

## CHAPTER I

# There are Only Islands After the End of the World

### Introduction: Thinking with Islands in the Anthropocene

Many Anthropocene scholars provide us with the key take-home message that they are writing ‘after the end of the world’ (Morton, 2013; Tsing, 2015; Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, 2016; Watts, 2018; and Gumbs, 2018 are just some examples). Not because they are necessarily writing about apocalypse, but because they are engaging the Anthropocene after the profound crisis of faith in Western modernity that has swept across academia in recent decades. For these contemporary thinkers, artists, activists, poets, policymakers, and many others besides, modern frameworks of reasoning which claimed to separate out humans from nature – to be able to grasp the ‘world’ as a coherent, controllable and manageable object – are part of the problem rather than the solution (Latour, 2017; Yusoff, 2018). In the Anthropocene, relational entanglements are understood to be too rich, vibrant and complex to be commanded in this modern way (Alaimo, 2016; Haraway, 2016). Indeed, it is widely noted that the question of ‘relational entanglements’

---

**How to cite this book chapter:**

Pugh, J. and Chandler, D. 2021. *Anthropocene Islands: Entangled Worlds*. Pp. 1–39. London: Ubiquity Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/book52.a>. License: CC-BY 4.0

is *the* problematic of contemporary thinking (Daou and Pérez-Ramos, 2016; Hamilton, 2017; Colebrook and Weinstein, 2017; Colebrook, 2019; Giraud, 2019).

Here, Derrida (2011: 9) resonates powerfully when he says that once faith in modern reasoning collapses we are faced with the stark realisation that '[t]here is no world, there are only islands'. Derrida proposed deconstruction as a method or approach for challenging the metaphysical claims of modern philosophy. For Derrida, islands were key framing devices because they are the most obvious spaces of disruptive relations which work against modernity's grasping or appropriative approach to the world and its metaphysical grounding propositions. This book expands upon Derrida's observation to analyse how *work with islands has become productive in the development of many of the core conceptual frameworks for Anthropocene thinking*. Islands have become important liminal and transgressive spaces for work on the Anthropocene, both inside and outside the modernist world, both real and imagined, from which a great deal of Anthropocene thinking is drawing out and developing alternatives to hegemonic, modern, 'mainland' or 'one world' thinking.

If we were to summarise the contemporary shift towards working with islands in a set of concepts it would be those of 'relational entanglements', 'relational awareness' and 'feedbacks'. These are the key tropes of this book. As we explore throughout, in contemporary debates about the Anthropocene, islands are regularly invoked as having a different set of capacities, affordances and potentialities to modern or mainland life. The widely heralded capacity of islands to respond to the environment, as shaped by relational agency, is the key way of understanding why islands have become significant for so much contemporary thinking (Bahn and Flenley, 1992; Eriksen, 1993; McMillen et al, 2014; Robertson, 2018; Watts, 2018; Barad, 2019; Dawson, 2019). Islands exemplify how all life in the Anthropocene is relationally entangled and co-dependent (Morton, 2016a; Wolfe, 2017). For those concerned with the hubris and counterproductive nature of modern frameworks of reasoning, the problem is their neglect

of relationships and their narrow focus upon essences and linear or universal causality. The relations and feedback effects associated with the Anthropocene are widely held to be masked by and hidden from a reductionist modern ontology and epistemology (Nancy, 2014; Colebrook, 2016; Clark and Yusoff, 2017). Thus, working with islands plays an increasingly notable role in Anthropocene thinking as it is precisely with islands that these relational effects come to the fore (Handley, 2015; Paravisini-Gilbert, 2015; Ingersoll, 2016; Camus, 2018; Wu et al, 2019; Elias, 2019). Islands are an attraction and lure for contemporary scholarship which seeks to challenge the hubris of modern frameworks of reasoning (Percival, 2008; De Souza et al, 2015; Tsing, 2015; Morton, 2016a; ecoLogicStudio, 2017a; Hayward, 2018; DeLoughrey, 2019; Suliman et al, 2019; Perez, 2020a; Clark and Szerszynski, 2021; Burgos Martinez, 2020; forthcoming). In modernity, the separateness, isolation and the relational dependencies of islands appeared to be their weakness, holding back island development and productivity. However, these relational sensitivities are, today, understood by many to be key to planetary survival (Teaiwa, 2007; Kueffer and Kaiser-Bunbury, 2014; Bird Rose, 2017a; 2017b).

We are not suggesting that there is such a thing as ‘island thinking’; there are, of course, only variations in ways of drawing upon and working with islands in different places and at different times in history. Under older European and modern thought the island was often understood as insular, isolated, liminal or backward, even populated by savages, when compared to continental, mainland reasoning (Malinowski, 1921; Grove, 1995; Glissant, 1997; Brathwaite, 1999; Gillis, 2004; Baldacchino, 2006; Royle, 2007; Olwig, 2007; McKittrick, 2006; McMahan, 2016; Crane and Fletcher, 2017; Riquet, 2020). Building directly from these older narratives, in debates about climate change, islands are still of course frequently reductively framed in Western and modern fantasies of control; understood as helpless, disposable or in need of saving by others (Farbotko, 2010; Cameron, 2011; Proctor, 2013; DeLoughrey, 2019). Here, islanders are ‘often portrayed as passive victims waiting to be saved from their sinking islands’ (Suliman et al,

2019: 304). Yet, the configurations and stakes of debate are also rapidly changing as well. Thus, this book analyses how the island is being re-thought, worked with and drawn upon in the development of contemporary thinking. In particular, we are going to explore how islands have shifted from the margins and become more important to many international debates, precisely because, after the supposed closure of the modernist imaginary of progress, islands have emerged as key sites for understanding relational entanglements which have come to the forefront in the search for alternative forms of thought and practice in the Anthropocene.

With ‘relational entanglement’ widely understood to be the central problematic of the Anthropocene, specific geographical forms and cultures have come to the fore, which enable the drawing out and development of this key focus and concern. As Donna Haraway (2016: 57) says, ‘[i]t matters which thoughts think thoughts’. Compared to islands, other geographical forms, like valleys, deserts and mountains, seem less productive when it comes to working through the problematic of relational entanglements. These geographical forms therefore appear less often, while in contrast, the island has become arguably one of *the* most emblematic figures for debates about the Anthropocene and related forces such as global warming, rising sea levels, ongoing colonialisms, intensifying ecological degradation and species loss, the ecological effects of mainland Western consumerism, nuclear testing and fallout, changing weather patterns such as intensified hurricanes and cyclones, and ocean acidification, to name just a few examples (Haraway, 2016; Kelman, 2018; Fitzpatrick and Erlandson, 2018; Baldacchino, 2020).

The important contention of this book, however, is that the rise to prominence of islands in broader contemporary debates about the Anthropocene has not only come about because islands are high-profile *symbols* of transforming planetary conditions, or because islands might be understood as smaller and more manageable ‘test tubes’ for policy and scientific experimentation. Islands have long been understood conceptually and empirically, across a very broad range of disciplines, as important spaces for varying

expressions of relational entanglements – from Darwin (2010) and Mead (2001), through to Strathern (2004), Glissant (1997), Walcott (1998), Hau'ofa (2008), Mitchell (1978), Condé (1992) and Brathwaite (1999). In many influential traditions of Western critical theory, including most notably those of Deleuze (2004) and Derrida (2011), the island has regularly been employed as a key figure which explicitly disrupts the grasp of modernist, linear and reductionist 'mainland' thinking. In island studies more generally, for many years now, a very broad range of island scholarship has understood islands as key 'relational spaces'.<sup>1</sup>

This book analyses how islands are being worked with, thought about and engaged in contemporary approaches to the Anthropocene. We examine how the liminal figure of the island is significant in the development of new or alternative approaches to ontology and epistemology, distinct from modern, mainland, thought. Here we want to be clear about this central claim. Of course we are not saying that all Anthropocene thinking chooses to explicitly engage the geographical form of the island, but it seems very clear today that a concern with islands' relational entanglements, affordances and feedbacks, regularly surfaces and is conceptually deployed in debates about the Anthropocene, marking islands as particularly productive for Anthropocene thinking.

In researching this book it has become clear to us that the island cannot be understood as coming to the fore only *after* the development of new approaches, alert to seeing relational interdependencies. To simply focus upon the development of relational ontologies and epistemologies in the minds of Anthropocene thinkers would be to deny the important 'work' that particular geographical forms and cultures, such as those associated with islands, are doing in these developments. The ways in which islands are being thought about and conceptualised in these debates, we argue, is *generative* of relational thinking in the Anthropocene, rather than merely an example of its application. Thus, we do not only write *about* islands in the Anthropocene. Rather, *Anthropocene Islands: Entangled Worlds' draws out heuristically and examines thinking with islands after the end of the world.*<sup>2</sup> Geography

*matters* for the development of thought in the world. Put simply, there are not islands, on the one hand, and the human mind on the other. If we accept that developments in broader social and human thought, and the material world are not separate but profoundly interconnected (i.e. that there really is no human/nature divide), then islands can be understood as important seeds for the conceptualisation of the Anthropocene; a liminal entry point for wider contemporary forms of thought. This is the generative power and lure of working with islands for Anthropocene thinking.

Whilst, as we will consider, the recognition of the conceptual generative power of islands has been influenced by prominent island scholarship and research itself around the world going back many decades, we cannot understand the broader shifts taking place in Anthropocene thinking without also addressing the important place of contemporary shifts in the Western academy as well. Bruno Latour (1993) has argued that ‘We Have Never Been Modern’. Whether that is true or not for the Western, mainland subject Latour was writing for, depends upon how literally we take the modernist imaginary. What is true is that islands ‘were never modern’ in the Western imaginary in the particular sense that islands, by definition, imply a series of separations that, throughout the history of modernity, were seen to cut off islands from mainlands (Gillis, 2004). Island scholars regularly make the point that islands have often symbolised a ‘difference’ or ‘otherness’ which stems from this separation (Glissant, 1997; Beer, 1997; Brathwaite, 1999; Baldacchino, 2006; Grydehøj, 2017). Under frameworks of modernity, islands were frequently seen to be lacking the essence of European ‘mainland’ forms of being which were cast in terms of civilisation, progress and advancement (Edmond and Smith, 2003; McMahan, 2016). While these attributes were considered as positive in modernity, island being was, by contrast, seen as ‘backward’, ‘closer to nature’ or ‘slower’.<sup>3</sup> Yet today, as we argue in this book, with modernist assumptions being profoundly questioned in a world of global warming, catastrophic climate change and species extinction, island ‘differences’ – the attributes, relational affordances and powers associated

with islands – have put working with islands to the forefront of the Anthropocene.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this book is to conceptually clarify and draw out this shift. Working with islands or relational thought per se is not one homogenous ‘other’ to modernist or mainland approaches, and so it is important to start a conversation about how we engage in working through the rich variety of possibilities and opportunities that island-oriented approaches afford today. In order to initiate this process, we carve out four tendencies or analytics which position the figure of the island within broader debates: these we categorise in terms of ‘Resilience’ (discussed in Chapter 2), ‘Patchworks’ (Chapter 3), ‘Correlation’ (Chapter 4) and ‘Storiation’ (Chapter 5).<sup>5</sup> They mark out two sets of conceptual sliding scales which, in the first half of the book, focus upon ontology (Resilience and Patchworks), and, in the second half, onto-epistemology (Correlation and Storiation). By using a conceptual sliding scale or continuum, we seek to illustrate how Anthropocene thinking emerges as a distinct set of ontological and onto-epistemological approaches, increasingly losing its modernist constraints. Thus, ‘Patchworks’ can be seen as expanding and reworking the island thinking which informs ‘Resilience’ ontologies; and the same can be said of how the onto-epistemology of ‘Storiation’ reworks that of ‘Correlation’.

Throughout the book, we analyse how the emergence of these four analytical framings draws heavily upon islands as a reserve for non-modern imaginaries, of forces of relation and feedback, and of possible alternative ways of working and conceptualising that go beyond the limits of modernist framings of linear causality, universality and homogeneity. Heuristically working across a wide spectrum of authors and works, we gather a range of key examples, in order to illustrate how island imaginaries of human/world relations are shaped in non-modernist ways in the Anthropocene. In the conclusion (Chapter 6), we consider how our initial set of four analytic distinctions could facilitate discussion around a critical agenda for contemporary island studies. Thus, we see this book as the starting point for a broader project – which we are

calling ‘Anthropocene Islands’ – focusing upon conceptually and heuristically exploring the stakes of island-work for contemporary thought and the Anthropocene problematic. To be absolutely clear, as we stated in the Preface, we do not see what we present in this book as the closure of the project but rather as the initial opening for a critical agenda which we seek to develop over the coming years.

### Relational Ontology

As just noted, the approaches to relational ontology examined in this book are those of ‘Resilience’ (Chapter 2) and what we call ‘Patchworks’ (Chapter 3). As a brief summary of their key characteristics before we get into the details: Resilience, as an expression of working with islands, draws out how the resilient capacities of island life and islanders are part and parcel of spatially and temporally fixed assemblages with autonomous capacities for self-ordering or adaptation. Resilience thus traces and responds to relational entanglements, affordances and feedback effects over space and time as constituted in Newtonian or Euclidian geometry. Central here is how Resilience thinking draws upon the immanent interactive powers of life itself – exemplified in many of these debates by island life – as a self-regulating system. As we will shortly elaborate, for us this is a key reason for islands and islanders’ emergence as high-profile agential spaces for Resilience thinking in debates about the Anthropocene (McMillen et al, 2014; Petzold and Ratter, 2015; Raygorodetsky, 2017; Pugh, 2017; Nicks, 2017; Chandler and Pugh, 2020a; 2020b; Kelman, 2020; Pugh, 2018; Baldacchino, 2018; Camp et al, 2019). Because, as the nineteenth-century naturalist Charles Darwin brought to popular attention, islands are remarkable localised sites of relational entanglements and feedback effects.

What we are calling ‘Patchwork ontologies’, which we see as an intensification and development of the key relational focus of Resilience, can be located towards the other end of this ontological continuum or sliding scale. Patchwork approaches are becoming



increasingly prevalent in debates about the Anthropocene, drawing heavily upon the powers of islands, foregrounding ontological tropes of relational entanglement and feedback effects. But, in contrast to Resilience, Patchwork approaches tend to have an open ontology of spatial and temporal becoming. They do not draw so much upon an imaginary of islands existing as self-regulating systems, tracing continuities in relation across linear time into an ever more efficient order, as in Resilience. Rather, towards the other end of the spectrum, Patchwork ontologies accept the Anthropocene as a condition which we are all *already* in. They actively and productively ‘stay with the trouble’ (Haraway, 2016) of relational disturbances and emergent effects (Tsing, 2015; Daou and Pérez-Ramos, 2016; Herrington and Lokman, 2016; Bird Rose, 2017a; 2017b; Watts, 2018), affirming the creative possibilities of a world no longer bound or constrained by the modernist imaginary.

We highlight the importance of working and thinking with islands for the development of Patchwork approaches via a wide range of examples, examined in Chapter 3. These include, among many others, Anna Tsing’s (2015) engagements with Japanese islanders’ practices; Deborah Bird Rose’s (2017a; 2017b) work with the Aborigines of Australia; Phil Hayward’s (2012b) with Haida Gwaii; Daniel Daou and Pablo Pérez-Ramos’ (2016) with island thinking in contemporary design; Mimi Sheller’s (2020) with local Caribbean island practices; Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Stephens’ (2017) with the ‘anti-explorer’ method; Teresia Teaiwa’s (2007) islanding as a ‘verb’; Juliana Spahr’s (2005) poetry about Hawai’i; and Laura Watts’ (2018) engagements with Orkney islanders. Our argument throughout is that it *matters* that authors choose to engage and draw heavily upon islands and islanders. Invoking certain island imaginaries – and islands’ relational entanglements, affordances and feedbacks in particular – is generative for such Patchwork approaches. These, as we examine, focus upon engendering or inculcating other ways of becoming than those of Resilience. Islands are not worlds to be managed or adapted to but instead become a powerful way of

expressing, opening up and understanding non-modern processes of world-making.

## *Resilience – Chapter 2*

Turning to the details of these relational ontologies, Chapter 2 examines the heuristic of ‘Resilience’, which we articulate here as the field through which island ontologies have been most obviously adopted by mainstream academic and policy-thinking (Briguglio and Kisanga, 2004; Alliance Magazine, 2012; Baldacchino, 2018; Pugh and Chandler, 2020a; Grydehøj and Kelman, 2020; Kelman, 2020). Resilience is conceptualised by us as an analytical field through which islands have emerged prominently in postmodern or non-modern framings of governance, as an alternative to linear thinking about progress and sustainability in the Anthropocene. Resilience seeks to capture the art of adaptation or of adaptive change in relation to changing circumstances (Grove, 2018; Anderson et al, 2020; Wakefield, 2020). At its most fundamental level, it presupposes a generative or productive relation across and within actors and agencies – not the importing of resources or external assistance – so it is the relational or contextual powers and affordances of these actors and agencies which are the key strengths to draw upon. Chapter 2 thus examines how, whereas modernity is seen to homogenise and reduce life to the lowest common denominator, repressing any form of being outside the norm, by contrast, drawing upon, engaging and working with islands has been significant to the rise of Resilience thinking because islands are imagined to have the opposite powers: the powers of creative and productive differentiation and individuation.

What enables islands to intensify relationalities, differentiation and individuation? Here Chapter 2 turns to the work of Charles Darwin, and the power he attributed to islands in his paradigm-shifting perspective of life itself; not only exemplified, but *revealed* to the rest of the world, by island life. Darwin famously theorised the radiating vibrancy of life in the form of a branching evolutionary

tree, where different environmental opportunities enabled different answers to the problems of life. Species evolved and adapted differently on the Galápagos because different island ecologies facilitated and enabled this differentiation. The key word for Darwin was thus ‘divergence’ (Quammen, 2018a: 6), which emerged from the separation and bounded nature of islands, and in focusing upon this he drew attention to how islands are powerful differentiating ‘engines’ for life itself. Darwin highlighted how islands reveal how all life is interactive and profoundly relational, with each island context drawing out different potentials. Darwin was obsessed with the power of islands – this ‘island effect’. Thus, with mockingbirds:

These gray, long-beaked birds differed from island to island but so subtly that they seemed to have diverged from one stock. Diverged? Three kinds of mockingbird? Varying slightly, this island to that? Yes: they appeared distinct but similar, in a way that suggested relatedness. If that impression were true, Darwin confided to Henslow [his Cambridge biology professor], confessing an intellectual heresy, ‘such facts would undermine the stability of the species.’ (Quammen, 2018a: 4)

Darwin’s work on islands brought attention to the differentiating, creative and adaptive potentialities of life itself. For Darwin, cats on an island, like lizards on a tiny Croatian island, or the finches on the Galápagos, do not evolve to become better cats per se, but ‘better cats for catting on that particular island’ (Quammen, 2018a: 6). There is a ‘law of adaptation’ at work (Quammen, 2018a: 6). Darwin’s heresy was to overturn the idea that evolutionary speciation is linear, or to do with the essence of cat-being, but rather non-linear, to do with the relational context of cat-emerging or cat-becoming. Species do not evolve in the sense of a linear telos of ‘progress’ (Quammen, 2018a: 6). Thus, as Riquet (2020: 246) says, Darwin brought about ‘a radical change of perspective [about islands] ... a relational perspective.’ ‘Islands allow Darwin to imagine ... a decentred world in flux, a conglomerate of criss-crossing lines’ (Riquet, 2020: 260). Since Darwin’s time, island life has become a high-profile symbol of non-linear emergence

and diversification because islands are seen to enable contexts to intensify and magnify interactive feedback effects (Kueffer and Kaiser-Bunbury, 2014). In this way, as Gregory Bateson (2000: 455, 457) acknowledged, the subject of evolution is no longer an isolated or autonomous one but the ‘organism plus environment’ or ‘organism-in-its-environment’.

Chapter 2 examines how these creative attributes of island life are seen to be important to Resilience-thinking, because they demonstrate that adaptation to change is not only possible but is an ontologically inherent power of life itself. Without Darwin’s understanding of how (island) life itself works, resilience theories could not have emerged in the way that they did. Central for us is also how early case studies of resilience frequently started by examining island life (Gane, 1975; Waddell, 1975; O’Keefe and Conway, 1977; Westman, 1986; Kelman, 2020). As the highly influential resilience scholar C. S. Holling noted in an interview about the resilience programmes which he initiated: ‘When we considered whether someone would be good for the programme, the first question we’d ask was “Is he/she good on islands?”’ (Alliance Magazine, 2012).<sup>6</sup> Given the longstanding understanding of islands as both laboratories for Western science *and* as key sites of creative adaptation, relational affordances and feedback effects, it is not surprising that islands ‘provided a significant part of the earlier baseline for understanding vulnerability and resilience’ (Kelman, 2020: 10). Early resilience theories drew upon island research extensively; including in Fiji (Gane, 1975), the Caribbean (O’Keefe and Conway, 1977) and Papua New Guinea (Waddell, 1975). Foregrounding islands as intensive sites of relational entanglements, affordances and feedback effects, Westman (1986: 5), for example, noted that the prediction of resilient properties of ecosystems in the Mediterranean can be approached ‘through knowledge of the autoecological adaptations of key species to the stressor, or through cumulative experience of the response to disturbance at the community level’.

The focus upon relational contingencies and emergence also crucially reverses the epistemological and governing hierarchies

of island vs. mainland. It challenges the top-down, modern and external centralisation of knowledge and power off-island, instead switching to focus on the active possibilities and relational potentialities of (island) life itself. We explore how today it is commonplace for international policymakers, academics and practitioners to work with islands in these ways and for them to highlight how islands are a resource for generating new understandings and capacities for Resilience (McMillen et al, 2014; Petzold and Ratter, 2015; Raygorodetsky, 2017; Ellsmoor, 2019). It is important to be clear how island life is seen as an important resource for these authors. They do not mean that island life is a resource in terms of a pile of materials that can be catalogued, extracted or worked upon through new or more productive technologies (as in Robinson Crusoe's obsessively modern listing and recording of facts about the island he was castaway upon). Instead, they mean that island life is necessarily always in excess of being: i.e. that there is always an untapped potential to the relational entanglements, affordances and feedback effects of life itself – notable in island life – in the here and now.

We present and understand Resilience as an analytic that works upon these virtual potentialities of (island) life. Thereby seeking to direct, instrumentalise and governmentalise approaches, often illustrating how the resilient capacities of (island) life are part and parcel of whole (island) socio-ecological systems. It is this drive that has made commonplace the understanding that islanders' knowledge systems include 'valuable insights on seasonal cycles, ecological processes, and the management of biocultural diversity that are relevant at a broad scale for understanding resilience and adaptability to the social-ecological effects of climate change' (McMillen et al, 2014: 44). Island life is widely understood as constituting a living system that the rest of the world may learn from; exemplifying the creative potentialities or 'emergent' powers of life itself – 'system effects' – that cannot be accessed directly by way of modern frameworks of reasoning. Whilst the 'Resilience' paradigm proliferates across many disciplines and settings (see Chandler, 2014; 2018a; Evans and Reid, 2014; Pugh, 2014; Grove,

2018; Wakefield, 2020), we examine how working with islands has historically been and today remains significant to Resilience as a key ontological framing for many concerned with contemporary thinking. As we have said above, not all Resilience thinking explicitly engages islands. Rather, it is that the island, as an important figure for working through the central problematic of relational entanglements, makes it particularly generative and productive for contemporary engagements with the Anthropocene.

### *Patchworks – Chapter 3*

Chapter 3 turns to explore what we call ‘Patchwork ontologies’, which we draw out as a characteristic of the work of many scholars, experimental artists, designers and activists engaged with debates about the Anthropocene and who work with islands (examples include, among others, Spahr, 2005; Teaiwa, 2007; Hayward, 2012a; 2012b; Daou and Pérez-Ramos, 2016; Yountae, 2016; Tsing, 2015; Roberts and Stephens, 2017; Bird Rose, 2017a; 2017b; Wetlands Wanderers, 2018; Watts, 2018; Sheller, 2020). As Craig Santos Perez (forthcoming) saliently notes, islands ‘have received unprecedented attention’ in recent years, not only in mainstream policymaking and Resilience debates, but also in the work of many high-profile critical theorists, from Donna Haraway (Hadfield and Haraway, 2019) to Anna Tsing (2015). As an island scholar and poet, Perez is attuned to this ‘hyper-visibility’ of islands. This attention to islands is highlighted, foregrounding how even as islands may sometimes appear to be ‘backdrops’ or ‘in the background’ of critical developments in Anthropocene thinking, there is no denying that a great deal of contemporary critique, artist practice and activism is being developed from work on islands and with islanders.<sup>7</sup>

Compared to Resilience, an important point, for us, about Patchwork ontologies is that they shift the register of debate towards affirmation, accepting that we are all already in the Anthropocene.<sup>8</sup> Patchwork approaches develop and transform relational ontology so that the modernist imaginary of islands existing in a flat,

two-dimensional space, side-by-side, tracing continuities in relation across linear time, is replaced with a more open ontology of spatial and temporal becoming (Glissant, 1997; Last, 2017). While this remains a relational understanding, Patchwork ontologies are more disruptive, destabilising the ‘solutionist’ or instrumentalising aspects of Resilience; making Patchwork approaches more open, less governmentalising and human-centred. If Resilience approaches seek to conserve modernity in the face of transformative planetary change, then the work of what we call ‘Patchwork ontologists’ – such as Anna Tsing, Juliana Spahr, Deborah Bird Rose, Brian Roberts and Michelle Stephens, Gilles Clément, Phil Hayward, Mimi Sheller and Laura Watts – foregrounds how entanglements of relation are never fixed. They thereby disrupt modern and Euclidian notions of space-time in distinction to those of Resilience.

Rejecting those who reduce and homogenise debate to a coherently discrete or separated island-system of relations, Patchwork ontologies instead focus upon patchwork islands of disturbances and emergent effects forming in nodes or knots of assemblages across time and space. It is the focus upon the disruptive power and the intensification of relational disturbances and effects (rather than modern, flat notions of space-time) which marks out Patchwork approaches; and it means that they cannot be easily ‘exported’ as a set of instrumentalising techniques or practices, as in the comparatively managerial ontological imaginary of Resilience. Patchwork ontologies work with islands to reframe the stakes of engaging the Anthropocene more openly and radically than Resilience – in Patchwork approaches the world dissipates into *patchworks* of islands of relational co-entanglements and affects, so that drawing upon islands in this way becomes the ontology of the world (which, as we shortly examine, enables Glissant (1997) to be read as one of the key early exponents of a Patchwork ontology).

For Patchwork ontologies, islands are not merely worlds that we are in; rather, as Glissant (1997), Tsing (2015), Roberts and Stephens (2017) and Bird Rose (2017b) variously draw out, islands are also ways of expressing and understanding our own processes of world-making. Thinking with islands then importantly

becomes a ‘verb’<sup>9</sup> (Teaiwa, 2007: 514; see also Baldacchino and Clark, 2013; Yountae, 2016) and a practice of opening ourselves to relational affects and knots of co-relational entanglements, rather than one of Resilience which tends to reify the world and suborn us to it. In the Patchwork ontologies we discuss in Chapter 3 – such as Tsing’s (2015) examination of Japanese islander satoyama practices, Hayward’s (2012a; 2012b) conceptualisation of the ‘aquapelago’, Brian Roberts and Michelle Stephens’ (2017) conceptualisation of the ‘anti-explorer method’, Bird Rose’s (2017a) engagement with the Aboriginal islander aesthetic of ‘shimmer’, the Wetlands Wanderers (2018) ‘Startling Adventures of RonR’, and Spahr’s (2005) *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs* about Hawai’i – the focus is upon how we make, explore and journey, rather than merely reflect upon and become more aware of our relational interconnections so as to become resilient.

Patchwork ontologies are highly pragmatic, whereby creative intermingling has results which are frequently surprising, and indeed often inspirational, rather than something intentional or governmentalizable. Importantly, Patchwork approaches do not draw upon an immanent dynamic or trajectory, as in the case of Darwin’s understanding of the evolution of species on islands. Instead, they often emphasise the importance of ‘staying with the trouble’ (Haraway, 2016), as life – regularly exemplified in these developments by island life – becomes less predictable, confineable and graspable in the Anthropocene (Tsing, 2015; Watts, 2018). Again, our point is that the material world, and the geographical forms which rise to the surface in these debates, matter for the development of thought in the world (Whitehead, 1967; 1968; 1985). The central focus of Patchwork approaches is ‘giving-on-and-with’ (Glissant, 1997: 142) the power of disturbances and emergent effects, where, in the work of many influential Anthropocene scholars, activists, artists and experimental designers examined in Chapter 3, island ontology becomes a key resource to draw upon and to stimulate thinking about how relationality is radically *open* and contains potentialities or possibilities which are beyond our capacities to predict or to control.



Chapter 3 examines how a key resource for what we call Patchwork ontology is Glissant's (1997) seminal text *Poetics of Relation*. Here Glissant's (1997) argument is that life (exemplified for him, above all else, by island life) is a coming to consciousness within what he calls the opacity of 'Relation'.<sup>10</sup> Conceptually speaking, for Glissant (1997), Relation is not actually an entity as such which could be transparently grasped and instrumentalised. Relation is instead the very process or *movement* itself, living through and with the disturbances and effects – of colonial legacies, island geographies, oceanic currents, changing shorelines, up to and including elemental forces themselves – that are formed and continuously re-formed to make up (island) life. In Glissant's (1997: 33) work, which examined the Middle Passage, creolisation, and the Caribbean, he argued that these islands were 'explosive regions' where Relation is 'gathering strength'. For Glissant (1997: 191–192), modern, mainland frameworks of reasoning had reductively and oppressively focused on how it was possible 'to grasp' the world; so that 'the verb *to grasp* contains the movement of hands that grab their surroundings and bring them back to themselves' (exemplified for Glissant by the grasping hands of colonialism on islands). By contrast, Glissant's radically open engagement with 'Relation' pushes relational thinking with islands to the point that we can never stand outside and grasp; only ever live within and experience 'the texture of the weave', living with and through the turbulence and relational effects (Glissant, 1997: 190).

Thus, as Glissant (1997: 206) says, while walking along a beach in Martinique and looking out to St Lucia:

I have always imagined that these depths navigate a path beneath the sea in the west and the ocean in the east and that, though we are separated, each in our own Plantation, the now green balls and chains have rolled beneath from one island to the next, weaving shared rivers that we shall open up when it is our time and where we shall take our boats. From where I stand I see Saint Lucia on the horizon. Thus, step by step, calling up the expanse, I am able to realize this seabow.

Here, Glissant is not saying that it is possible to grasp or ‘stand outside’ of the island, or the world, observing it from an objective or true position in time or space, as in the ways of modern, mainland, or Cartesian frameworks of reasoning (or, indeed, in the confined island imaginaries of Resilience thinking). Rather, Glissant is contemplating how the totality of Relation makes an impression and manifests locally; how island life, and his own life as someone from Martinique, emerges from this coming to consciousness in Relation (Burns, 2012; Dash, 2006; Pugh, 2016a). Glissant (1997: 142) advocates a *poetics* which seeks to dig deeper into the world through ‘giving-on-and-with’, challenging universal, generalising or transcendent totalities in its ever ‘more stringent demands for specificity’. Glissant’s poetics is a practical one in which the subject is no longer an ‘observer’ of relations but practically worlding itself in a concrete, embedded and embodied way.

As Drabinski (2019: x) says of Glissant’s work, ‘[t]hinking in ruins, which is productive rather than (solely) melancholic, is already thinking the archipelago as a geography of the globe and the geography of thought’. For Glissant, the power and opening up of Relation is reflected particularly well in today’s crisis of faith in modern reasoning which had sought to grasp, instrumentalise, command and control the world as a coherent and manageable object. Thus, at the end of the *Poetics of Relation*, touching upon contemporary debates about the Anthropocene by reflecting upon the fallout from Chernobyl, Glissant (1997: 202–203) says:

What was the infinite detour taken by this nuclear catastrophe, whose worldwide repercussions were felt among the destitute as well as among the well-to-do, in savanna villages, probably, just as much as in skyscrapers, and which consequently fed the most passively experienced of commonplaces in the planetary consciousness, that led it also to be condensed into what seemed to be an involuntary poem, through which it happened that the world could speak to us? The landscape forced its way through the dazzling barrier, fixing upon the superficial brilliance this terse scrap of utterance. ... The circle opens up once more, at the same time that it builds in volume. Thus, at every moment Relation

becomes complete but also is destroyed in its generality by exactly what we put into action in a particular time and place ... We leave the matrix abyss and the immeasurable abyss for this other one in which we wander without becoming lost.

Glissant's work allows us to draw out some of the key elements or aspects of what we call Patchwork ontologies, discussed in Chapter 3, in which islands are no longer conceptualised as confined sites of fixed spatial differentiation and individuation. Instead, islands increasingly function as the ontology of the world; where the fall-out of a nuclear plume, the Japanese islander *satoyama* practices discussed by Tsing (2015), the 'anti-explorer method' of Roberts and Stephens (2017), or the contemporary design processes influenced by thinking with islands as key sites in the 'Age of Entanglement' (Daou and Pérez-Ramos, 2016: 9), all highlight specific co-relational entanglements, and the living of life 'in the ruins' of modernity. It is in paying attention to these patchworks of disturbances and effects, and the pragmatic actions put in place at a particular time and place, that, for such approaches, 'we wander without becoming lost' (Glissant, 1997: 203).<sup>11</sup> Thus, we examine how drawing upon and working with islands in these debates and developments in critique, art and activism brings to the fore the figurations and co-shaping of relations, emergent disturbances and effects, which we characterise as Patchwork ontologies.

### Onto-epistemology

After establishing that engaging islands and islanders in the Anthropocene is seen as productive for the generation of relational ontologies, the second half of the book turns to how islands have been worked with in the production of *distinctive relational approaches to epistemology*: those of *onto-epistemology*. In a relational ontology, questions of epistemology are not entirely separate from those of ontology, but are 'onto-epistemological': in other words, knowing is not a product of passive reflection but inextricable from being itself. In Chapters 4 and 5 we suggest that

Anthropocene thinking with islands about epistemology can be approached via two lenses or tendencies, demarcating two extremes of a sliding scale or continuum in which forms of relation become increasingly strange or weird from a modernist perspective: *Correlation* and *Storiation*.

Just as island relational ontologies could be grasped on a disruptive continuum, captured at either pole through the lenses of Resilience or of Patchworks, depending upon whether we are in or beyond modernity, understood as a grid of fixed space and time, the same is the case when it comes to how we think with islands onto-epistemologically. In terms of the heuristic schema of onto-epistemology, the analytical approach of Correlation, like the ontological approach of Resilience, marks one end of the continuum. Correlation, while moving away from linear causal understandings, nevertheless maintains a modernist Newtonian conception of linear time and flat Euclidean space. At the other end of the continuum, Storiation, much like Patchwork ontologies, radically disrupts flat or modern notions of space and time. As we have emphasised above, for us this distinction is absolutely key for grappling with the changing ways in which Anthropocene thinking draws upon and works with islands to increasingly displace and erase modernist categories of thought; bringing to the forefront the non-modern implications of relational entanglements and feedbacks.

Chapter 4 analyses how Correlation approaches to onto-epistemology maintain a knowing human subject and a world of patterned regularity amenable to policy intervention. Here, the island emerges as a ‘correlational technology’ where island changes are often seen as the first signs or indicators of the looming dangers of climate change (Watts, 2018; Baldacchino, 2020). As Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2019: 166) says, ‘the island is understood not just as the Earth, but as its anticipated future’ (Fitzpatrick and Erlandson, 2018; Watts, 2018; Larjosto, 2020). Central for us, however, is not the fact that islands are vulnerable or exposed but rather the logic at play in seeing or perceiving something through changes in another entity: an (onto)epistemology of inter-relation

and correlation rather than one of linear cause-and-effect. In these approaches it is not so much that climate change ‘causes’ island changes but more that it manifests as or, in fact, *is* these changes. In onto-epistemological framings we move from a temporal and spatial line of movement to one of synchronicity – which enables humans to better register, read and sense transforming planetary conditions through their real-time effects. In Chapter 4 we explore how drawing upon and working with islands has become widely understood to be generative of Correlational approaches. The now ubiquitous trope, of islands as the ‘canary in the coalmine’ for climate change, dramatically illustrates how Correlation is one of the most prevalent framings for grasping the meaning and impact of planetary change in contemporary academic and policy-making literatures.

By contrast, approaches of Storiatio, examined in Chapter 5, forcefully disrupt the modern binaries of subject/object, thought/being – and thus move beyond Correlation’s focus upon *inter*-relation – problematising the way that modern thought maintains the separation of entities in time and space. Instead, Storiatio onto-epistemologies engage islands and island cultures as significant ‘holding’ sites, not generating knowledge of relations but highlighting the disruptive potential of the *e/affects*, traces and afterlives of actions and events by way of speculative approaches and practices. Thus, Storiatio has an explicit concern for the ways in which the ongoing legacies (for example, of modernity and colonialism) are occluded by way of Correlational frameworks which attempt to modulate around the status quo. Instead, Storiatio approaches work with islands as holding the marks and signs of effects in other ways; registering the impacts of actions in ‘weird’, ‘ghostly’, ‘haunting’, and ‘quantum’ ways (as just some examples we discuss: Morton, 2016a; Sharpe, 2016; Wolfe, 2017; Mathews, 2017; Barad, 2019; King, 2019; Neimanis, 2019; Farrier, 2019, 2020; Wang, 2020; Clark and Szerszynski, 2021; Perez, forthcoming).

The power of thinking with islands and island cultures in the development of Storiatio approaches has involved a significant

turn to, and particular readings of, certain island writers. We consider how the island scholar and poet Kamau Brathwaite (1981, 1993, 1999) can be seen as opening up the line of thought of Storiatio; precisely because he understands the island ‘tidalectically’ as the embodied, *intra-* (rather than *inter-*) relational movement associated with the ongoing legacies and effects of colonialism which are held in and hold the present. In the contemporary era we find Brathwaite’s way of working with islands to be highly influential and updated in such prominent works as Christina Sharpe’s *In the Wake* (2016) and Tiffany Lethabo King’s (2019) *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*. Both reflect a strong turn to draw upon the works of certain island writers, like Brathwaite, who engage land and water simultaneously, as a vitally important pathway, or holding space, for registering Black or Indigenous subjectivities and resistances – speculatively reading the ongoing legacies, effects and hauntings of colonialism which problematise separations of the present from the past.

Both the (onto)epistemological analytics of Correlation and Storiatio are therefore situated and relational, and can also be understood as non-modern or non-anthropocentric approaches to material or contextual capacities of knowing. Where they differ is that in Correlation approaches it is the patterned regularity of inter-relational effects which is key, as adaptive interactive life co-relates in ways which are amenable to facilitating human understanding and prediction, enabling the reading of environmental change. In Correlation, relational interaction thus takes place in a universal or ‘one world’ modernist conception of time and space, and Correlational practices are seen as replicable models which can be widely applied and exported elsewhere, so that the rest of the world can learn from islands and islanders. In Storiatio, by contrast, relational interaction much more explicitly problematises these modern notions of linear time and flat space. Thus, Storiatio approaches often speak of strange, unexpected or irreducible forms of intra-action associated with the afterlives, legacies or ongoing effects of such forces as consumerism, waste production, colonialism and capitalism (Alaimo,

2014; Morton, 2016a; Mathews, 2017; Wolfe, 2017; Farrier, 2019; Barad, 2019).

In Storiation, islands and island cultures are regularly employed to highlight how there is no ‘away’ and no ‘past’ in the Anthropocene (Morton, 2013; Ghosh, 2016; Cyphers, 2019). This is exemplified by how, when it comes to such vast, multidimensional forces as global warming, far from being isolated or cut off, islands hold the traces and legacies of processes which are often more difficult to detect from mainland positions and perspectives. Thus the island is increasingly figured as not only existing *within* complex relations of coloniality and global warming but as *holding* these forces and being held by them, disrupting hegemonic, modernist scales and distinctions (Sharpe, 2016; Yountae, 2016; King, 2019; DeLoughrey and Flores, 2020). The marked rise in the importance of, what we call, ‘Storiation’ for contemporary thinking, articulates the engagement with the geographical form of the island and island cultures through more speculative methods, which highlight forces and intensities which modernist methodologies too often fail to capture.

### *Correlation – Chapter 4*

This chapter turns to the powerful ways in which Anthropocene scholarship and policymaking focuses upon islands to generate ways of knowing through Correlation. In this approach, islands are framed as enabling a different form of knowledge, derived from correlation rather than causation; where the registrations or effects generated by the interactive life of islands on many different scales is understood to provide new insights about the world. Thus, for example, we can understand islands as bearing the relational effects of their interactive becoming within global warming, rising sea levels, nuclear fallout, and other forces associated with the Anthropocene (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007; Nwanze and Sinon, 2013; Hall and Sanders, 2015; Cole et al, 2016; Fitzpatrick and Erlandson, 2018). Islands therefore enable ways of understanding climate impacts on ecologies and become significant sites for understanding based upon new technologies

of dating and testing for different chemical and organic traces (Springer et al, 2017). In this way, islands and island beings are held to ‘speak to us,’ and when they do they tell material stories of life’s inter-relation and interdependencies in the Anthropocene.

In modernist approaches to knowledge, the search for universal laws of causation is seen as essential to control and command the non-human world, extracting resources and developing ‘Man’ as distinct from the world of ‘Nature.’ This way of thinking about knowledge emphasises the distinctions key to modernist epistemology, the binaries of thought and matter and of human and world, constructing a hierarchy of understanding of a universal or ‘one world’ world. But working with islands after the end of such a world enables other insights. Here, Correlational thinking aligns with that of Resilience ontologies in challenging modernist assumptions; focusing not on entities held to have essences, but on *relational* interactions, establishing regularities, patterns or habits reiterated across and through systemic interactions.

Correlational knowledge is the knowledge of experience, of practice, of habit, often embedded in relations and embodied in modes of being and working. It is the mode of interactive becoming of life and it leaves its traces upon the flesh of the world, in the evolution of species and landscapes. For example, correlational insights enable us to spot the likely occupation of workers and labourers through their muscle distribution, their bodily gait, times and routes of travelling, areas of habitation, and so forth – as Michel Serres (2011) argues, the seaman becomes one with his ship and brings the sea home with him in his body (see also Ingold, 2015). In the same way, the snout and tongue of the giant anteater, through patterns of correlational dependency on the food source of ants, tells us much about the nature of anthills (Kohn, 2013). These patterned relations of iterative interaction enable us to learn through correlation. As Thom van Dooren (2014: 27, emphasis in original) clarifies, species can be understood to correlate or to register environmental effects:

... a species must be understood as something like a ‘line of movement’ through evolutionary time. But it is much more than an



empty trajectory. Each species embodies a particular *way of life*... an ongoing intergenerational process of *becoming* – of adaptation and transformation – in which individual organisms are not so much ‘members’ of a class or a kind, but ‘participants’ in an ongoing and evolving way of life.

The key point is that species register their relations in their ways of becoming. For example, species co-evolve over time, like the bee orchid *Ophrys apifera* which co-evolved to mimic a particular species of bee, now extinct. Species can therefore ‘speak to us’ about changing environmental relationships and conditions, holding traces and registrations of relations and of entities which can no longer be observed directly. Correlation is always indirect, always a measure or register of a relation and a way of tracking changes in relation. The evolution of species thus becomes a powerful way of registering the interactive effects of human-induced climate change, pollutants, nuclear testing, and transforming planetary conditions; so that ‘evolutionary biology can inform governance and policies in the Anthropocene’ (Jørgensen et al, 2019: 527).

As noted, islands and islanders are widely understood to have the sensitivities and affordances necessary to reveal and register processes of anthropogenic influence which would otherwise go unseen by the wider world (Benwell, 2011; Hanna and McIver, 2014; Walshe and Stancioff, 2018). For international committees, managers and policymakers, islands are harbingers or advanced indicators of what is to come elsewhere; from the fires which engulfed Australia in 2019 and 2020, to the sinking islands of Tuvalu, Anote’s Ark, and the loss of island species around the world. As Watts (2018: 149) says:

Islands are often on the planetary frontline of environmental change. Their long shore-lines and specialized ecosystems are finely tuned and sensitive places, barometers for the Earth ... the litmus test for the urban future.

Long held as key sites for understanding relational entanglements and feedback effects in evolutionary theory, biology, anthropology,

geophysics, and many other disciplines, islands and islanders are notable Correlational modes for sensing and revealing the forces of global warming, rising sea levels, nuclear fallout, intensified hurricanes, and a whole range of other shifting planetary conditions (Cantieri, 2017; Cass, 2018; Pugh and Chandler, 2020b; Grydehøj and Kelman, 2020; West, n.d.). In saying this, therefore, we are not only pointing to how islands are reinterpellated as a 'living laboratory' (Watts, 2018: 105), in the sense of being small and confined sites for modernist methodologies of investigative research (Grydehøj and Kelman, 2017). We argue that the island, and island life itself, is widely seen as enabling the *generation* of onto-epistemologies operating on different, correlative rather than causal, assumptions in order to stimulate alternative frameworks of knowledge and knowing to address the challenges of the Anthropocene.

Along with island ecologies, probably the most high-profile illustration of this in contemporary thinking is the widespread celebration of Indigenous islanders' own correlational abilities (Salick and Ross, 2009; Breckwoldt and Seidel, 2012; Enn, 2015; Camus, 2018; Suliman et al, 2019)<sup>12</sup> seen as a vital attribute for survival in the Anthropocene (Percival, 2008; De Souza et al, 2015; Forest Peoples Programme, 2019). As First Peoples Worldwide (n.d.) say, 'Indigenous science and knowledge are based largely on bioindicators, or natural signs ... Learning from nature in this way is an integral part of the Indigenous worldview that all things are connected, and that nature, when respected, can be a benevolent part of the whole community.' Indigenous islanders are often characterised as possessing unique correlating and sensing expertise, lost to the Moderns:

On these small atolls the ocean and its rhythms, the endless sound of the waves breaking on the reef, and the tides, constantly contracting and expanding around the islands like a heartbeat, feature in most aspects of daily life. Navigational skills have allowed a handful of people from these islands to align themselves in this ocean world and to predict sailing and weather conditions. Navigators have interpreted the formation and colour of clouds to

identify islands over the horizon. Birds and certain species of fish would give an indication of the distance to land. Star paths were followed when travelling greater distances. Most impressively, ocean swells, reflected from far away islands and reefs, would echo through the canoe and its navigator, and would be recognised like the face of an old friend. (Robertson, 2018: 50–51)

Thus, Indigenous islander correlational practices are increasingly considered to be extremely useful in the ‘forecasting of extreme weather conditions’ (Siutaia, 2020). In such approaches, living and evolving knowledge of relational interaction is often understood as (or previously relegated to) ‘Indigenous knowledge’. However, as we explore, Correlational approaches have received a high-tech boost and makeover in the Anthropocene, taking an algorithmic form of ‘if this ... then that’, associated with contemporary forms of computation involving Big Data and the Internet of Things (Chandler, 2018b). Thus, in Chapter 4 we illustrate the prevalence of Correlational logics in a wide range of practices, where working with islands is widely understood as significant to the generation of new approaches, highlighted by the trope of the ‘smart island’. Here, the prolific use of Big Data combined with extensive networks of sensors enables rapid policy responsiveness to changing island coastlines and rising sea levels (United Nations Climate Change, 2019); the remote sensing of coral bleaching around islands acts as a bio-sensor of environmental change (Foo and Asner, 2019); and there is growing interest in algorithmic correlation with social media feeds to see emerging island disasters (Cavallo, 2017; Whyte, 2017). Through such examples, we demonstrate how working with islands as key sites for understanding relational entanglements and feedbacks enables novel approaches, and plays an important role in the generation of Correlational onto-epistemologies in contemporary thinking.

### *Storiation – Chapter 5*

Correlation approaches, in our framing, work to establish island onto-epistemologies as important to survival in the Anthro-

cene. They generate forms of knowing that are capable of grasping entities as having attributes and affordances in relation, rather than possessing fixed and distinct ‘essences’. Correlation is dependent on regular, reiterated patterns of effects. Whilst different from the modern logics of causation, it therefore still operates to generate generalisable forms of calculation, measurement and comparison – like the construction of temperature via correlative means (the expansion of mercury in a glass tube when heated). In Chapter 5, we seek to highlight and give shape to an approach at the other end of the sliding scale of relational onto-epistemologies that frequently uses island experiences to generate a more disruptive form of onto-epistemology: which we are conceptualising as Storiatio. Central to Storiatio is registering the ongoing afterlives, traces, hauntings and effects of such significant forces as colonialism, modernity, global warming, nuclear radiation, rising sea levels, and waste production; where islands and island cultures regularly emerge as important sites for investigation and island writers have increasingly come to the fore (Brathwaite, 1999; Teaiwa, 2011; 2012; Sharpe, 2016; Morton, 2016a; Yountae, 2016; DeLoughrey, 2019; Salt, 2017; Theobald, 2018; Jetñil-Kijiner, 2019; King, 2019; Perez, 2020b, forthcoming; Clark and Szerszynski, 2021).

What distinguishes the Storiatio analytic is the *holding together* of entities and effects, registered through islands and islander lives, in ways that deeply problematise modernist framings of the spatial and temporal locations of objects and events (Alaimo, 2014; 2016; Morton, 2016a; da Silva, 2016; 2017; Farrier, 2019; Neimanis, 2019; Wang, 2020). Storiatio approaches engage islands and island cultures to speculatively bring to the forefront of thought *intra*-actions and effects (rather than coherently graspable inter-relations) through their afterlives, hauntings, and their ongoing and transformative traces (Brathwaite, 1999; Sharpe, 2016; Mathews, 2017; Theobald, 2018; King, 2019; Barad, 2019; Clark and Szerszynski, 2021). Key to the analytic of Storiatio then is how this onto-epistemological approach seeks to speculate *through* the island, islanders’ embodied movements and their practices, rather than critically stand back, in the way of modern reasoning

or Cartesian ‘Man’, and tell stories *about* them (Brathwaite, 1999; Wolfe, 2017; Sharpe, 2016; King, 2019; Clark and Szerszynski, 2021). In this way, to think in Correlation and Resilience terms of entities adapting to others via feedback, or to pose the problematic in terms of Bateson’s cybernetic framing of ‘organism plus environment’, still separating entities and communication or thought and being, differs from the articulation of Storiatio as an embodied and material onto-epistemology of intra-relation. Vicky Kirby’s (2011: xi) work has been very helpful in enabling us to think through the analytics of Storiatio, in her view that ‘interactive’ life should be understood as textual as ‘life reads and writes itself’, in ways which foreground how the languages of feedback effects fail to capture how entities do not pre-exist feedback effects or communication *but are constituted with them* (see also da Silva, 2016, 2017; Barad, 2019).

We can start to draw out some of these key aspects of Storiatio by turning to the work of Timothy Morton (2013: 36), who argues that in the Anthropocene there is no ‘away’ – what we do ‘sticks’ and objects and experiences can appear to us through their legacies and afterlives which we can read in their ongoing material effects. For Morton (2016a), some of these effects play out more immediately – such as the powerful hurricanes hitting islands around the world every year – while others stretch out for hundreds of thousands of years, e.g. the time it takes for carbon to dissolve in the oceans surrounding islands. Thus, in working with islands as important sites of relational entanglements we come to see a world which holds strange ‘attractors’ and interconnections, rather than one of clear separations, linear causality or a hierarchy of branching ‘trees’ (see also Alaimo, 2016; Hejnal, 2017). For authors like Morton (2016a), the effects of entangled relation mean that engaging islands can provide valuable insights into the ‘afterlife’ of objects and events in ways which transform modern understandings of them as isolated or contained. The (island) future then becomes entangled with the past as the ‘afterlife’ of relational effects continue to reverberate across time and space, as we detail in the chapter, in ‘strange’, ‘weird’ or ‘quantum’ ways (da Silva, 2017; Wolfe, 2017; Barad, 2019; Neimanis, 2019).

Storiation is not merely a way of seeing and speculating about the effects of environmental damage; there is much of modernity that needs to be confronted through the ongoing effects that are constitutive of the present rather than part of the past. Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake* (2016) does precisely this in highlighting the ongoing effects of chattel slavery and its afterlives in the present:

These are questions of temporality, the *longue durée*, the residence and hold time of the wake. At stake, then is to stay in this wake time toward inhabiting a blackened consciousness that would rupture the structural silences produced and facilitated by, and that produce and facilitate, Black social and physical death. (Sharpe, 2016: 22)

Thus Storiation – the material effects or registrations of being in the world – troubles the separations of space and time of modernity unlike approaches of Correlation. It is through Storiation that islands and islander lives most powerfully enable the rewriting of modernity's attempts to construct a linear temporality in which the past and the future point in opposite directions. In the Anthropocene, whatever they say is 'over' or 'finished' is very much still with us.

Elizabeth DeLoughrey's *Allegories of the Anthropocene* (2019) emphasises how some feminist,<sup>13</sup> postcolonial and Indigenous perspectives not only challenge the modern, mainland, 'god's eye' view of the island but also foreground how the narrative use of *dis-juncture* and *rupture* 'demands a multiscale method of telescoping between space (planet) and place (island)' (DeLoughrey 2019: 2). Disrupting linear histories of 'pasts' as 'events' separated from the present and, through islands and island cultures, DeLoughrey works at 'uncovering other (feminized) "roots" and agents' (2019: 25); 'telescoping' (2019: 2) together that which a modernist methodology seeks to exclude or to disavow. Understanding the island or islander as *holding together* entities and relations, causes and effects, in these ways, in the contemporary work we examine in the chapter, is a central aspect of what we describe as the analytic of Storiation (Teaiwa, 2011; Farrier, 2019). Thus, as a further illustration, for DeLoughrey (2019: 121), the sculptural work of

someone like Tony Capellán, which almost exclusively comes from objects, such as plastics, washed up on the shores of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, is ‘not a colonial archive but rather a site of witnessing, rendering the “secret” of wasted lives visible to the more privileged classes who benefit from the labor and the sacrifices made by the undifferentiated poor.’

It is important to clarify the stakes here. As in the case of the other analytics which we develop in this book, what we are doing with Storiatio is drawing out a cross-cutting, broader analytic; which, we think, is highly prevalent across a range of contemporary works that increasingly engage islands for the generation of Anthropocene thinking. Thus, to be clear, we are not saying that the entire body of work of authors like DeLoughrey, Sharpe or Morton *is* Storiatio (just as Glissant’s entire body of work could not be reduced to Patchworks), but that there are discernable patterns or prominent lines of thought which can be analytically highlighted across them as representative of an important contemporary register, or prevalent logic, in Anthropocene thinking. We are also therefore not seeking to speak for or on behalf of someone’s body of work, but rather drawing out certain elements which can be mapped into the emergence of these broader analytics. As implied above, the Storiatio chapter explores how certain approaches map across a wide range of works; as when Perez (forthcoming), an Indigenous Chamoru from Guåhan (Guam), says that ‘much of’ the Pacific ecological and climate change literature he is working on with Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner and Leora Kava ‘expresses Storiatio, or the afterlives and haunting legacies of imperialism in the Pacific’. In turn, even as terms like ‘haunting’ may at first sight appear to denote a fairly Western/Judaeo-Christian concept, further drawing upon Katerina Teiawa (2011, 2012; 2015), Nigel Clark and Bronislaw Szerszynski (2021), Mimi Sheller (2020), Emanuela Borgnino (2020) and Tamara Searle (2019), we variously examine their Storiatio of Indigenous spiritual practices, from shamanistic and African-rooted traditions such as spirits coming into people’s bodies, through dance, music and trance (all of which have strong histories of island-practice).

We attend to how certain island and oceanic tropes, and strands of island scholarship, are being explicated in works within contemporary Indigenous and Black Studies, often at the forefront of onto-epistemological approaches of Storiation (see, for example, Moten, 2003; Sharpe, 2016; Yountae, 2016; Hessler, 2018; Neimanis, 2019; King, 2019; DeLoughrey, 2019; Wang, 2020). Of particular importance for the analytics of Storiation is the work of the Barbadian historian and poet Kamau Brathwaite. Sharpe's (2016: 177) *In the Wake* explicitly foregrounds how Brathwaite prefigures her own approach to registering how Black life embodies, intra-relationally, the legacies of colonialism; stating that Brathwaite's way of Storiating Caribbean life 'is Black being in the wake'. Similarly, Brathwaite is also central to King's (2019) *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*. Brathwaite's (1999) onto-epistemology of 'tidalectics' not only profoundly disrupts mainland, continental and modern frameworks of space-time, and binaries of human/nature, it shows how Caribbean islanders emerge, literally as new forms of life, in the wake of colonialism:

*Why is our psychology not dialectical – successfully dialectical – in the way that Western philosophy has assumed people's lives should be, but tidalectic, like our grandmother's – 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 ... (Brathwaite, 1999: 34; italics in original)*

This helps us to illustrate how Storiation speaks of intra-action and the holding together of dynamic forces and attractions, not a modern focus upon inter-action between pre-defined and separate entities. Brathwaite's 'nanna' will surely at times stand back and critically reflect upon the conditions of colonialism, but the key point for Brathwaite's onto-epistemology is that it is her daily routines and embodied movements themselves which are the dynamic forces holding in – living on in and maintaining the legacies of – the wake of colonialism. There is no critical



separation, binaries, or linear understanding; the situation is one of a dynamic holding together of hauntings and traces ‘*receding (“reading”) from the island(s) into the perhaps creative chaos of the(ir) future ...*’ (Brathwaite, 1999: 34). This comes out particularly well in the tropes which Brathwaite employs to characterise colonialism on islands. ‘Tidalectics’ thus speaks of how the focus upon intra-action deeply problematises modern notions of separate entities, predictive time, and flat space, instead favouring a speculative process of thought that decentres the notion of the modern subject, starting from islander and island materiality.

For Sharpe (2016) and King (2019: 207), Brathwaite is a key figure for understanding how Black life lives on in the wake of slavery and colonialism, with his ‘old woman of Caribbean history engaged in the morning ritual of sweeping who walked on the water with sand in her toes’. For King (2019: 207), Brathwaite’s focus upon the embodied movements of the old woman disrupts the simplicities of *inter*-relational and modern frameworks of reasoning – human/nature, mind/body, land/water divides – and reflects how ‘Land is not the traditional element used to analogise Black flux or think about dynamic, fluid, and ever moving Black diasporic subjectivity’ (see also Wang, 2020). As we detail in the chapter, in her own *Storiation*s of Black and Indigenous life, King (2019: 29) employs such methods as ‘critical fabulation’ and ‘speculative bricolage’ in order to effectively hold together the traces, hauntings, ghosts and afterlives of colonialism which are embodied and constitutive of the present. But here we can already see how such contemporary scholars are profoundly influenced by island writers and poets, such as Brathwaite, who have long performed in ways which ‘can be turned back against continents... offering a model of how to live complexly rather than through the simplifications and essentialisms that have characteristically been projected onto islands’ (Edmond and Smith, 2003: 12).

The figure of the island and these strands of island scholarship have been important for the development of the *Storiation* analytic which characterises an increasing range of contemporary

thinking. We examine, in addition to those noted, related works including those by Cary Wolfe (2017), Andrew Mathews (2017), Karen Barad (2019), David Farrier (2019, 2020), Jackie Wang (2020), Claire Colebrook (2016, 2019), and the concluding chapters of Glissant's (1997) *Poetics of Relation*. In Storiation approaches, islands and islanders are understood as intensive sites, holding and registering the hauntings and traces of relations, that do not cut the past from the present. Islands and islanders, engaged as these worlds of legacies and effects, of the dynamism of embodied intra-active becoming, rather than inter-action, are seen to offer alternatives to Correlational approaches: Storiations of the differentiating powers of colonialism, of the emergence of tidalectic psychologies living on in the wake, of island dances, vodou and shamanistic practices, of species long extinct, of the consumerisms that haunt islands in strange ways – Storiations of how there is no 'away' and no past in the Anthropocene (Morton, 2013; Ghosh, 2016: 26).

### **The Importance of Island Studies in the Anthropocene**

There is little doubt that the widespread contemporary interest in islands mirrors the rise of non-modern, relational, non-linear and more-than-human thinking across many academic disciplines and policy practices. But, as explored in this introductory chapter, this book makes the argument that the engagement with islands in many debates today is not merely caught up in the slipstream of contemporary social and philosophical trends, but is important to the ontological and onto-epistemological framing and tools with which the new epoch of the Anthropocene is being grasped. What we therefore undertake in this book is an analysis of the 'work' that thinking with islands, island imaginaries, island writers, artists, poets, activists, and island problematics is doing in these debates. This is because we believe that we can more fully understand why and how Anthropocene thinking is as it is today if we are able to open up questions of how working with islands is playing an important and generative role.

Not only thinking about, but *with* islands (Gillis, 2004) has become an important resource for alternative and non-modern relational ontologies and understandings in the Anthropocene. We suggest that there is a need to not only critically focus upon how the modern episteme reductively grasps islands (to be clear, this is still important), but to also establish a new critical research agenda focused upon how islands are being enrolled in debates about the Anthropocene as key sites for understanding relational entanglements, in the generation of many different forms of relational ontology and ways of knowing. Central here, as we want to stress, is how working with islands or relational thought per se is not one homogenous ‘other’ to modernist or mainland approaches, and so it is important to start a new conversation about how we engage in working through the rich variety of possibilities and opportunities that these approaches afford. It is the shift to engaging and working with islands in wider Anthropocene scholarship, policy-making, art and activism, which we believe points towards some important stakes for a critical agenda going forward. This would expand analysis concerning the question of why and how engaging islands has been so productive and generative for Anthropocene thinking. Thus, in the concluding chapter (Chapter 6), we elaborate upon how we see this book as an initial opening for a new critical agenda for island studies in the Anthropocene. But before that, in the intervening chapters, we will be laying out our proposed heuristic set of analytics for working with islands in the Anthropocene – the relational ontologies of Resilience and Patchworks, and the relational onto-epistemologies of Correlation and Storiotion.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Whether researching creolisation in the Caribbean (Brathwaite, 1981, 1993; Glissant, 1997), the migration of peoples in Oceania (Hau’ofa, 2008; Rakuita, 2017), the dynamism of shifting or disappearing ice-sheet islands (Riquet, 2016; Steinberg and Kristoffersen, 2017), the Silk Road archipelago (Xie et al, 2020), or the construction

of new human-made islands (Jetñil-Kijiner, 2019; Dodds and della Dora, 2018; Bonnett, 2020), what we have elsewhere called these 'relational' and 'archipelagic' turns in island studies (Pugh, 2013, 2016a, 2018) have, over the past few decades, radically decentred the notion of the isolated and static 'island' to instead emphasise mobile, multiple and interconnected relational forms. It should not be underestimated just how much the relational and archipelagic turns have exponentially developed (Baldacchino, 2019). This is illustrated by Bongie's (1998) *Islands and Exiles*, DeLoughrey's (2007) *Routes and Roots*, Thompson's (2010) *Imperial Archipelago*, Joseph's (2019) *Sea Log: Indian Ocean to New York*, and Martínez-San Miguel's (2014) *Coloniality of Diasporas*, as examples which focus upon colonial relations; Stratford et al's (2011) foregrounding of the archipelagos rather than islands of the world; Suwa's (2007) and Hayward's (2012a, 2012b) development of the 'aquapelago'; Ingersoll's (2016) *Waves of Knowing* which offers a 'seascape epistemology'; Louis and Kahele's (2020) invocation of *Kanaka Hawai'i Cartography*; Hessler's (2018) various engagements with Brathwaite's 'tidalectics'; Rankin (2016), Pugh (2016a) and Pugh and Grove's (2017) focus upon 'archipelagic assemblages'; Sheller's (2000, 2007) work on archipelagic 'mobilities'; Denning (2007), King (2007) and Connell's (2018) work on migration and islanders; Crane and Fletcher's (2017) focus upon archipelagic thinking in island literatures; Loughran's (2019) on archipelagic education; and Roberts and Stephens (2017) foregrounding of the archipelagic nature of the Americas. There are many, many others besides who foreground islands as relational spaces (Stratford, 2003; Steinberg, 2005; Hay, 2006, 2013; Papoutsaki and Harris, 2008; Clark and Tsai, 2009; Baldacchino and Royle, 2010; Alexander, 2016; Joseph, 2013; Starc and Stubbs, 2014; Ronström, 2015; Benítez-Rojo, 2016; Kearns and Collins, 2016; Bremner, 2016; Hong, 2017; Graziadei et al, 2017; Murray, 2018; Vale, 2018; Evans and Harris, 2018; Carter, 2018; Nimführ and Sesay, 2019; Davis, 2020; Isaacs, 2020). For an excellent overview of a variety of recent approaches see Michelle Stephens and Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel's (2020) collection *Contemporary Archipelagic Thinking*.

<sup>2</sup> We are not the first to use the term 'Anthropocene Islands'. Given the vast amount of contemporary work on islands in the Anthropocene it is not surprising that the term has been employed in a number of projects and works, each operationalising it in their own specific ways to think through islands as sites for Anthropocene thinking. So

far as we are aware, the term has been used in at least three quite distinct ways, prior to and alongside its use in our work. We believe that it was perhaps first used in September 2017 with the launch of the exhibition ‘Anthropocene Island’ at the Tallinn Architecture Biennale (ecoLogicStudio, 2017a; 2017b): an impressive set of designs – involving scientists, social scientists, artists, and many others – for what an island might look like in the Anthropocene (we discuss this example in detail in Chapter 2). Another example of how the term ‘Anthropocene Islands’ has been employed is by Peggy Cyphers and others (2019) in the exhibition ‘Anthropocene Island: Colonization, Native Species and Invaders.’ This uses the term in order to register the ongoing legacies and hauntings of capitalist consumerism, specifically plastic, and how islands amplify and illustrate how there is therefore no ‘away’ in the Anthropocene (see also Drifters Project, 2019). We discuss Cyphers et al’s (2019) work in Chapter 5. A third usage of ‘Anthropocene Islands’ is employed in Amelia Moore’s (2019a) *Destination Anthropocene: Science and Tourism in the Bahamas*. Moore (2019a: 5) defines her approach, which develops anthropology in the Anthropocene, as focusing upon ‘the discursive and practical entanglement of science and tourism, which I call “Anthropocene Islands”’. Based upon ethnographic fieldwork into science, tourism and the Bahamas, Moore draws attention to how islands are key sites for examining contingent relations between class, race, capital accumulation, exploitation, and other forces, as these manifest and are expressed in global environmental change (see also Moore, 2015a, 2015b, 2016, and 2019b).

<sup>3</sup> Joseph (2020: 193) reflects the view of many contemporary authors when she *positively* foregrounds how the liminality of islands [remains] ‘outside the frameworks of mainland narratives’ (see also Gómez-Barris and Joseph, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Here we suggest that scholarship might be further interested in exploring how, or indeed whether, approaches to Anthropocene scholarship in China, India and other large continental mainlands, are changing through how they draw upon and engage islands. Whilst beyond the remit of this book, we think this would be a very important area to develop in the future, and would be particularly interested in speaking to anyone who is engaged in this area of research.

<sup>5</sup> We capitalise the terms ‘Resilience’, ‘Patchworks’, ‘Correlation’ and ‘Storiation’ when we deploy them heuristically, as the key analytic categories developed in this book.

- <sup>6</sup> Thanks to Stephanie Wakefield for drawing our attention to this interview material.
- <sup>7</sup> For example, when Anna Tsing, Andrew Mathews and Nils Bubandt (2019: 186) produced a special edition for *Current Anthropology* on what they called the ‘Patchy Anthropocene’ – ‘a conceptual tool for noticing landscape structure’ – a third of the articles in that special edition, including Hadfield and Haraway’s (2019) famous ‘Tree Snail Manifesto’ developed from work with Pacific Island tree snails, were derived from work on islands.
- <sup>8</sup> The terms ‘patchy’ and ‘patchworks’ more generally seem increasingly prevalent in contemporary debates about anthropology and the Anthropocene in particular (see, for example, Tsing et al, 2019; Günel et al, 2020; Sheller, 2020). They align more generally with the rise of concern for how we are already in the Anthropocene and/or a general focus upon assemblages, knots of relations and co-entanglements. As we have discussed elsewhere (Chandler and Pugh, forthcoming, a), although there are overlaps with these developments, for us ‘Patchworks’ means something quite specific, as we examine in detail in this book.
- <sup>9</sup> We thank Godfrey Baldacchino for this important observation about islanding becoming a ‘verb’ in Patchwork ontologies. This is something we develop in Chapter 3.
- <sup>10</sup> Glissant (1997) capitalises ‘Relation.’ We will therefore also do so when explicitly referring to his work.
- <sup>11</sup> We wish to emphasise that our point here is not that contemporary scholars necessarily cite an island scholar like Glissant (although, of course, many do; see, for example, Yountae, 2016; Last, 2017; Mentz, 2017; Yusoff, 2018, DeLoughrey, 2019; Colebrook, 2019). Rather, our key argument is that thinking with islands in Glissant’s (1997) *Poetics of Relation* was an early exemplar for the Patchwork ontologies, being generated in Anthropocene scholarship today. It matters that Glissant’s approach initially focuses upon islands and then was expanded outwards. Patchwork ontologies focus upon patchwork islands of refiguration forming in nodes or knots of assemblages across time and space, disrupting modern notions of flat space-time which still hold in ontologies of Resilience. In Patchworks approaches, in this particular way, islands become the ontology of the world.
- <sup>12</sup> There is no clear definition of ‘Indigenous knowledge.’ This is not surprising considering that there are over 7,000 different Indigenous

languages and peoples inhabiting extremely diverse environments. What we focus upon in this book is the various ways in which Indigenous islanders are understood to contribute to different ways of 'being' (ontology) and 'knowing' (onto-epistemology) from Moderns in debates about the Anthropocene.

- <sup>13</sup> Explicitly feminist approaches to island studies scholarship which operate in these ways have also been developed by many other researchers, including, most recently, Karides (2016, 2017), Lama (2018), Coss (2020), and in the collection *Gender and Island Communities*, edited by Gaini and Nielsen (2020).