistemological priority

to matter/ing rather than to the thinking subject. The end point for an ethico-political duty of care, which pays attention to the world rather than starting from the needs, interests and desires of the subject.

We suggest that Glissant (1997), the pre-eminent relational island thinker, was already aware of this ‘island’ power for speculative thought. Indeed, he articulates this power precisely as the (logical) conclusion of the *Poetics of Relation*. Early in the book he draws our attention to the indifferent and withdrawn islander, who he meets in the form of a solitary man on the ‘Black Beach’:

This is where I first saw a ghostly young man go by; his tireless wandering traced a frontier between land and water as invisible as floodtide at night. I’m not sure what he was called, because he no longer answered to any given name ... He refused to speak and no longer admitted the possibility of language ... (Glissant, 1997: 122)

Glissant (1997: 122) says that ‘[i]t doesn’t feel right to have to represent someone so rigorously adrift, so I won’t try to describe him.’ But even so, Glissant does, and he reads the man’s physical gestures (without any accompanying words) as saying the following:

‘I understand what you are attempting to undertake. You are trying to find out why I walk like this – not-here. I accept your trying. But look around and see if it’s worth explaining. Are you, yourself, worth my explaining this to you? So, let’s leave it at that. We have gone as far as we can together.’ I was inordinately proud to have gotten this answer (Glissant, 1997: 123)

For Glissant, this withdrawness is a response to what he calls the Chaos of the opening up of Relation on a global scale, and the associated forces of capitalism, colonialism and other forms of oppression manifest on the Caribbean islands. It is also his response to the generosity of those who seek to save islanders, or approach them with a duty of care in their relational entanglements. Indeed,

the book returns to this man – walking the beach, in his opacity and withdrawn attitude – to provide its closing lesson:

... his withdrawal [is] absolute As for those who follow him, if we can put it that way, (but we do know the rhythm of his passages; we are able to anticipate them), we are beginning to accept the fact that he is more resistant than we and more lasting than our endless palaver. No one could be content with this enclosed errantry, this circular nomadism – but one with no goal or end or recommencing. (Glissant, 1997: 208)

In the world of modernity, dominated by the oppressive and extractive forces of coloniality, we could perhaps read two paths of critique and resistance: one, the radical alternative telos of a newer or better form of caring modernity; the other, a much more ‘minor’, radical and thorough-going rejection of the imaginary of modernity itself. It is from these roots, highly productive of Caribbean subjectivities among others, that approaches of Storiation derive much of their power today. This resistance is the refusal to be captured or represented: Glissant’s islander is read as defiant of power, disruptive of claims to knowledge, and resistant precisely because of this power of withdrawal.¹⁹

Conclusion

In our examination of the onto-epistemology of Storiation we have considered a number of approaches, drawn from working with islands, in speculative materialist and quantum ways, seeking to escape the modernist episteme by giving islands and islanders the power to trump the constraints and limitations of modernist thought. Here, ‘becoming island’ implies an openness to being influenced by the world rather than imposing the imaginaries of modernist-centred knowledge and control. Islands, as we have highlighted throughout this book, can play this role, as an alternative pole of thought, because of their imagined exclusion from the homogenising control of mainland or modernist power. The limi-

nal positionality of the island, as part of the modernist world but at the same time seen as the preserve of non-modern relational dependencies, has enabled the island to become a significant figure for Anthropocene thought.

Our contemporary moment is very much shaped by struggle to escape from modernist constraints. This book has taken seriously the role of the island in providing the resources for work that seeks precisely this. Becoming island is not an aspiration for modernist political fighters or leaders with programmes and new agendas to impose: it is an opening to new experimental practices, ways of being and knowing that seek to 'hold' the world rather than climbing above it. This holding of the world is not a romantic gesturing, imagining the world as a harmonious and wonderful sublime; there can be no romanticising the Anthropocene. For Colebrook (2016: 124), the notion of what she calls the 'geological sublime' foregrounds how we can hold the world without recentring the subject:

The geological sublime is therefore the challenge of looking at the entire archive of the earth – including human script – as one might look at the marks left on buildings by the forces of weathering. How would we read ourselves if we were not to assume some ultimate readability or spirit beneath the materiality of text?

Storiation, as the key 'holding' analytic in our heuristic framing, seeks to 'de-theorise' the world; to start from the world rather than from the subject. It seeks to slow, to hold, thought within the world. This is a speculative practice of thinking through and with other entities rather than rushing to appropriate them. What would the world look like, how could it be known without the rush to reduce, to assimilate, to appropriate, to extract, to instrumentalise? How can we hold the world before making 'all too modern' cuts and distinctions? We have seen how Storiation as an onto-epistemological approach has attempted to do this in two ways. Firstly, in the refusal of modernist imaginaries of time and space, bringing what was considered 'past' or 'away' back to inform the present; to hold the occluded and excluded, the afterlives of the extractive and oppressive becoming of the Anthropocene itself.

Secondly, in the refusal of modernist cuts of thought and matter, of subject and object; to hold these together in tension through the speculative process of decentring the thinking subject.

Storiation thereby is a practice of working with the world after the end of modernity – and in this sense is no different in its stated aspirations than the analytics already discussed, of Resilience, Patchworks and Correlation. However, the stakes of what it means to work with the world are very different in each of these approaches. The question of what it means to think and work beyond modernist constraints is the overarching problematic of the Anthropocene. A problematic in which the figure of the island has played an important heuristic role, its liminal positionality enabling it to inspire and inform a wide range of work and experimentation in both thought and practice. However, to date, little serious work has been devoted to this question. As we have been clear throughout, we have not been concerned with stating how islands should be framed or understood, but rather with methodologically and analytically starting to draw out the work that islands enable across this growing and vital area of thought. We are interested in examining the question of how islands work and are (re)worked in Anthropocene thinking. We do not see our own heuristic framing as necessarily the only way of answering this question. On the contrary, as we turn to explore further in the final chapter, we hope this book might spark discussion about the development of a more expansive critical agenda for island studies in the Anthropocene.

Notes

- ¹ Contemporary art, for example, regularly engages islands as central figures for understanding how there is no ‘away’ in debates about the Anthropocene. For example, Laurent Gutierrez and Valérie Portefaix (2015: 225) record the artwork ‘Island is Land’ about the formation of a new island in the ocean ‘formed by tons of plastic garbage’, and as a way of registering the traces, hauntings and afterlives of mainland modernity. As we examine in this chapter (see also, Chandler and Pugh, forthcoming a), the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is perhaps the emblematic island figure, which demonstrates how, contra

modern frameworks of reasoning, there is spatially and temporally no outside, no ‘over’ or ‘past.’ (see also Alaimo, 2016; Somerville, 2017). Such Storiations of islands in the Anthropocene thus hold together that which modernity seeks to cut and to separate, disrupting assumptions of segmented time and space. Elsewhere, Gutierrez and Portefaix (2015: 226) record the exhibition *Desert Islands*, where:

the surface of the sea is translated to a fractured surface of 100 mirrors. Each mirror frames one island, as well as its geographical position to the others. Assembled into a new world map, the meticulous selection of 100 islands presents a multifaceted laboratory of major human actions and experimentations on islands – utopian communities, fiscal paradises, military spheres, clandestine migration zones, drug exchange points, prostitution hubs, and exclusive leisure areas. The 100 islands serve as a new reference, to not only feed the desires but also the fears and secrets of our time.

- ² In Chapter 2, we examined how the term ‘Anthropocene Island’ has been put to use for the development of more Resilience-oriented analytics (ecoLogicStudio, 2017b). But there are other ways in which the term has gained purchase which are more aligned with those of Storiation. Peggy Cyphers, for example, curated the exhibition ‘Anthropocene Island: Colonization, Native Species and Invaders’ (Pratt Institute, New York, 16–27 September 2019), with the purpose of engaging:

the vast environmental and geopolitical forces re-ordering the world as we have known it. Through the traceable singularity that is plastic (the geologic place-marker of the Anthropocene) to native and ‘invasive’ species, the re-worlding of migratory creatures, including humans, are examined. As a universal material of contemporary global culture, plastic endures in the environment such that all plastic ever created still exists. The petrochemical industry that fuels the relentless production of plastics is the same *modus operandi* that is also causing desperate attempts to extract the last drops of oil from the planet, which in turn is cooking up the enormous climatic changes we experience across the globe. Climate change is pushing all creatures – human, plant, animal and mineral – into new geolocations. The artists of ‘Anthropocene

Island: Colonization, Native Species and Invaders' examine these interconnected linkages through sculpture, drawing, photography, video and installation. (Cyphers, 2019)

- ³ Similarly, for Cole et al (2016: 211), focusing upon the islands of Japan, 'the 2011 Fukushima-Daiichi disaster in the time of the Anthropocene' can also be understood 'as a moment when life escapes formations of categorical or territorial capture.'
- ⁴ Denise Ferreira da Silva (2016: 65, emphasis in original) argues that, 'Without *separability*, knowing and thinking can no longer be reduced to *determinacy* in the Cartesian distinction of mind/body (in which the latter has the power of determination) or the Kantian formal reduction of knowing to a kind of efficient causality. Without *separability*, *sequentiality* (Hegel's onto-epistemological pillar) can no longer account for the many ways in which humans exist in the world, because self-determination has a very limited region (spacetime) for its operation.' After the end of the world of modern reasoning, turning away from cuts and separations, 'sociality becomes neither the cause nor the effect of relations involving separate existants, but the uncertain condition under which everything that exists is a singular expression of each and every actual-virtual other existant.'
- ⁵ Morton (2013: 28) is fond of employing analogies in order to heighten the affective sensation of the weirdly disorienting forces of the Anthropocene; in particular regularly comparing global warming to 'the Force' in *Star Wars*, where he says that global warming 'surrounds me and penetrates me' but, in its totality, remains a mystery (see also Morton, 2013: 80, 85, 141). Like Luke Skywalker, sensing the Force while sitting on his island retreat in *The Last Jedi*, for Morton, global warming is similarly sensed in the trees, oceans, rocks, surfaces and surrounding oceans of an island. But there is always an essentially ungraspable mystery, the humbling ontological 'rift' between the vast multidimensions of global warming and humans sitting on an island, who are unable to read them in their totality (Morton, 2013: 18). There is no escape, no isolated or insulated island. As avid fans of *Star Wars* trivia will know, the island which Luke Skywalker spends his time in self-imposed exile on, in *The Last Jedi*, is actually a real island called Skellig Michael (off Ireland). As Gillis (2004) writes, Skellig Michael had a particularly important role in medieval European Christianity; which, influenced by the idea that Christ encourages exile from the material world, understood isolated islands, such as Skellig Michael, as the holiest sites in

their world for such escape and purity. These were ‘closely associated with the supernatural, with extraordinary events, heroic adventures, and divine revelations, with mythical beginnings and endings’ (Gillis, 2004: 37). Thus, it is important to note that, in Morton’s work, islands play a very different ontological and spiritual role. For Morton, if the great mystery of hyperobjects, like global warming, is withdrawn, then we can only look for signs, or signals, or effects; never know reality itself. We can only speculate upon how each ant, blade of grass, or person walking on the island experiences the Anthropocene.

⁶ Nigel Clark (n.d.) examines the artwork of Melinda Rackham’s *a.land*, which similarly works with an ‘island imaginary’ to convey a ‘succession of porthole perspectives – a kind of channel switching through diverse domains – suggest[ing] that the totality of the world is beyond our grasp ... This is a world where form is always provisional and transmutation a constant possibility.’

⁷ Our access to the world is always indirect or mediated (the same for all other entities); thus, while there is only one reality there are necessarily many ‘worlds’ formed through infinitely differently forms of mediation, which are always partial and contingent. We have access to data from which we can infer causation or correlation, but this data is neither the reality of the object, of the instruments or of the subject itself. If we act as if there is only one ‘world’, and that this is a world that we have access to, we anthropocentrically see just what appears to us – for example, if we see that washing hands kills bacteria (*p*) then we don’t see that washing hands enables bacteria to live, to change and develop resistances (*not-p*). Morton (2016b: 65, emphasis in original) argues, therefore ‘We are going to have to think things as *weird*. What is required is that we break out of Aristotle’s Law of Noncontradiction where ‘You can’t say *p* and *not-p* at the very same time’ (Morton, 2016b: 74). Life needs to be seen as contradictory, weird or strange to enable us to think more openly, ecologically and responsibly.

⁸ Such approaches are widespread: for example, commenting upon Coronavirus, Alex De Waal (2020) says: ‘Perhaps the most difficult paradigm to shift will be to consider infectious agents not as aliens but as part of us—our DNA, microbiomes, and the ecologies that we are transforming in the Anthropocene.’

⁹ For Alaimo (2010: 158), Darwin’s work on islands and evolution ‘casts the human within an evolutionary narrative in which we are not immune from the forces of messy, unpredictable materiality ... a

material world that is never merely an external place but always the very substance of our selves and others.’

- ¹⁰ As Morton (2017: 282) says, ‘Of all people, it was Charles Darwin who opened the gate to the spectral world ... When one collapses the life-nonlife boundary and relaxes the human-nonhuman boundary, all kinds of spectral creatures start to be seen, nightmarish beings that scuttle about. That are not categorizable. Yet they exist. They look like nightmarish beings because of the extreme pressure they exert on existing frames of reference, existing categorical boxes. ... But when the boxes dissolve, are these beings intrinsically horrifying? Is the gothic view of these beings the only view, for the rest of time, or is it a temporary effect of the pressure that such beings place on categories such as life and nonlife?’
- ¹¹ As another example, Melody Jue’s (2020: 73) *Wild Blue Media: Thinking Through Seawater* draws upon the writing of Vilém Flusser and turns to the ‘vampire squid’ and the oceanic abyss:

as a speculative environment, constructing a ‘molluscane point of view’ to imagine how an intelligent aquatic organism would develop different concepts to orient itself to its world than those familiar to the dry landscapes of human thought. The abyss dramaticizes the ocean’s condition of ephemerality, where inscription on paper or even stone tablets would eventually be eroded by seawater or encrusted with growth. Because the vampire squid lives in a milieu where not all our vocabulary or figurative language works smoothly, it pushes us to consider more ocean-specific conditions of mediation and a vocabulary that would be adequate to the abyssal environment. (Jue, 2020: 73)

- ¹² Thus, for the onto-epistemology of Storiation: ‘evaluative questions are thoroughly pragmatic, but with a speculative edge. They bear on how practice speculates on what it can do, in the very form of its unfolding modal mix of activity, as it is borne witness to by the manner of effects it produces – and through which it is witnessed self-producing as event-medium, flush with the immediacy of the occurring emergence that it composes and that composes it ... Immanence: many lives (in expressive potential)’ (Massumi, 2019: 183).
- ¹³ In other work, DeLoughrey and Flores (2020) focus upon the Caribbean submarine and island shorelines as important ways of tracing and holding together the legacies of colonialism and modernity. They quote Alaimo (2011: 283): ‘Submersing ourselves, descending rather

than transcending, is essential lest our tendencies toward Human exceptionalism prevent us from recognizing that, like our hermaphroditic, aquatic evolutionary ancestor, we dwell within and as part of a dynamic, intra-active, emergent, material world that demands new forms of ethical thought and practice.’ (see also Neimanis, 2018; Peters and Steinberg, 2019; Barker, 2019). For DeLoughrey and Flores, the artworks of Tony Capellán, Jean-Ulrick Désert, María Magdalena Campos-Pons, Nadia Huggins, and David Gumbs are illustrative of such an approach. They engage with how Capellán’s ‘sculptural work almost exclusively originated with objects, mostly plastic, that washed ashore in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic’ (DeLoughrey and Flores, 2020: 312). Thus, the island is not coherently separated from the oceanic or the submarine and ‘Immersion in this piece becomes invasion, an excess of the waste of capitalist consumption that challenges any notion of the sea as wilderness or space of pure nature’ (DeLoughrey and Flores, 2020: 134; see also Arnall and Kothari, 2020). In another stark example, Canadian artist Kelly Jazvac turned to ‘plastiglomerate’, found on a Hawaiian beach in 2006 by oceanographer Charles Moore, to illustrate ‘how the Anthropocene era is leading to the formation of new man-made minerals’ (Yalcinkaya, 2019). This ‘hybrid material is the result of plastic items washed up on the shore fusing with shells, sand and other natural materials when burnt in campfires lit on the beach’ (Yalcinkaya, 2019).

- ¹⁴ There are slightly different circulations of this passage. In a text, Brathwaite (2007: 158) says the ‘sea was slake grey of what was left ...’. See also Christina Sharpe’s (2020) reading of Brathwaite’s *Dream Haiti*. These subtle differences are not our focus, however, as they do not change the point being made.
- ¹⁵ Yountae (2016: 120) writes that colonialism in Caribbean islands is a ‘haunting historical wound,’ that must be understood intra- relationally as the ‘primary material weaving [their] physical texture.’ Similarly, for DeLoughrey (2010: 703), the Atlantic Ocean is ‘a place where the haunting of the past overtakes the present subject’; something which, as Karen Salt (2017: 61) has remarked, ‘places haunting back into the environment, and into materiality, or matter’.
- ¹⁶ This aligns well with da Silva’s (2017) bringing together of race and colonialism in what she calls ‘fractal thinking’, which is ‘a composition, or decomposition depending upon the possibility to interrupt the unfolding of a discourse – philosophical, historical, sociological, anthropological, etc. – which would otherwise allow for a presentation

of a situation that always justifies violence ...'. In da Silva's approach, as with Sharpe and Moten, the 'outside' of an unfolding discourse is held together in superposition, and 'the composition in the fractal is the positioning of those different moments in time and space, but as part of the same context' (da Silva, 2017). Such fractal thinking about race and colonialism acts as a 'holding' space for speculative possibilities: 'My interest in the thing is not an interest in its essence but is an interest in what else about the world could be known if modern knowledge had not limited itself as much as it did' (da Silva, 2017).

- ¹⁷ It is, of course, also possible for a Correlational approach to register the legacies and afterlives of colonialism if they display a constant relation over time. For example, Jessica Johnson's (2019) discussion of the project 'Xroads Praxis', which employs satellite imagery to reveal how the lights went out after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico in 2017. For Johnson (2019), 'Xroads Praxis' is a way of sensing the interweaving relationship between transforming environmental conditions and the legacies of colonialism on islands; what she calls 'a black diasporic technology for exploring what digital and analog landscapes hide and reveal':

... blackness in the blackened spaces hit hardest by Hurricane María disappeared in the aftermath. In Carolina and Loíza, towns in the constellation near San Juan, that some one-fifth to three-quarters of the population (respectively) described itself as of African descent went without mention in the aftermath of the storm. In Ponce, which did not restore electricity to all its residents until August 2018 – 328 days after the storm – between 10 and 20 per cent described themselves as black. Indigenous spaces suffered similar disappearances. Utuado, which for generations claimed indigenous patrimony on the island and is the home of Caguana Indigenous Ceremonial Park, barely rated a mention in mainstream news generated by the storm. Nor does Utuado, a region where even before the storm running water and electricity were privileges not rights, appear in the satellite image. (Johnson, 2019)

- ¹⁸ To take another illustration of the onto-epistemology of Storiation which foregrounds speculative practice, Neimanis (2019: 504, emphasis in original) has examined oceans and wrecks as sites and holding spaces for dwelling in the legacies, hauntings and dissolve of modernity, and for the associated importance of speculative thought:

Sea level rise, of course, is not a metaphor. Neither is the melting ice that has given up on its terrestrial existence, nor the very real thermal expansion of the oceans that is evermore inundated with our panting hot breath, to take from the sea her own ... We may not know what comes next. We are crossing. There is something that exists in the caesura, in the pause between inhale and exhale that is also called aspiration, between feet firmly planted in the sand and weathers that flow outwards, downwards, and maybe upwards again in these naturalcultural meteorological cycles. Here, there is something we still do not know ... *Everything is now*. Maybe the diver will become whale, who gave up on terrestrial life three million years ago, returning to the deep as five fingers of a hand were slowly covered over by a flipper. Maybe all of a sudden we will find our feet are floating. Maybe, like whales as the seas rose around them, we will learn to notice by echolocation – a skill in which knowledge is utterly dependent on learning to listen differently. Maybe we begin our dissolution by breathing, and learning, and listening; by helping to foster practices of fugitivity and care ... A singular life, a racialised structural lifeworld, the microclimate of one species, the whole ocean: who is to say what matters more, or less? In any case, the Anthropocene will demand that we become other than ourselves, and at least other-than-the human as we know it. If this is to be mourned, it is also surely to be welcomed.

- ¹⁹ There is a historical tradition which documents this trope, most famously, when Caliban says to Prospero on the island of *The Tempest*, ‘you taught me language, and my profit on’t, Is I know how to curse’. This can be taken literally as Caliban saying that he is reduced to frustrated cursing because the (colonial) language he has been taught by Prospero is not up to the task of connecting Caliban to *his* island (see Pugh, 2013). This enables a reading of the final scene between Caliban and Prospero, as a demonstration of the weakness and inadequacy of colonial language when it comes to grasping the islands and the islanders of the New World. Thus, as Shakespeare (2002) acknowledged, even as they were being ‘discovered’ by Europeans, during his time, islands and islanders were already doing disruptive, liminal, ‘work’ as withdrawn spaces; the ungraspable ‘outsides’ of mainland modernity.