A geography beyond the Anthropocene: Ursula Le Guin's *Always Coming Home* as topophilia for survival

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Accepted for publication in *cultural geographies,* 20th August 2022

Abstract

The science fiction of Ursula Le Guin deftly uses prose to conjure alternative worlds, societies, and cultures of nature amidst times of profound upheaval. Equally, her writing is suffused with quiet hope: the sense that we already possess the tools required to craft better futures, if only we paid better attention to the here and now. Across her work, Le Guin poses political and ethical questions about the value of, and our relationship to, the wider environment and the consequences that (may) lie in wait along our contemporary lines of flight. In *Always Coming Home* (1985), she excavates a possible future: a speculative cultural geography of life on earth that is both careful in its placing and caring of place. In this paper, we consider the space-times of this experimental 'archaeology of the future' and its imagined post-Anthropocene landscape. We explore how Le Guin's non-linear, digressive, fragmentary writing mobilises the love of place (topophilia) to manifest an awareness of there being multiple, potential, situated articulations of life after the Anthropocene in tension with profound uncertainty over the earthly legacies of our *current* modes of existence.

Introduction: Narrating Anthropocene Geographies

Discussions of the 'Anthropocene' inevitably imagine future geographies. Often, apocalyptic, barren, or 'blasted' landscapes materialise socio-cultural anxiety in the face of crisis.[1] However, cautious hope is also manifest in stories of conservation and care that might 'provision' future ecological abundance.[2] In each case, such narratives tend to figure our present as a vital moment of *transition*, rather than terminus, though to what remains uncertain.[3]

A challenge when speculating on liveable futures is figuring ways of living that might take us there. Both comprehending and responding to the distributed causality of planetary change has prompted the environmental crisis of the Anthropocene to be seen as a crisis of *representation*. For Bill McKibben, Western paralysis, or apathy, in the face of climate catastrophe reflects our fatal 'confusion' with regards the unfolding geographies of ecological crisis.[4] Timothy Morton argues the Anthropocene is characterised by the proliferation of 'hyperobjects' – such as 'climate change', 'nuclear waste' or 'microplastics' – each exerting a force in shaping the world, yet resistant to human sense-making because of their complex, distributed, inhuman spatio-temporality. A world of hyperobjects poses issues for tracing more-than-human geographies, potentially signalling the ends of 'landscape' as viable spatial imaginary amidst a world of scattered causality and pan-scalar entanglement. [5]

Nevertheless, the nebulous, distributed geographies of the Anthropocene do not negate the value of situated perspectives. Much writing in geography (and beyond) examines the Anthropocene through the lens of place and landscape. More popularly oriented nature writing similarly offers encounters with place to grasp the Anthropocene's affects.[6] Work on extinction, for example, traces specific, spatial stories of species decline to illuminate losses unfolding in multiple registers, and propose means to articulate or resist them.[7] David Matless conceptualises UK coastal erosion landscapes as 'Anthropo-scenes', making fathomable deep time environmental transformations. Crucially, engaging with Anthropo-scenes as the "stepping point for […] stories" of ecological transformation requires acts of representation and looking, as well as phenomenological encounter.[8] Aurora Fredriksen's theorisation of "ordinary Anthropocenes," emergent from particular human-nonhuman assemblages haunted by longer histories of habitat degradation, helps attune to more mundane experiences of anthropogenic ecological change.[9] Anna Tsing's influential work on the landscapes of forestry and mushroom picking in the Pacific Northwest and Japan considers the possibilities and excesses of life amidst the ruins of capitalism.[10] Clearly, then, "the *geographies* being engaged for the development of Anthropocene thinking *matter*".[11]

Consequently, this paper critically examines the work of Ursula Le Guin, whose writing inspires many via its hopeful worlding. Our engagement with Le Guin reflects an appreciation of the power of stories to articulate environmental crisis. Her brand of feminist science fiction

(sf) addresses many issues that concern contemporary cultural geographies of the Anthropocene, asking how particular realities emerge, exist, and endure amidst shared conditions of entanglement, violence, and co-becoming.[12] Offering geographers "an informed view of possible futures […] imaginatively constructed", her sf texts provide vital "cognitive spaces" for extrapolating potential trajectories out of present restrictions and crises.[13] As an "inherently geographical" genre, sf worlds reflect and refract "real physical, social, and cultural landscapes" via experimental acts of world building that connect the futuristic, or fantastic, with the spaces of a differently perceived, lived present and their potential to be otherwise.[14]

Rather than re-assert heroic narratives of progress, Le Guin's sf conjures alternative worlds, societies, and cultures of nature that materialise, and make 'thinkable,' more abstract questions of ethics, violence, and interrelating in times of upheaval. Equally, her stories exude modest optimism: the sense that we already possess the tools required to craft alternative futures. We examine her novel, *Always Coming Home* (hereafter *ACH*), published 1985. An "archaeology of the future", *ACH* constructs the fictional lifeworld of the Kesh: a human society that "might be going to have lived a long, long time from now" amidst the ruins of a California ravaged by global catastrophe.[15] As argued, *ACH* demonstrates the potential of sf writing to articulate potential geographies *beyond* the Anthropocene via projects of 'place love' attuned to future survival.

Additionally, *ACH* is a particularly intriguing text because of its presentation, stylised as anthropological ethnography. Thus, the text articulates a place-love informed by Le Guin's childhood explorations of landscape, and the academic influence of her father, anthropologist Alfred Kroeber. Kroeber spent much of his life championing the importance of studying and understanding indigenous societies in California, articulating an approach to studying culture that eschewed environmental determinism and evolutionary conceptualisations of 'civilisation' (alongside propositions of inherent, hierarchical racial difference). Instead, he advocated a contextual, situated examination of societies in the vein of his mentor Franz Boas.[16] His work is significant for geographers, given its influence upon the Berkley School approach to studying culture and landscape.[17] Moreover, his practicing anthropology as a gathering of fragments that pieced together located ways of living haunts *ACH* and it's densely

descriptive, at times encyclopaedic, treatment of a possible future geography. Equally, in the context of current critical reflections on Kroeber's practices, the text entrains questions about the more troubling legacies of anthropologists' efforts to represent non-Western peoples (often conceived as non- or pre-modern) and their environments. Consequently, whilst foregrounding the progressive potential within Le Guin's treatment of place, we remain cognisant of the awkwardness of *ACH*'s political project, seeking as it does to draw inspiration from indigenous cosmologies, and its risk of appearing to promote both appropriation and romanticisation.[18] As discussed below, such concerns are present in Le Guin's own thinking and throughout the text's account of a possible future geography.

The following section introduces Le Guin's novel and its critique of rationalist utopia. We then proceed to conceptualise the relationship between the novel and California's Napa Valley. In turn, we present our alternative reading of the novel as a practical project of place-love oriented towards future survival, informed by work on place and landscape characteristic of cultural geographies' recent 'telling turn'.[19] Doing so, we argue, reinforces the importance of places and landscapes as *containers* of stories, possibilities, and futures in the Anthropocene.

Roaming the Valley

Unfolding amidst a future version/vision of California, *ACH* invites the reader into the world of the 'Kesh': a human society inhabiting the 'Valley of Na' (Napa Valley). Billed as a novel,[20] yet more a collection of fragments that cross-cut, interweave, complement, even contradict, reading *ACH* recalls Deleuze and Guattari's notion of book-as-rhizome. An open-ended tangle of lines of affect and flight, the Valley coalesces and pulls apart in the process of writing and interpretation.[21] An experimental imagining of a liveable society and landscape following planet-wide destruction packaged akin to an anthropological monograph, *ACH* hosts multiple readings. Le Guin defers agency to the reader, letting them to explore the Valley in a non-linear, open-ended manner.[22] Evoking the Deleuzian 'plateau', her text is "all middle".[23]

In terms of content, the life-story of Stone Telling, a Kesh woman, informs the most consistent *narrative*. Told in three parts, Stone Telling relays her childhood and journey to distant lands with her birth father; a warrior from the patriarchal, militarist *Dayao,* or Condor – a society

sharply contrasting the Kesh, whilst mirroring our own. Stone Telling's tale introduces and elaborates elements of Kesh society examined elsewhere, and her experiences and ultimate return reflect the novel's titular refrain. The remainder of *ACH* comprises short(er) pieces, illustrations and, originally, musical recordings that divulge, or collage, Valley life. Presented as a gathering together of the collected knowledge of the Kesh, the text has been ostensibly compiled by anthropologist-ethnographer 'Pandora', its content relayed via parable, proverb, poetry, drama, song, and the 'factual' documentation of practical information (much housed in additional, encyclopaedia-like appendices referred to as 'The Back of the Book').[24] A consistent voice and participating character, narrator, or else implicit translator/reporter, Pandora seemingly hails from *our* time, operating as cipher for both the reader and Le Guin. She dramatises the challenge of representing and comprehending this future and her often frustrated efforts to communicate with various Kesh informants, and document the minutiae of their world, underscores the ontological gap between our society and theirs, as well as the awkward relationship between anthropological ethnographer and their subject, questioning the limits of imagining and materialising this future.[25]

We elaborate aspects of Valley living below, but in brief the Kesh practice a hunter-gatherer existence organised around relations of kinship with a variety of human and non-human 'people'. Each 'person' in the valley is affiliated to a particular "house", defining their (cross-species) familial connections and obligations, delimiting sexual practices, and diagramming the relational ecology of place. Each 'House' has an associated 'heyima' or lodge, serving as "material manifestation" of Kesh cosmology and practical all-purpose community buildings for worship, political debate, workshops, discussion, accommodation, knowledge accumulation, education, resource management and economic activities (within and beyond the valley). Humans and 'domesticated' nonhumans (e.g. cohabiting animals, hunted fauna, gathered flora, building materials) belong to five 'Earth' houses. Other nonhumans (truly 'wild' animals, birds), inhuman agencies (the wind, the rain), and past/potential human others (the dead, the unborn) belong to four 'Sky' houses.[26] This cosmology is encapsulated by the 'heyiya-if' or "hinge" (Figure 1). An "inexhaustible metaphor,"[27] the hinge informs philosophy, architecture, town planning, ceremonial activities and spiritual life. Its spiral arms evoke the Taoist *taijitu* (the yin/yang symbol) as well as the spirals featured throughout indigenous American iconography. At its centre resides a point of disconnection, signifying the

unknowable possibility of change and difference, and the un-representable, yet vital, relationship between earth (actual, material existence) and sky (excessive, virtual existence). As Pandora comments: "A hinge connects and it holds apart".[28]

Figure 1: The 'heyiya-if' / hinge depicted in *Always Coming Home* (1985). Illustration by Margaret Chodos-Irvine. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

When exactly the novel occurs, beyond several thousand years hence, remains ambiguous. The Kesh are doubly "puzzled" by questions of origin.[29] Neither do they possess answers to such questions; nor do they comprehend time in terms of a periodised, teleological 'history'. Thus, there is a profound *discontinuity* (captured by the hinge) between our time and geography, and that of the Kesh, undermining any clear sense of historical progression from one to the other. As conveyed via several awkward exchanges between Pandora and Kesh individuals, they seem to favour thinking in terms of geography and journeys through lived landscapes, over progression through linear time. One man, Gather, who enjoys studying the historical records of past architectural styles, leaves Pandora frustrated when he cannot answer questions as to *when* in history the Kesh are to be located. As she describes:

> He doesn't perceive time as a direction, let alone a progress, but as a landscape in which one may go any number of directions, or nowhere. He spatialises time; it is not an arrow, nor a river, but a house, the house he lives in. One may go from room to room, and come back; to go outside, all you have to do is open the door.[30]

That is not to say the Kesh they have *no* concept of temporality: they track the seasons and count yearly cycles relative to lived events in the valley (e.g. rituals, harvests). The origin myths of Kesh culture suggest that Valley society emerges after several world-ending events (seemingly climate crisis and nuclear conflict).[31] Consistently, however, the gyre of circling buzzards and condors recurs across the text, conceptualising circularity and return without "closing the circle".[32] 'Coming home' maintains community in harmony with place, rejecting repetition, closure, or stasis in favour of change and uncertainty.

Linear accounts of civilisation are associated with the "sickness" of past societies, and the cause of the world's ruination. The Kesh inhabit a version of Earth degraded by multiple cycles of anthropogenic destruction. Much of California as we know it lies underwater, its urban centres drowned. Large areas have been rendered toxic and uninhabitable; and the coasts and oceans are strewn with industrial waste. The Kesh are "surrounded with evidence of our values,"[33] manifesting at multiple scales. Human and nonhuman bodies in the Valley bear the "biocidal legacy"[34] of stillbirth, congenital conditions, and restricted life expectancy. Living in ruins prompts the Kesh to reject worldviews manifesting such destruction as the doing of "backward-headed" people who failed to think on the consequences of their avaricious quest for progress.[35]

The Kesh are, however, hardly technophobic. They generate hydroelectricity, maintain a train on wooden rails, and construct buildings, wineries, and mills. Additionally, communities over fifty persons host 'exchanges': computer terminals enabling inter-settlement communication and access to the accumulated information archives of a networked artificial intelligence, the 'City of Mind'. In this future, the City of Mind has long since advanced beyond its human creators, becoming self-aware and extending its project of information accumulation into the stars. Instead of rejecting technology, then, the Kesh *choose* not to pursue the construction of technoscientific shibboleths, favouring the practical, tacit skills and knowledge required to live well in the Valley over those complex techno-industrial assemblages (and associated systems of inequality and degradation) needed to build tanks, bombs and planes. Valley technology is "completely adequate to the needs of the people".[36]

Finally, the Kesh are not the only humans living in this world. Other societies – nomadic pig herders, coastal merchants, distant cotton growers – exist in (and beyond) California and exhibit their own ways of living. These other human societies appear analogous to the Kesh in many ways, with whom they trade and communicates from time to time. Some, however, are strikingly different in outlook and activity, such as the antagonistic Condor or *Dayao*. Therefore, whilst Le Guin focuses on the Valley, her world is populated with other "introverted but cooperative peoples," engaged in distinct projects of survival.[37]

A Feminist Utopia

Le Guin's writing consciously shirks mainstream sf conventions. Less concerned with idealising the 'high-tech', her worlds manifest slower, anarchic, anti-authoritarian societies.[38] Le Guin disregards obvious heroes or epic battles, viewing fiction as "a bag […] holding things in a particular, powerful relation to one another". Thus, her novels are "full of beginnings without ends, of initiations, of losses, of transformations and translations".[39] These are worlds to *wander* in rather than race across.

Consequently, *ACH*, like *The Dispossessed* (1974) and *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), expresses an alternative feminist, process-oriented utopianism.[40] The question of utopia is central to sf world-building. For Darko Suvin, utopianism requires grounding in scientific reality via the 'novum': the "specific object or change introduced by the author [that] leads to the fictional world's estrangement."[41] In this sense, utopian sf aims to model how current circumstances could lead to "progressive alternatives" and futures, extrapolating trajectories of (possible) innovation. Often critical of present issues, the novum should ideally open onto *better*, more equal futures. [42] Suggesting tangible, material continuities between our 'now' and the text's 'then', sf utopias are tethered in provocative ways to contemporary modes of living and emphasise the challenges of the *present* as much as the future.[43]

For Le Guin, figuring utopia "a novum away" prevents appreciating the "possibilities inherent in the world we have."[44] She rejects the idea of modernist 'progress' as implicated in the ills of contemporary planetary degradation, accusing rationalist or 'Euclidean' utopians of reproducing such discourses. By imagining societies where, conversely, progress is subordinate to *process*, *ACH* renders in fiction Le Guin's critique of utopia as a masculine, 'yang' enterprise; "aggressive, lineal, progressive, creative, expanding, advancing, and hot."[45] An obsession with progress in the present, at the expense of environment and people, reproduces a colonizing will to master, measure, and control. In *ACH*, the City of Mind satirises these ideals via its objective of "a total mental model or replica of the Universe".[46] In contrast to 'yang' utopia, its "[m]odels, plans, blueprints, wiring diagrams," Le Guin's 'yin' utopia is "dark, wet, obscure, weak, yielding, passive, participatory, circular, cyclical, peaceful, nurturant, retreating, contracting, and cold."[47] Such ways of living are un-mapped and involves inhabiting the "edges" of progress, avoiding "a one-way future consisting only of

growth".[48] Turning (y)inwards, slowing down, and learning to know and value the specific ecologies of place locates Le Guin's "habitable present" in acts of processual dwelling, denied within reified, abstract progress narratives.[49]

The world of the Kesh has been characterised as such a utopia.[50] A people "predominantly concerned with preserving its existence," they practice "a modest standard of living, conservative of natural resources, with a low constant fertility rate and a political life based upon consent", adapted to their environment and living in general harmony with others.[51] The Kesh celebrate "process for its own sake rather than to facilitate progress […] ontology rather than teleology".[52] Life in the Valley rejects technoscientific innovation's emancipatory promise. Crucially, such a society could "exist already". Indeed, *it may have once existed* in the California landscapes that inspired Le Guin (see below).[53] This yin utopia is therefore as much about *returning* to workable acts of place loving/living, as imagining the future. Consequently, *ACH* has been interpreted as a feminist act of "staying with the trouble", making habitable worlds with what we have.[54]

Yet whilst the Valley conjures "utopian hope",[55] Le Guin strives *not* for a general account of utopian geographies. She favours "a partial vision" avoiding both "the Scylla of bulldozing universalism and the Charybdis of disempowering relativism" via a focussed particularity.[56] The situation of the novel is fundamental: this future takes place *somewhere*. Reading *ACH* via the notion of 'utopia' proves awkward for its association with the idealised "no-place", given that Le Guin's project (and its writing, see below) explicitly labours *some-place*. Furthermore, the text itself *denies* any utopian claims. Kesh society, marked by death, violence, conflict, struggle and toxic after effects, is arrestingly *un*-utopian. *ACH's* account of survival in this "messy wilderness"[57] emphasises the ongoing effort required to resist lapsing into the mental "sickness" that leads humans to dominate and control.[58] As one character, a Kesh archivist, remarks to Pandora and the reader:

> This is a mere dream dreamed in a bad time, an Up Yours to the people who ride snowmobiles, make nuclear weapons, and run prison camps by a middle-aged housewife, a critique or civilisation possible only to the civilised, an affirmation pretending to be a rejection, a glass of

> milk for the soul ulcered by acid rain, a piece of pacifist jeanjacquerie, and a cannibal dance among the savages in the ungodly garden of the farthest West.'[59]

The Valley "isn't a perfect world". A partial, situated project, it might be "close to the best of all possible worlds."[60] The text conveys the troubling thought that the world of Kesh might *require* apocalypse and genetic ruination to occur. Therefore, we turn to what what *ACH does* offer: namely, a specific account of a specific place and its inhabitation in spite of future catastrophe. In doing so, we contend that Le Guin manifests topophilia – the love of place – as a survival strategy in/beyond the Anthropocene.

Topophilia for Survival

In the remainder of this paper, we present Le Guin's text as an act of Anthropocene topophilia, performing the love of place as a survival strategy. Specifically, *ACH* mobilises Le Guin's praxis of love of/for/with landscape in three registers, articulating a potential post-Anthropocene geography. First, it mobilises love for place accrued through inhabitation, investment, attachment, and knowledge. Secondly, Kesh society diagrams a model of slow living as part of a more-than-human ecology, which is a subject of care. Finally, *ACH* responds to the absences, silences and discontinuities that percolate through landscape as invitational into acts of loving place by figuring alternative futures, and recovering lost pasts. In these ways, *ACH* practices topophilia for survival, traces a 'geography of love'[61] amidst its fictionalised future for northern California. It showcases the kind of literary innovation called upon to meet the onto-epistemological challenge of the Anthropocene.[62] Given the difficult task of representing the scope of planetary ecological crisis and our means of response, *ACH* draws on encounters with place to muse on its future potential, and potential future.

Topophilia is a concept with ambivalent politics. We articulate, via Le Guin, a *progressive* place-love as a means to cultivate the necessary ecological attention that living well in/after the Anthropocene might demand. Yet one can reasonably frame *ACH's* geographical focusing as of a piece with the kind of "world reduction" that her sf has been accused of elsewhere. That is, by virtue of a contracted spatial reality, *ACH* presents an idealistic situation whereby its speculative worlding need not wrangle with the questions of how to navigate or respond to the unequal power relations, competing agencies and distributed processes that

characterise the complex geographies of the Anthropocene.[63] Equally, one must also acknowledge the troubling tendencies of place-love to be mobilised as the basis for exclusionary, parochial and nostalgia-oriented politics. Such concerns are elaborated in response to the unequal effects of time-space compression, as well as in more discussions of the problematic conflating of 'landscape', 'dwelling' and notions of 'homeland'.[64] To manifest place (and landscape) in more progressive political terms requires, as Doreen Massey famously argues, appreciating its open-ended, fluid and always contested qualities as the 'meeting place' of multiple spatio-temporal relations.[65] This is the treatment of place that we see given form in 'The Valley', and it is on this basis that we turn to examine her project of topophilia oriented to survival in/after the Anthropocene.

Place-love as personal attachment.

Yi-Fu Tuan conceptualises environments as "objects of profound attachment and love."[66] He argues that grasping, and responding to, environmental crises requires reckoning with the affective bonds between people and environment. Thus, Tuan offers 'topophilia' as a term capturing such attachment as the outcome of phenomenal and cultural experience. Through knowing and investing in places, affection and commitment grows. Crucially, topophilia demands *situatedness*; it "cannot be stretched over an empire".[67] Place love involves intimately exploring environmental characteristics and edges. Thus, Tuan's contemporary, Edward Relph, frames an *authentic* place sense in terms of *home,* "balancing a need to stay with a desire to escape". Homes offer "the point of departure" for worldly living.[68] Thus, loved places, as home, are more than emotional repositories. They figure an ontological orientation onto the world implicated in how we affect and are affected.[69]

Le Guin's account of 'the Valley' in *ACH* expresses topophilia by articulating a life-long association with, and affection for, the Napa area of California. She frames her life-long efforts at writing as, variously, efforts to articulate *this* place. Specifically, the homestead purchased by her father, anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, where she spent summers as a child. Kroeber's career researching the cultures of indigenous communities in California and elsewhere, and his interest in the valley as a landscape inhabited by a little-recorded indigenous society, fed her place-love. His approach to documenting these cultures – espousing, after his mentor Boas, the importance of fieldwork, first-hand ethnographical encounters beyond the

museum, and the significance of linguistic processes in cultural development – is evident in her construction of the Valley. His extensive writings on the cosmology and social structures of such communities – much of which he documented through first-hand conversations with informants – would inform the "anarcho-primitivist" politics characteristic of societies in her writing.[70]

Works of literature engage in acts of "spatial dreaming", giving form to "cultural and political hopes and anxieties".[71] In elaborating the intention of *ACH*, Le Guin makes explicit her desire to find language capable of expressing the storied landscapes of the Napa Valley. As she describes:

> I want to talk about looking at the world, about geography, particularly about geography of the human people to whom this isn't a New Land, not the New World, but just the world, their world. This is going to lead me for a little while into rather strange places, but place is what it's all about, and there's no use talking in abstractions if what you're trying to get at is exactly the opposite.[72]

The subfield of literary geographies, long housing myriad inventive and critical approaches for examining texts, proposes multiple ways of examining the geographical 'event' of written work as involving a variety of activities and sites in their creation, reception and (re-)presentation.[73] Importantly, this work acknowledges literature as more than ideological, reflecting cultural context; or empirical 'data', for its evocative place description. Literature "disrupt[s] or challenge[s] conventional meaning not simply through its coverage of 'geographical' topics but also through the particular conventions of literary writing." Cultural geographies have witnessed a (re)turn to story-telling and narrative over the past two decades.[74] This 'literary' or 'telling' turn views creative use of narrative as the means of constructing careful and intimate portraits of places and landscapes, their mutability and dwelling.[75] A key aim is to nurture ways of writing that "realise fidelity to place".[76] Read in this context, *ACH* appears a dedicated, geographical project of love for the place Le Guin spent childhood summers exploring from a young age, and later returned to regularly, including when she wrote the novel.

To achieve her goal, Le Guin required a new way to *write* place. The character of this place is central to the poetry, stories, rituals and existence of her imagined Kesh, living *inside* this land, and "opening one's senses to all that [it] has to offer".[77] Le Guin recalls childhood efforts at writing the Valley. Her stories, shared with her father, featured angelic messengers, impressing the land's meaning upon visiting explorers. Perhaps reflecting his own rejection of the tendency of anthropology to view culture and landscape as explainable in terms of overarching theories (like evolution) rather than as objects to be examined and studied in context, Kroeber queried why the landscape required mediation. He encouraged her to write place as excessively, materially *present,* free of such elevated interpretation, and rich in its substantive detail. From then, Le Guin sought increasingly to eschew those (Western) literary tropes and tendencies that "lead me away from my own land".

ACH would feature dense, empirical accounts of the character of the ground, plants, animals, trees, rocks, and hills, each described and mapped in almost overwhelming detail. She sought to render a geography of California concerned less with "abstractions" than the "utterly concrete, local, fixed in place".[78] Furthermore, Le Guin encountered and read indigenous literatures, cosmologies, and oral traditions, finding they contained "the right words for my country, my world, here".[79] For many of these communities, landscapes appeared as processual, more-than-human ecologies. When writing *ACH*, she Le Guin sought to connect with the practices, stories and cosmologies of those people for whom Napa had once been a home akin to the yin utopia mapped in her writing, now long gone, and beyond conventional means of excavation (see below). Thus, the mythologies and traditions of those indigenous societies that did endure – the Yurok, Swampy Cree, and Navaho – provided her with "unfailing inspiration for an ethic and aesthetic native to the western American earth," though she was careful not to exploit their stories.[80]

Learning to listen to "the people who lived there" was challenging and time-consuming. Indigenous mappings, contrary to Orientalist tropes, are hardly "simple" ways of envisioning landscape. As complex, multi-layered ways of thinking about place, they required a reorientation for the outsider Le Guin.[81] In this she was aided by the "intellectual milieu" of her childhood, with its many fleshy and textual "refugees". Alternative scholars, non-Western texts (notably, the *Tao-te-ching*), and representatives from the indigenous communities

working with her father circulated through her family home. She turned their ideas over in the earth, playing amidst the madrone and adobe whilst her brothers fought overseas.[82] Her long exposure to alternative ontologies and texts informed her efforts "to think like a person of the Valley" and her text's attempts to enact a similar experience for its readers.[83] Nevertheless, it remains possible to read aspects of the text as romanticising of indigenous ontologies. Despite her efforts at articulating a complex, non-utopic, living society, *ACH* remains embroiled with the legacy of colonial anthropology and unresolved questions around the extent to which such albeit speculative and creative reimagining of indigenous cosmologies might be subject to the charge of appropriation.

Drawing on emplaced ways of writing and thinking, Le Guin's crafted account of California articulated the landscape's lived multiplicity and distinctive "accent" through fiction. Thus, Le Guin's love of place provided a means to reimagine it as the vessel for a possible future. Mobilising a lived geography to communicate a love of place, *ACH* combines rich description, the rhythms of oral tradition, and Le Guin's speculative anthropological eye. Equally, the definitively *local* and bounded feel of the world-in-a-text enables the reader to roam the Valley and mingle with its people. In the manner of a rich regional geography, the confinement of place becomes an opening onto broader processes, transformations and questions.[84] The world of the Kesh might be a mere 30 miles around, but such distance "can be a short or a long way" depending how it is traversed.[85]

Place-love, care and kin.

ACH's project of topophilia exceeds the expression of personal attachment, performing a place love that is "spatial, relational and political".[86] *ACH* diagrams a model for a slow, emplaced way of living amidst a more-than-human landscape, peopled with kin and addressed as a subject of care. This is place-love as *praxis*: a performative commitment to care, respect and response. For Le Guin, "[w]hen you build a world, you are responsible for it."[87] Her love for the Valley saw her build a world in which it was cared for. Building a world responsibly means paying sufficient attention to the details. Thus, *ACH* devotes space to intimately describing the form and character of the land, and the practices by which the Kesh engage it. For Relph, places to which we have a genuine attachment constitute "fields of care" involving "real responsibility and respect for that place both for itself and for what it is to

yourself and to others" alongside "a complete commitment to that place"[88] Although Relph (and Tuan) has been subject to significant criticism for accounts of place tending towards solipsism and the erasure of lived difference,[89] such remarks *do* resonate with contemporary writing on love and care in feminist theory addressing such limitations. To elaborate the Valley as 'a field of care' we read *ACH* through Donna Haraway's theorising of non-innocent multispecies love.

Haraway draws much inspiration from Le Guin's work, championing sf as a vital space for exploring the implications and obligations of entangled becoming with 'chthonic' others in our current epoch. Her own sf experimentation, 'The Camille Stories', constructs a pan-generational tale of transition – via cross-species experimentation and communal, collaborative living – from today's Anthropocene into a flourishing 'Chthulucene' of multispecies becoming.[90] Not the only theorist to conceptualise love as practical, relational work necessitating definition and direction,[91] for Haraway, kinship, companionship, and love between "significant others" – persons (in the Kesh sense) who recognise and become-with each another, if asymmetrically – necessitates labour to register and respond to the other. Tracing histories of human-canine cohabitation, collaboration and co-evolution via reflections on her dog, Cayenne, and the contact zones of their meeting, Haraway characterises human-nonhuman "response-ability" – the ability to recognise and respond to an-other – as both "historical aberration and a natural cultural legacy".[92]

Such theorising helps to articulate relations of love as developing, contingently, over time, being reworked and reproduced via the acts of inheritance by which they are (re)made.[93] Crucially, for geographers, it matters *where* such relations play out: the geographical character of the contact zone mediating encounters with and recognition of the other.[94] In modelling the world of the Kesh, *ACH* presents a far-future is one of a contemporary society that has moved in reverse. The novel constructs a slow way of living amidst this ecology as *constituent* rather than *master*. This society is localised but not closed. They welcome travellers to their lands and are "content" to know of, but not visit, places beyond the Valley.[95] Contrasting the (ultimately self-defeating) aggressive expansionism of the exceptionalist, anthropocentric Condor, the Kesh trade and interact with others societies as needed, managing these relations across inter-generational via agreed partnerships. However, they

also direct the majority of their energy and concern inwards, towards the practicality of daily living in the people of the Valley. Indeed, the closing lines of the initiation song for members of the Finders Lodge (a guild in charge of trade and excursions beyond the Valley) bids the listener "walk carefully […] walk mindfully […] walk fearlessly […] return with us, return to us, be always coming home."[96]

Haraway's thinking (and that of other posthumanist-feminists) figures love as active, knotty, intergenerational, ongoing and necessarily incorporating acts of exclusion as the loving of some occurs at the expense of others.[97] Le Guin's work offers a site for speculating on how such a love might manifest in and through place. Important, too, is Haraway's rejection of a rational biopolitics for governing exclusions, preferring a "love that escapes calculation"[98] and which stays with the trouble of relating. *ACH* offers a creative, literary example that is good to think with. It helps us conceive of what such love might practically involve when seeking to negotiate place as a more-than-human achievement in the wake of ecological catastrophe. The slow, introverted existence in place that characterises Valley life is based upon desire to "persevere", rather than expand or dominate. Such an existence is "an interactive, rhythmic, and unstable process, which constitutes an end in itself".[99] Thus *ACH* diagrams a caring, responsible form of place loving/living outside of modernist progress. The Valley serves as what Haraway terms a "quiet place" for "modest possibilities of partial recuperation and getting on together".[100] The Kesh defer to landscape, its form and character, with regards practical living. Stone Telling recalls the disagreement between the Kesh and visiting Condor soldiers, seeking to bridge a nearby creek to transport supplies. For the villagers, such efforts at landscape engineering are ill-thought: "If a bridge at this place were appropriate, there would be one". As one elder explains to the Condor general:

> One doesn't need roads and bridges to go from room to room of one's house. This Valley is our house, where we live.[101]

As the narrator, Pandora, notes, "It is hard for us to conceive, harder to approve, of a serious adult person not in a hurry […] Hurry is the essence of the city" and of civilisation.[102] The city, a materialisation of the anthropological machine via purified spaces and quotidian acts of human exceptionalism,[103] is anathema to the valley. Whilst the Condor "keep without giving,"

dwelling amidst "walls of black basalt" and "wide streets at right angles,"[104] the Kesh endure as a "loose, light, soft network", of "small scale" settlements, trading, crafting and gathering resources as needed. They "were not engaged in enterprises requiring heroic sacrifice".[105] Upon the Valley, Stone Telling's handmaid, who escapes the Condor lands with the protagonist, remarks "it's easy being here". In the Valley, "everybody belongs to everybody" rather than all things belonging to 'man', as under the Dayao.[106] Indeed, Pandora observes that "Kesh grammar makes no provision for a relation of ownership between living beings."[107] An external visitor to the Valley, she captures the essence of Kesh existence woven into a more-than-human, non-hierarchical ecological network of care.[108]

Importantly, Pandora suggests, this low-impact way of living reflects a society in which "large families, a large private food-supply, and a competitive attitude were all socially disapproved".[109] However, it is also the deathly consequence of past catastrophes resulting in low birth rates and short life expectancies (30-40 years). Such slow living appears predicated on a legacy of slow violence. Indeed, there is little desire to live long in this world and the role of doctors incorporates euthanasia, as the Kesh prioritise "the alleviation of misery […] ahead of the prolongation of life" or maintaining "an ideal of perfect health", ensuring "that living wasn't any harder than it had to be." [110] Therefore, such care for place in the eco-corporeal ruins of California is possible only *after* the Anthropocene epoch has occurred. Amidst this blasted earth, efforts unfold to replenish refuge.[111]

The primary source of food is gained through gathering, though hunting does occur as a pastime and for religious purposes. Thus, living requires practical knowledge of regional ecology, exemplified by the Kesh capacity to live well on a diverse range of local edible flora. Indeed, "[t]here is no word in Kesh for famine".[112] Domestic animals, being members of 'earth' houses, "consented to live and to die with human beings"[113] as "people living together".[114] Wild animals, as members of the unearthly 'Sky' houses, possess their own ways of living. To attempt to "coax" or control these lifeforms is viewed as "perverse."[115] Hunted animals consent to die when called upon by the hunter to meet their weapon. Reminiscent of certain indigenous American traditions, specific invocations mark the killing of hunted animals and the hunter's gratitude.[116] Stories of spectral beasts leading hunters to their death

reflect Kesh anxieties around failing to show sufficient "respect". Thus, the dealing of death does not negate a recognition of nonhuman personhood.

As a result of their society's modest size, and proliferating toxic markers of past "backward-headed" civilisation, the Kesh engage the environment and its inhabitants and active beings, with whom they converse and engage in acts of care and attention. All "people" were held to have their own "dances", whether perceptible by humans or not. The dances of the Kesh, such as the "world dance", acted as seasonal celebrations of humanity's "participation in the making and unmaking, the renewal and continuity, of the world".[117] They greeted its inhabitants, other animals, even stones, with a call of 'heya': an "untranslatable statement of praise/greeting/holiness/being sacred"[118] acknowledging nonhuman personhood. The organising familial 'houses' evoke the materiality of landscape, named for the madrone tree, red adobe, and blue clay. The houses likewise materialise Le Guin's imagined multispecies society, connecting humans, animals, plants together in familial networks that can be usefully likened to Harawayan "oddkin," figuring a more-than-human family network defined by more than genetic relation or straight filiation.[119] As Pandora notes, it was normal "[to] call an olive tree grandmother or a sheep sister, to address a half-acre field of dirt ploughed for corn as "my brother"". This was neither a "primitive" nor "symbolic" act for the Kesh, but the culmination of a love for place that involved understanding one's existence within a larger relational ecology.[120]

Place-love and absence.

Sf writing creates vital space to respond to the transformations, estrangements, monstrous entities and effects of the Anthropocene. As Jonathon Turnbull demonstrates by way of examining Jeff van der Meer's *Southern Reach* trilogy, such texts render those hauntings, discontinuities, feedback loops and forms of 'weirding' that trouble linear accounts of modernist progress.[121] Indeed, in the context of conceptual turns towards emotion, affect, embodiment, and practice, the means by which sf texts, authors, and readers navigate and manifest the un-/non-representable are significant for how they explore and reckon with the limits of perception.[122] Literature inevitably *works on* the reader "to affect and inspire […] rather than merely represent,"[123] providing a key site for making sense of, and evaluating, the representation, experience, and relationality of place and landscape.[124] Before

concluding, we briefly reflect on *ACH* as an act of place-love that marshals absences, silences and discontinuities as invitations to imagine potential futures.

Whilst Le Guin rejects "overt moralizing,"[125] a clear ethical thread runs through *ACH*. As much recent work in geography and elsewhere argues, the Anthropocene, as an epoch of extensive human-inflicted environmental degradation, cannot be detached from histories of colonisation and colonial violence.[126] Furthermore, as 'Western' ontologies of nature and culture as essentialised and distinct are seen to legitimate capitalist ecocide, the value of alternative stories and indigenous ontologies as a means to reframe human-nonhuman relations and reject dualistic Enlightenment thinking is championed. Indeed, Haraway's recent work engages indigenous American activism and knowledges to account for creative ways of resisting extractive industry. She emphasises the importance of foregrounding different ways of talking about the environment, singling out Le Guin's fiction to impress that "[it] matters what stories use to tell other stories with".[127]

Yet, in the case of the landscape that hosts Le Guin's speculative future, no stories survive. The knowledges, practices and beliefs of those living in Napa Valley prior to the arrival of European colonisers were never recorded. As low-impact societies with cultures of oral transmission, their genocide and displacement resulted in their ways of living being erased with few traces. As Le Guin notes, even their names are unknown; only those afforded to them by the Spanish remain.[128] This vast absence resides at the heart of *ACH,* echoing across the text, as it permeated the anthropological survey work of her father, whose initial fieldwork involving indigenous societies and cultures in California were driven by a feverish, colonial archival impulse to salvage soon to be lost ways of living.[129] For Le Guin, the vanished past inspires as much speculation as the distant future, offering fertile ground to cultivate ways to lovingly exist in place:

> Which is farther from us, father out of reach, more silent – the dead, or the unborn? Those whose bones lie under the thistles and the dirt and the tombstones of the Past, or those who slip weightless among molecules, dwelling where a century passes in a day, among the fair folk, under the great, bell-curved Hill of Possibility? […] There's no way to reach that lot by digging.[130]

Absence is inherent to the experience of landscape; its capacity to unsettle and disperse our perception outwards, elsewhere, on affective lines of flight.[131] In tension, absence also pulls us in, inviting us to it with stories, relations, dreams.[132] As a result, "the absencing fracture of landscape is simultaneously a sort of openness"[133] as moments of "distance and non-coincidence" texture our encounters and perceptions within place in ways that ensure they are never settled. For John Wylie, the 'geographies of love' thus concern less geographies of "fusion" or attachment (after Tuan), or relating and response (after Haraway), than moments of rupture and dispersal, originating out of the silence and absence that marks encounters with the other's unknowable excess.[134] In short, experiences of landscape are haunted by that which is not present, or unactualized.[135] The inarticulable gap at the centre of landscape invites the labour of love as an ongoing working through of the tensions between presence and absence.

Thus, the irresolvable absences at the heart of the Valley – a past unrecorded,; a future yet to come – beckon Le Guin into acts of topophilia, and *ACH*'s twin aims of mourning and worlding.[136] Itself an *expression* of love, this sf project attempts to fill this void with new, hopeful stories of living in place. As discussed, when constructing "her Valley", Le Guin sought indigenous communities in California and beyond that remained for inspiration and guidance in writing landscape as something lived in across generations, as part of wider ecology of beings – human and not. Yet, the absence of the indigenous communities who *did* once live in Napa Valley remains at the book's heart: "One may listen, but all the words of their language are gone, gone utterly."[137]

Moreover, this absence is integral to the central organising metaphor of Kesh culture: the hinge. Depicted as two interlocking spirals, it reflects the twin domains characterising Kesh ontology: the earth, or actuality, of living; and the sky, or domain of virtual possibility. At the centre of the hinge sits a gap, a space, between these sides of existence. That gap, "that leap, break, flip, that reversal from in to out, from out to in,"[138] is central to A culture that abides in fluidity and uncertainty as engines for difference and change. The Kesh practise a deep respect for the transitory, fleeting, and impermanent. They regularly empty their libraries of books that have long gone unread and burn them, creating space for new knowledge whilst

expressing faith in the idea that all that is useful is either already known or will be rediscovered when needed.

Le Guin's imaginary future is an intricately woven account of what might yet come to pass in the wake of the Anthropocene marked by a further absence, that of conventional narrative. Her refusal to indulge what Roland Barthes terms the "pleasure" of the text enables *ACH* to manifest in writing the Kesh's preference for the gyring returns over and above of the pursuance of linear progress. To build this world is a conjurer's attempt to shift the reader's perception of our own reality 'sideways'. And yet, dissonance at the heart of the hinge suggests uncertainty about whether we *can* perceive differently. The Valley remains aporetic, like the fantasy of fulsome dwelling itself.[139] As Pandora writes:

> When I take you to the Valley, you'll see the blue hills on the left and the blue hills on the right, the rainbow and the vineyards under the rainbow late in the rainy season, and maybe you'll say, "There it is, that's it!" But I'll say, "A little farther."[140]

In turn, the Kesh's world proliferates with the absence of our current ways of living. When such ways (re)appear – as in the Condor cities and tanks – they do not last long. *ACH* is bound up with *our* absence, as much as that of those preceding us. As well as working, via love, to recover a way of living in place, *ACH* reminds us that our world is, today, already ghosted by alternative forms of worlding. Such sentiment is evoked in one of the many poems, ostensibly shared with Pandora by her Valley informants, 'From the People of the Houses of Earth in the Valley to the Other People Who Were on Earth Before Them'. Here the Kesh appear to directly address our time from theirs, reminding us that the Valley exists here, now, as yet without expression:

> In your time when all the words were written,
> in your time when everything was fuel,
> in your time when houses hid the ground,
> we were among you.
> […]
> You did not know us. We were the words you had no language for.[141]

Arising out of absences – that of a past where people lived well, and a future where they do again – comes Le Guin's act of place-love in the Anthropocene. The text "encourages a conceptual reordering of the world," and offers "an entry into the reciprocal set of relations that characterise [Valley] life".[142] For the Kesh, storytelling is an act of intervention in the world.[143] *ACH* mobilises absence to manifest of a geography of love, and its invitation to consider how we might make a life amidst the ruins, returning to place and the demands of living well within it.

Conclusion

To conclude, we have drawn from literary geographies and contemporary work on narrating the Anthropocene to consider Ursula Le Guin's *Always Coming Home*, as a practical act of topophilia oriented towards future survival. As Haraway argues, "SF is storytelling and fact telling": as "theory in the mud" it proffers "the patterning of possible worlds and possible times, material-semiotic worlds, gone, here and yet to come."[144] Through speculatively offering a future society that lives in and through the specifics of place after the planet (and human bodies) have been ravaged and transformed by war, toxins, and climate collapse, Le Guin crafts a hopeful vision of future geography. She imagines one possible version of life beyond the Anthropocene, found in a specific place and way of living each carefully rendered in intricate, excessive detail. Informed by her engagements with indigenous knowledge, Le Guin seeks a means of articulating her deep love for a place haunted by absence. Her act of "storiation" works to "lead us away from hyperobjects, abstraction, and indifference."[145]

The Kesh represent one future amongst many, offering hope and a sense of the work required to think and make alternative modes of existence. *Always Coming Home* does not offer a future for all humanity. Neither does it suggest that the Anthropocene is a time to abandon the specificity of place and landscape – the animating particularities of encounters between people and geography. It is also a future packaged and stylised in accordance with conventions reminiscent of the salvage anthropology that motivated her father and others' engagements with California's indigenous societies during the early-twentieth century. Yet, what her work *does* offer is an attempt to craft the means for living *inside* these specificities.

Le Guin explicitly tethers the future of humanity to the *love* of (a) landscape. For her, California's Napa Valley affords the possibility of a life beyond the Anthropocene. Thus, her brand of sf showcases the ethical, imaginative and political work that returning to 'place portraiture' within cultural geographies might undertake.[146]

Crucially, such a project for Le Guin requires finding a language both appropriate to articulating the crises of our time, as well as manifesting ways of living that break free from the toxic narrative arc of 'progress' and move "sideways" or "yinwards". Of course, her means of doing so evoke further questions of how to reckon with anthropology's colonial history, as well as the challenge of engaging (and mobilising) indigenous ecological knowledge alongside the issues of romanticisation and appropriation.[147] Clearly, though, an overheating world is ill-served by 'hot utopias' that position salvation a mere technological 'novum' away. *ACH* rejects what we might call 'eco-modernism' in favour of evoking (and prefiguring) current enthusiasms for 'degrowth', local consumption, and slow living leading into more processual engagements with the environment that decentre the human. Le Guin's work *is* utopian in its hope for a better future, yet also disavows this impulse in both revelling in the gap between our present and that future, and choosing to locate it beyond the violent ruination of our current world. Le Guin presents attentive, empirical, lyrical place-writing as a possible strategy for manifesting practical ways of living that *can* open onto better relationships with our surroundings before such ruination – of the planet and the body – comes to pass.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the editors of the special issue for inviting this submission and for their support throughout the publication process. We also want to extend thanks to the editors at *cultural geographies* – specifically Harriet Hawkins and Anna Secor – for their assistance during the review process. Finally, our gratitude goes to the participants in 2020's the *Earth and its Others* online conference event, for engaging with our initial ideas; and to those who provided anonymous review feedback on the manuscript, which greatly assisted in bringing it up to standard.

Notes

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[3] D. Haraway, 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin', *Environmental Humanities*, VI, 2015, pp.159–65.

[4] B. McKibben, 'Worried? Us?', *Granta,* LXXX, 2003, pp.8-12.

[5] T. Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World,* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); regarding the implications for 'landscape' see: T. Morton, 'Zero Landscapes in the Time of Hyperobjects', *Graz Architectural Magazine,* VII, 2011, pp.78-87.

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[10] A. Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015); A. Tsing, 'Blasted Landscapes'.

[11] D. Chandler and J. Pugh, 'The Anthropocene Islands agenda', *Dialogues in Human Geography*, XI, 2021, p.448.

[12] C. Åsberg and R. Braidotti, 'Feminist Posthumanities: An Introduction' in C. Åsberg and R. Braidotti (eds), *A Feminist Companion to the Post Humanities* (London: Springer, 2018). p.12.

[13] R. Kitchin and J. Kneale, 'Science fiction or future fact? Exploring imaginative geographies of the new millennium', *Progress in Human Geography*, XXV, 2001, p.20; 32.

[14] See H. Gunderman, 'Geographies of Science Fiction, Peace, and Cosmopolitanism: Conceptualising Critical Worldbuilding Through a Lens of Doctor Who', *Literary Geographies,* VI, 2020, p.42; also J. Kneale, 'Plots: Space, conspiracy and contingency in William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* and *Spook Country*', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, XXIX, 2011, pp.169-86; L. Harris, 'Towards narrative political ecologies', *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space,* 2021, p.14.

[15] U. Le Guin, *Always Coming Home* (London: Grafton, 1988), p.xi.

[16] On the early work of Kroeber see I. Jackins, 'The First Boasian: Alfred Kroeber and Franz Boas', *American Anthropologist*, CIV, 2002, pp.520-532. Kroeber sets out an approach to studying culture as a 'superorganic' domain of existence to be known in terms of its material objects, practices, oral traditions and linguistic forms,

and their geographical distribution via works including: A. Kroeber, 'The Superorganic', *American Anthropologist,* XIX, 1917, pp.163-213; and *The Nature of Culture,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952). For a discussion of Kroeber's 'salvage' anthropology that sought to document pre-colonial indigenous societies in California, see: K. Lightfoot, *Indians, Missionaries and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers* (Berkley CA: University of California Press, 2005).

[17] See discussion of M. Rose, 'The question of culture in cultural geography: Latent legacies and potential futures', *Progress in Human Geography,* XLV, 2021, pp.958-960.

[18] Recent consideration of these issues features in the self-reflective discussions of Bawaka Country inc. S. Wright, S. Suchet-Pearson, K. Lloyd, L. Burarrwanga, R, Ganambarr, M. Ganambarr-Stubbs, B. Ganambarr, D. Maymuru and M. Graham, 'Everything is love: Mobilising knowledges, identities and places as Bawaka', in M. Palomino-Schalscha and N. Gombay (eds), *Indigenous Places and Colonial Spaces: The Politics of Intertwined Relations,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p.53-55.

[19] See H. Lorimer, 'Telling small stories: spaces of knowledge and the practice of geography', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* XXVIII, 2003, pp. 197-217; H. Lorimer and H. Parr, 'Excursions – telling stories and journeys', XXI, 2014, pp.543-7; E. Cameron, 'New Geographies of Story and Story Telling', *Progress in Human Geography,* XXXVI, 2012, pp.573-92; M. Rose, D. Cooper and H. Griffiths, 'Acknowledging the work of poetry: a collaborative commentary on Tim Cresswell's *Fence*', *cultural geographies*, XXV, 2018, pp.257-62;

[20] Le Guin has described the decision to subtitle the original published text with the words 'a novel' as "a commercial thing", reflecting her publisher's fears that the book text would be mistaken for anthropological account. Indeed, Le Guin revealed she encountered some initial difficulty with copyrighting the recordings of Kesh music as the material was assumed to have been recordings of traditional indigenous musicians, rather than an sf creation. See: U. Le Guin, T. Barton, M. Chodos-Irvine and G. Hersh, 'The Making of Always Coming Home: A panel at Mythopoeic Conference XIX Berkeley, California, July 31 1988', *Mythlore,* XVII, Spring 1991, pp.56-63.

[21] G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia Vol. 2* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p.2.

[22] C. Franko, 'Self-Conscious Narration as the Complex Representation of Hope in Le Guin's *Always Coming Home*', *Mythlore*, XV, 1989, p.57.

[23] U. Le Guin, *ACH,* p.163.

[24] U. Le Guin, *ACH,* p.xi.

[25] C. Franko, 'Self-Conscious Narration'.

[26] A full account of this cosmology is provided within 'The Serpentine Codex' in: U. Le Guin, *ACH,* pp.43-9.

[27] U. Le Guin, *ACH*, p.45.

[28] U. Le Guin, *ACH,* p.242.

[29] C. Franko, 'Self-Conscious Narration', p.59.

[30] U. Le Guin, *ACH,* pp.171-72.

[31] For discussions on the temporality of the Kesh, and some of these origin myths, see U. Le Guin, *Always Coming Home,* pp.160-169.

[32] U. Le Guin, *ACH,* p.29.

[33] C. Franko, 'Self-Conscious Narration', p.59.

[34] J. Moore, 'An Archaeology of the Future: Ursula Le Guin and Anarcho-Primitivism", *Foundation*, Spring 1995, p.39.

[35] U. Le Guin, *ACH,* p.159.

[36] U. Le Guin, *ACH,* p.380.

[37] U. Le Guin, *ACH,* p.379.

[38] See J. Moore, 'An Archaeology of the Future: Ursula Le Guin and Anarcho-Primitivism", *Foundation*, Spring 1995, p.32-39.

[39] U. Le Guin, 'The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction', in U. Le Guin, *Dancing at the Edge of the World,* (London: Paladin, 1989 [1986]), p.169.

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[43] K. Strauss, 'These Overheating Worlds'; M. Woods, 'Imagining the Anthropocenic City: the New Face of Urban Renewal in New Orleans and Josh Neufeld's A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge', *Literary Geographies,* IV, 2015, p.84-102.

[44] K. Buse, 'Genre, utopia', p.276.

[45] U. Le Guin, 'A Non-Euclidean view of California as a Cold Place to Be', in U. Le Guin, *Dancing at the Edge of the World,* (London: Paladin, 1989 [1982]), p. 90.

[46] U. Le Guin, *ACH,* pp.151; U. Le Guin *et al*, 'The Making of', p.61.

[47] U. Le Guin, 'A Non-Euclidean view', p.90.

[48] U. Le Guin, 'A Non-Euclidean view', p.85.

[49] U. Le Guin, 'A Non-Euclidean view', p.87; K. Buse, 'Genre, utopia', p.270.

[50] See S. Medlicott, 'Conceiving an Ecofeminist Utopia: Genre, Gender, and Ecology in Ursula K Le Guin's *Always Coming Home*', *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 2020, pp.1-14; K. Buse, 'Genre, utopia'; A. Chan Kit-Sze, 'Re-reading Ursula'; C. Franko, 'Self-Conscious Narration'.

[51] U. Le Guin, 'A Non-Euclidean view', p.96.

[52] S. Medlicott, 'Conceiving an Ecofeminist Utopia', p.10.

[53] U. Le Guin, 'A Non-Euclidean view', pp.81-2; 93.

[54] S. Medlicott, 'Conceiving an Ecofeminist Utopia, pp.7; D. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene,* (Durham NC: Duke, 2016).

[55] C. Franko, "Self-Conscious Narration", p.57.

[56] C. Åsberg and R. Braidotti, 'Feminist Posthumanities', p.13.

[57] U. Le Guin, *ACH*, p.239.

[58] As well as featuring in several Kesh parables and myths, and manifesting in the figure of the "backward-headed person", the nature of this "sickness" is the subject of a lengthy debate in a dialogue between various Kesh individuals and the representatives of the 'Warrior Lodge' that forms in response to the potential threat of the Condor people in the course of the 'Stone Telling' narrative: U. Le Guin, *ACH,* pp. 381-6.

[59] U. Le Guin, *ACH*, p.316.

[60] J. Moore, "An Archaeology", p.37.

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