MATERIAL INTIMACY: BEARING WITNESS, LISTENING, AND WANDERING THE RUINS

by

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ABSTRACT

Material Intimacy: Bearing Witness, Listening, and Wandering the Ruins

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In this dissertation, I consider the rhetorical ecology of architectural ruins, specifically those of natural disaster, as actors in a system of human and nonhuman intra-action that has rhetorical potential for material intimacy. I argue that ruins address the human in ways that elicit a response. The human response enacts a paratactic praxis, which I explore in my first chapter as a practice that creates series or lists that call on the reader or the listener to fill the gaps between entities and make meaning out of the resulting juxtaposition of words, phrases, or collections. In the second, third, and fourth chapters, I locate paratactic praxis in accounts of ruins following natural disasters by drawing on a new materialist rhetorical methodology via three specific moves toward material intimacy: witnessing, listening, and wandering. I have chosen ruins as a focus of study precisely because of the need in our digital age to become more intimate with the spaces that we create, protect, and destroy as a means of understanding humanity's place in the world. The language we use to describe ruins and the effects they have on us contain keys to uncovering the hidden rhetoricity of ruins. I use a combination of new materialist developments

in rhetorical theory based on a phenomenological foundation to explore the human experience of ruin and ruins as material bodies engaged in that experience.

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DEDICATION

For Dave.

My dream maker who has taught me the value of endurance and the importance of Being-there.

And my children.

Who inspire me to keep learning and growing.

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INTRODUCTION

Hurl a rock and you'll shatter an ontology,

leave taxonomy in glistening shards.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (2)

Imagine a crowd gathering eagerly around a ruin. The collective body of excited onlookers anticipates the explosion with a tinge of fear. Barriers organize this body of bodies into a tiny square around the ruin. No one can approach the dilapidated structure. A child steps forward to activate a device that will explode the building into rubble. The crowd has come to watch the spectacle of the explosion. The child's place at the triggering device, akin to throwing the first pitch at a baseball game, signals the inhale by the crowd as everyone prepares to witness the destruction of the building.

This scene opens China Miéville's flash fiction story "Three Moments of an Explosion." In three vignettes, Miéville describes a world of ruin and corporate exploitation where "rotvertising," or "the spelling of brand names and the reproduction of hip product logos in the mottle and decay of subtly gene-tweaked decomposition," operates as part of a cultural milieu that explodes buildings as part of a corporatized voyeurism (3). In the first section of this story, the demolition of the ruin is sponsored by a corporation that embeds their ad in the dust clouds resulting from the destruction of the building. Like many of the settings in Miéville's work, this environment is at once foreign and yet eerily familiar.

While the first vignette focuses on the larger machine of capitalist destruction, the second zooms in on three human explorers who engage in "extreme squatting" as a thrill-seeking experience (4). The explorers each take a pill that lifts them "out of time" as they "explore the innards of the collapsing edifice as it hangs, slumping, its floors now pitched and interrupted mis-eradication, its corridors clogged with the dust of the hesitating explosion" (4). The climb to the top and then the rush to get down and out before the explosion gives the explorers a chance to enter the ruin and experience the interaction that comes from facing death—their own death and the building's demise. With a drug-induced strength, they attempt to beat time by climbing to the top and rappelling down before the explosion, but only two of them make it out. The unharmed explorers convince each other that the unfortunate victim "had been slowing on purpose, so the ecstasy would come out through her pores" (4). The narrator generalizes that this slowing "would hardly be an unprecedented choice for urban melancholics such as these" in their response to the cultural capital of demolition (4). The human experience of the ruin takes center stage in this section of the story as the sounds of the crowd outside the building fade into the three individuals' exploration.

This brief description of the human exploration of the ruin occupies the mid-point between the cultural milieu in section one and the building's final act in section three. This liminal space where the human and nonhuman merge marks the turning point for the building: the point when it ceases to be what it was and becomes "the ghost of the explosion itself" (4). The ghost, or the ruin before demolition, prophesizes of the coming destruction—a speculative specter acknowledging its being-towards-death. "It *wants* something" the narrator says of the ruin, "It's *sad*—you can tell in its angles, its slow coiling and unfolding" (4, emphasis added). These lines move the reader toward the third vignette, the ruin's eulogy, and leave the final

words of the story to the ruin. The observers outside the barriers, and even the human explorers who make it out, have nothing to say in the end. The ruin's response to the cultural pressure and the human interaction is to crumble. Is it out of pity or submission? Pity for whom? Pity for those who blew it up? Pity for those who died inside? Miéville ascribes emotions to this ruin in the story: "it's *sad*" (4 emphasis original). The building, perhaps, has something to say in its final exhalation.

Miéville's story magnifies a corporate-controlled destruction of buildings by emphasizing the pleasure of demolition. This pleasure does not exist only in fiction, but rather infuses the built world in much of Western society.[1] In his cultural history of destruction, *Rubble: Unearthing the History of Demolition*, Jeff Byles traces the intentional ruin of architecture through the American landscape. He tells a story, reminiscent of Miéville's rotvertising, that describes the human pleasure and economic value of what he calls "erase-atecture" (7). His argument examines the tension in the debate surrounding demolition as a tension between "the built and the unbuilt, the past and the future, even the living and the dead" (18). The center of this tension also represents a collision of values between preservation and destruction.

The 21st century has seen a boom in the demolition of architectural history for a variety of reasons, from razing modernist style homes in Los Angeles in order to build McMansions to the paths of rubble left by an increase in natural disasters in highly populated areas. The pleasure that Miéville highlights comes in many forms in contemporary society. Some demolitionists justify the removal of decrepit architecture on the basis of exhilaration at the possibilities available from a blank slate. This justification has powered the demolitions of hundreds of

[1] There is a tension between the pleasure of demolition, or the affective payoff associated with destruction, and the sorrow associated with loss. I do not directly address these affects, but they do underpin some of my discussion of affectability and rhetoricity.

buildings in Detroit, with "much of the demolition work . . . concentrated in about 20 neighborhoods where the blight removal is projected to have immediate positive effects of improving remaining property values and clearing land for future development" (Laxmore et. al.). The removal of decrepit architecture can often be much cheaper than restoration. Others champion the destruction of ruins due to the dangerous conditions present in unsound architectural forms. The debate surrounding Cabrini Green in Chicago exemplifies the conversation surrounding demolition in the name of safety.[2] Advocates for demolition argue for the economic and aesthetic value of newness and construction, thus dismissing ruins as valuable in those arenas (and others) for the sake of renewal through advanced technologies, materials, and practices.

Another side of that debate are those who advocate for restoration rather than demolition and often argue for a respect for ruins that acknowledges their anchor to the past and the narratives that they represent. The value of ruins, for this perspective, arises from the need for a preservation of more than just the architecture. For example, Nicole Curtis, host of the DIY Network television show "Rehab Addict," focuses her restoration business on dilapidated architecture and devotes each show to making one structure sound and livable again. According to Curtis's about page, her program of restoration "takes ramshackle homes from the wrecking ball to their original stunning glory." Her painstaking effort to restore homes and businesses to their original form invites viewers into historic spaces to consider the power of resurrecting the past through architecture.[3] Curtis often selectively leaves out the social and political narrative

[2] See David Fleming's *City of Rhetoric*: *Revitalizing the Public Sphere in Metropolitan America* for an in-depth study of the rhetoric of place and Cabrini Green.

[3] In a few episodes, Curtis does specifically address racial and other social issues surrounding the architecture she restores. Her main project, however, is the renewal of past architectural forms and preserving the trades of that past.

surrounding the architecture to focus specifically on material details, such as hardwood, finials, and windows. By emphasizing the historical value of the material, Curtis keeps the social narratives in these communities at bay but attempts to retain the temporal depth in those spaces. Curtis's rehab operates on a small scale in homes and businesses of little consequence except to the local neighborhoods of which they are a part. But her "addiction" to rehab can be scaled in debates surrounding other projects, such as the renovation of large mansions like the Biltmore estate in North Carolina or the more recent debate about the allocation funds to restore the recently burned Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. These kinds of architectural structures often represent apparatuses of injustice and cruelty in some form or another, and their value rests in their material presence.

In this project, I am not arguing for restoration or demolition; rather, I want to encounter *the ruin in itself* as an entity that is more than its association with all of these forces. Restorationists and demolitionists alike continue to debate the use and value of ruins. In these debates, the ruin itself becomes a representative of historical, social, and political concerns, or rather fodder for arguments made about issues that include affordable housing, land use, and historical narrative. The rhetorical import of these debates should not be minimized. My work phenomenologically investigates the experience of the ruin encounter as a potential site for understanding that contributes to these debates. This encounter occurs in a liminal space and time, between human and ruin, as a point of contact. While the forces of social, political, and environmental concern certainly influence the outcomes of this contact, I am interested in the ways that ruins influence us. Rather than draw conclusions about what should or should not be restored or destroyed, I investigate the ways in which the ruin—as a material presence—

participates in the human experience and the potential consequences that arise from that experience.

I start from the position that in addition to the issues I outlined above ruins concern us—as a nation and as a world—because they participate in the forces of entropy that move in the background of building and dwelling on earth. I use the term *entropy* throughout this project to mean the potential for change that arises out of the release of energy from a system. I include Collin Gifford Brooke's definition of entropy as a rhetorical trope that considers entropy as a positive kind of disorder. Brooke's "entropics of discourse" aligns with Jason Snart's literary examination of entropy as "capitalism's Achilles heel in the sense that it allows energy for an active, critical agency" external to capitalism (8). As a trope that expresses the movement of energy, entropy functions to describe the decline of ecological systems that contain discrete modalities, progressive stages, and multiple scales. Entropy functions as a progressive movement toward disorder within these systems. How we respond to the disorder, how we engage with ruin, matters because of the potential for system-wide influence across the various modalities present in the system by introducing new sources of energy in the form of responses to the material ruin there.

This project concerns itself with ruins and the varied human responses to living with and among ruins. I am drawn to the images, spaces, and narratives encompassing sites of ruin. Like Jenny Rice, I am interested in cultivating "a culture of sustainability and care for our everyday spaces" (5). Sustainability in this context can be viewed as the way "we can conduct our lives in some way that preserves the ecological health and endurance" of the environment (Rice 41). I find ruins compelling on their own, but I am particularly interested in how the ruins of everyday spaces participate in discourse, or, as Laurie Gries says, "how vital actants [i.e., ruins] are

productive of space (and time) as they materialize, flow, and intra-act with a variety of entities in and across various assemblages" (88).[4] If ruins are productive of space (and time), and projects such as the demolition I referenced above seek to remove ruins from that space and time, then it is possible that the denial of the built environment as well as the denial of the thermodynamic law of entropy effectively erases potential futures for the ecologies that ruins participate in.

In this dissertation, I consider the rhetorical ecology of architectural ruins, specifically those of natural disaster, as actors in a system of human and nonhuman intra-action that has the rhetorical potential for material intimacy. In the aftermath of a catastrophe like a hurricane, ruins function differently than abandoned or dilapidated architecture like the ones Curtis restores. I take a position toward mate(real)ity that considers the role that matter takes in intra-acting with human beings and the potential affective properties of those intra-actions. [5] I use the parentheses in the word 'mate(real)ity' to highlight the intimate nature of *mate* and *real*. The word *material* comes from the Latin *materia* which specifically relates to physical substance, while mate stems from the German meaning *fellow*. It might seem contrived to carve up the word *materiality* in this way; however, another root *mater* relates these concepts together in a way that I think is useful. *Mater* comes from both Latin and German meaning to conjugate or "a quality, condition,

[4] Gries uses Karen Barad's term 'intra-action' here. I use it as well throughout my project. I use the term to draw on Barad's definition of intra-action as "*a relationality between specific material (re)configurings of the world through which boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted"* (139).

[5] Bruno Latour's term 'actant' might seem more appropriate here but I prefer the word 'actor.' The term 'actant' strips away subjectivity in a manner that distances the ontological status of the Other, while actor preserves the integrity of the subject and the Other. Much of the research in rhetorical theory that works within a new materialist framework draws on Latour, such as the recent essay collection *Thinking with Latour in Rhetoric and Composition*. I focus primarily on Heidegger and his legacy as his framework is more appropriate in the context of the architectural ontologies I am working with.

event, etc. that gives rise to or is the source of something"—in other words, a place of origin (OED). This place is most often regarded as nurturing and nourishing, such as a womb. By separating out the fragments of the word *materiality*, I want to emphasize this multi-layered etymology as a place of intimacy and substance. I explain intimacy more fully in the next chapter, but I use the terms *mate* and *real* to invoke the companionship that humans can experience when engaging with mate(real)ities by butting up the real with the suffixity, which denotes the nature of a thing or its being. My use of the parentheses throughout this project offers a visual iteration of the material intimacy I believe is key to understanding the human relationship with the world. In the space of the closeness of intimacy, many affects can be present—pain, pleasure, shame, pride, despair, and hope. Material intimacy includes a both/and proposition to embrace all potential affects in responses to ruins.

Ruins clearly have value to human beings, but how do we intra-act with them? I am curious about valuations and the ways that the presence of ruins shifts ideas about values in the ethical sense, but also about how ruins present an ethos. What is the character of ruins? Can ruins provide answers to questions of sustainability through the affects they invoke? What does an intimacy with ruins' mate(real)ity make possible in order to create more sustainable environments? Can a building, a ruined one, be persuasive? In what ways do these broken structures appear linguistically in relation to humanity and to the environment? These questions provoke an attention to the matter of rhetoric.

In response to these questions, I advocate for material intimacy as a sustainability practice that engages with mate(real)ity ontologically. I argue that ruins address the human in ways that elicit a response. The human response follows a paratactic praxis, which I explore in Chapter One, that reveals the intimacies already present in ruin/human intra-actions. A ruin, as a

material presence, also contains an ideological absence. In this paradox of absence as presence, ruins embody a material-discursive tension, a tension that leads to complex responses that reflect material intimacy. I posit a series of moves that both reveal and lead to this intimacy and reflect the rhetoricity in ruins following a catastrophic event. Diane Davis's concept of rhetoricity operates as a foundational principle in my project that describes the rhetorical potential or affectability that is originary or *a priori* in rhetorical networks or ecologies. I apply this perspective to ruins and their appearance in accounts of natural disasters by drawing on a new materialist rhetorical methodology via three specific moves—witnessing, listening, and wandering—toward material intimacy. These moves form the basis of my analysis of paratactic praxis as a material-discursive model that decenters the human respondent, while simultaneously including them in the ecological system where intra-action occurs.

To Ruin

Before I get to the importance of viewing ruins through a rhetorical ecological lens, I want to address ruin in the wider U.S. cultural and political context of the 21st century. I define ruin more fully in Chapter One, but here I want to situate this project within a larger frame of political, social, and aesthetic forces that shape the way that Americans view ruin. During much of the early 20th century, the United States and much of the West told a story of construction and expansion that relied on new building projects as the catalyst for capitalist power and for developing cultural value. The historical narrative along with economic growth has fueled some of the debate between restoration and demolition that I discussed in the previous section.

The rhetoric of the World War eras, particularly during recovery after The Great Depression, reflected a deep commitment to optimistic economic growth. U.S. Department of Labor reports in 1948 show rapid growth in construction across economic sectors following

World War II. Sharp increases in residential construction continued unabated after the war and through the middle of the 20th century, in part due to an optimism following the resolution of the war. Subsequent periods of economic stability contributed to the sustained rise in residential and business construction and to the dismissal (and demolition) of ruins. The housing crisis and economic downturn in 2008 shifted that industrious sense of optimism that was once an integral part of the American economy.[6] Declines in key industries threatened the forward motion of those earlier capitalist projects.

The automotive industry, embedded in the architecture of Detroit, Michigan, highlights this decline through its numerous abandoned structures related to the expansive project of building in the early decades of the 20th century. The Packard Automotive Plant, designed by famed Detroit architect Albert Kahn, opened in 1903 during the early momentum of the developing automotive industry. Now abandoned, the plant has become an iconic site of urban exploration, drawing explorers to it like those in Miéville's short story. Michigan Central Station (MCS), a relic from the same era and also an iconic urban exploration site, has been empty since 1988 and appears repeatedly online as an emblem of beautiful, terrible ruin.[7] The abandoned buildings in Detroit and others have come to represent the deterioration of the capitalist dream from the 1920s and 1930s.

[6] Other factors such as 9/11 and the War on Terror also contributed to a national anxiety about the future of the United States as a world power. The housing crisis is only one contributing factor in the downturn in optimism surrounding new building projects.

[7] This phrase comes from the title of Dora Apel's book *Beautiful Terrible Ruin*. MCS figures as one prominent example of Apel criticism of photographers who come to Detroit to photograph abandoned buildings and then leave without contributing to the economy or acknowledging the recovery efforts underway the communities in downtown Detroit. She argues that the rise in this type of photography, often called urban exploration or ruin porn, reflects a deep-seated anxiety about decline, particularly in the middle class.

The debate around the aesthetics of ruin comes largely from photographers trespassing in these buildings and publishing what some call "ruin porn." The decline I just referenced has inspired urban explorers to seek out architectural ruins as emblems of history, to fill a need or gap in their own sense of their place in American culture. In recent years, photo essays of American ruins have become popular among readers of large, colorful art books. These books often focus on abandoned industrial sites or other icons of capitalism. Photographers working at these sites experiment with different light mediums, angles, and technology and often argue a similar point of view: American history will be lost if we do not document it. Books of this type of photography generally include introductions that argue for the need to preserve the past from destruction by rendering the real ruin into a static two-dimensional artifact.[8] This effort, to circumvent the passage of time and freeze historical moments, artifacts, and contexts, moves preservation from a material to a textual act.

Collections that explore the decay of capitalism, like *Abandoned America: The Age of Consequences* by Matthew Christopher and *Dead Tech: A Guide to the Archaeology of Tomorrow* by Manfred Hamm and Rolf Steinberg, argue that the sites that are depicted represent the present and the past. Christopher is interested in the meaning of ruins as metaphors for death, but he also views our time as "an Age of Consequences, a point where our own actions over the past several decades are having catastrophic effects on our towns, our national economy, and our environment" (7). While the ruins are supposed to speak for themselves, what the photographers translate is that capitalism has destroyed the earth; it is a human-created phenomenon; we are all going to wither away in the face of massive climate change. Many of the photographs centered

[8] See Marchand and Meffre's *Yves Marchand & Romain Meffre: The Ruins of Detroit* as well as Eric Holubow's *Abandoned: America's Vanishing Landscape.*

on industrial ruins contain similarly apocalyptic charges against the greed and corruption of high capitalism. They also seek to create connections between the past success of these structures and the current destruction of nature.

An alternate example of the connection between ruin and nature can been seen in Arthur Drooker's book *American Ruins* (see Fig. 1 below for an example of Drooker's work). In his opening essay, "In the Region of Romance and Fancy," Drooker claims that the primary aim of his collection of photographs is to "capture the visual poetry of what [past Americans of all sorts] left behind, and restore what they had built to our collective memory" (9). He wants to offer an aesthetic that encourages the viewer to make a spiritual connection with the past. Drooker shot his entire collection in a digital infrared format in the hopes not only of framing the actual ruins but also of conjuring "ethereal landscapes where shadows hover like apparitions, leaves and grass glow in downy white, clouds float in their own dreamy dimension, and ruins appear as fragments of an unsolvable mystery" (9). This project focuses the lens on ruins embedded in nature. In fact, Drooker's infrared technique highlights the trees, brush, rock, and other natural features against the dark, gray, receding stone. In his introduction to Drooker's book, Christopher Woodward describes the effects of Drooker's aesthetic: "In *American Ruins* we see how a dynamic, visible relationship with nature is critical for the potency of each ruin. Each has a

Figure 1 Bannerman Castle, Pollepel Island, New York found on Drooker's website at http://www.arthurdrooker.com/american-ruins/

unique, personal relationship to its environment—emphasized by an infrared technique that gives a greater luxuriance to nature and somehow shows the cracks and fissures in each stone" (19). The relationship between crumbling stone and verdant overgrowth seems to connote a potential future, of a cycle of life and death rather than a terminus.

Given the proliferation of photo essays on ruins, art historians have taken photographers to task for their ignorance (or deliberate erasure) of some key characteristics of the visual representations of these spaces. Many critics utilize the characteristics of ruin photography as exemplars of cultural shifts, and what they find is not positive. Urban photographers tend to eliminate human activity or portraiture from their depictions of ruins. As I mentioned earlier, the convention for UrbEx photographs is to orient the frame so that the viewer of the photograph is the only human agent. This positions the viewer as a voyeur who is complicit in the act of penetrating the ruined spaces for personal entertainment and gratification, hence the term 'ruin porn.' The frame also positions the viewer as a lone survivor in a post-apocalyptic world, effectively erasing the contemporary social and political concerns surrounding the spaces that are represented.

Dora Apel's critique of urban exploration photography in Detroit exemplifies the characteristics of this debate. The increase in ruin tourism in Detroit troubles Apel. She argues that photography is complicit in dismissing national and local policies that have demolished much of the city's infrastructure. Apel believes that the creation of ruin imagery is a mechanism for calming anxiety about the future that serves as an undercurrent for the two main topics in her book—the social and political traumas that Detroit has suffered and the ways in which UrbEx photography negates those traumas. This dismissal, for Apel, serves to relieve widespread concerns about the future that have surfaced as a result of contemporary doomsday narratives

(Chapter Four). The anxiety about the decline of American culture creates this need for ruin imagery.

Like Dora Apel, Susan Arnold believes that urban decay images of Detroit depict the city as a desolate wasteland. Her essay, "Urban Decay Photography and Film: Fetishism and the Apocalyptic Imagination," highlights what she perceives as one of the most pressing issues, namely, that urban decay photography produces "an identity of the place that becomes more widely believed or experienced than the social reality" (328). The essay includes photographs of the city that depict students in a school and show signs of life in the halls. This school, now demolished, has been photographed by several urban explorers with little evidence of human inhabitation. These images are evidence, in Arnold's view, that "the photograph does not represent the past; rather it discursively produces it" (329). Much like Apel, Arnold believes that photographs (and other documentary artifacts) are not objective evidences of reality.

Both critics attribute the obsession with ruins to an apocalyptic imagination that fuels anxiety about the future as well as deflects attention from the function of socio-political forces that shape the underlying motivations for creating the images in the first place. These positions work in contrast to Christopher's main objective for his book. He conceives of a ruin as "a place of spirit and atmosphere that invites us to think about the past, present, and future" (18). The focus, again, is on the viewer, but the work is an *invitation* to value a particular subject position in relation to the image. While the two critics I have highlighted here argue that a great deal of attention needs to be directed toward the rhetorical value of images, the photographers above do not necessarily conceive of their images in the same way.

I have provided this context to offer an overview of the conversation currently surrounding contemporary ruins. There are many more. Like the photo essays, academic interest

in ruination has increased dramatically in the last ten years. Contemporary critics have relied on specific sites as explorations of concepts. One example is Catherine DeSilvey's work in material aesthetics. She uses a homestead in Montana to illustrate her argument that it can be valuable to overcome some squeamish tendencies and preserve artifacts and structures that we might consider only worth tossing into a garbage heap. The essay collection *Ruins of Modernity*, edited by Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, contains a vast array of essays that examine discrete pieces of material ruin and relate those pieces to a greater sociological or political function. From World War II memorial sites to the remains of South American dictatorships, many of the essays in the collection meditate on the ways that modern ruins inhabit and shape the contemporary landscape. Hell and Schönle offer a series of orienting questions in their introduction to the series of essays. They ask, "Do we need an ontology of ruins?" and "Is there a possible elective affinity between ruins and modernity?" (5). These questions operate as guiding ideas for the authors of the collection and for my project.

I am interested in an ontology of ruin, but I am also drawn to the material constraints of that ontology. The dialectic between the material ruin and the more ephemeral, difficult-to-pin-down identity of the self seems particularly valuable in understanding the rhetoric of space, and in conjunction ruined space, as well as in exploring the human orientation toward future interaction with the earth. Conceptually and materially, the landscape of ruins is a palimpsest of meaning. Building on the rhetoric of architecture and the metaphor/material connection with regard to identification, these questions form a network of interpretation that, I hope, will enable me to develop an ecology of ruin. Post-humanism, ecocriticism, and new materialism offer some theoretical frameworks to explore this ecology, which I address more fully in Chapter One. In the face of apocalyptic narratives and naysaying doom and gloom, I hope that my work with

ruins can offer a new perspective on how to understand the cycle of change that ruins can signify or even, dare I say, advocate for. The mate(real)ity of ruins is uniquely suited to this discussion because of the many layers—spatial, geographical, temporal, and linguistic—that the term and its reality can contain.

My interest in ruins grew out of a fascination with classical ruins and urban exploration. While my project does not directly address ruins of antiquity, UrbEx photography or these aesthetics forms of ruin, they are nevertheless part of the conversation. Representations of decline (both classical and modern) inform contemporary perspectives on ruins and, as the manufacturing sector moves overseas and climate change contributes to disasters that decimate bustling cities in coastal regions, media representations of ruins exacerbate anxiety related to these changes. Industrial ruin porn emphasizes the economic fallout from the movement of manufacturing to the Third World as well as the difficult recovery process for economically distressed areas. Global concern for the increasing number of natural disasters also contribute to representations of industrial ruins.

Photographic representations, for me, lack the affective resonance I am exploring and yet contributes to the conversation in each chapter. The anxieties surrounding climate change and environmental degradation accompanied by political turmoil (particularly in the last decade) exacerbate the tensions in ruin interaction and can be seen in media coverage following disaster events as well as in political discourse. President Donald Trump's election to the Oval Office, at one level, reflects anxieties about the decline of American values, prosperity, and military strength. Much of the conservative electoral base voted for the President in hopes of a return to a nostalgic past with an idealized notion of bustling American manufacturing, increased middle-class home ownership, and the practice of conservative social values. Entrenched in this

nationalistic idealism is the practice of building as a demonstration of American economic strength and vitality. In a recent speech, President Trump reiterated this renewal of the American infrastructure:

> Americans deserve the best infrastructure anywhere in the world. They deserve roads and bridges that are safe to travel, and pipes that deliver clean water into their homes. Not like what happened in Flint, Michigan. They deserve lanes of commerce that get people and products where they need to go on time. Most of all, Americans deserve a system of infrastructure that is looked upon not with pity—the world, in many cases, is so far advanced that they look at our infrastructure as being sad. We want them to look at us with envy—a system worthy of our magnificent country.[9]

It is clear from the tenor of the current administration that ruined infrastructures represent a decaying national identity, an embarrassment within global society. Part of President Trump's campaign platform, including his "Make America Great Again" slogan, invoked a traditional idea of newness as best. The ethics of constructing quality architecture and rejuvenating communities with improved infrastructure certainly applies here. In many parts of the country, the construction industry contributes to a vibrant evolution of economic growth and improvement while also contributing to innovative and ethical building practices as well as an increase of the quality of life for residents in those area. Yet while clean water, safe bridges and roads, and booming new construction improve those communities privileged to have them, there exists a warrant in this logic that dismisses ruined structures as having any value. The implicit

[9] This speech, given June 9, 2017 at a White House press briefing, contains similar sentiments threaded throughout. The President celebrates his policy of limiting bureaucratic red tape to enable large-scale building projects to proceed unencumbered by regulatory slog. For the full text of the speech visit: https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/09/remarks-president-trump-regulatory-relief.

assumption that Trump would like his constituents to grant is that a continuation of capitalist production eliminates a need to attend to ruin.

However, the increasing destruction of the environment by a variety of sources, both human and nonhuman, demands an attention to ruins and the networks surrounding them. Local government agencies mobilize during and after a catastrophic event to provide relief efforts and economic support to citizens who have lost their homes and businesses. These agencies work in concert with relief agencies against ruin and destruction, although at times ineffectively. Charity organizations such as religious groups contribute to the distribution of resources and to the renovation of ruined homes and businesses. Still other kinds of volunteering, economic support, and debate contribute to ongoing efforts by the local public to find some stability, architectural and otherwise, in the aftermath of a catastrophic disaster. Often rebuilding efforts bring another source of attention to ruin by fueling "a growth industry" in disaster-prone coastal areas. For instance, after Hurricane Harvey, *Bloomberg Business* reported that construction companies in the recently hit Houston area expected record-breaking sales in the fourth quarter of 2017, an indicator of the monetary cost of reconstruction efforts, which more often than not clear the ruins for new building projects.[10] Other industries related to real estate in hurricane-prone areas have also faced the problem of too much business. These various agencies respond to the affectability of ruin in ways that can inhibit or promote the efforts of human beings to respond to the ruins of

[10] A related issue in this conversation is the issue of waste. Reports after Hurricane Katrina estimated the debris at 10 million cubic yards. What to do with this amount of waste continues to be a problem following natural disasters. The Congressional Research Service publishes reports that calculate the damage after large scale catastrophes and make recommendations; however, even years after a disaster, these communities still struggle to find solutions to the debris problem.

disaster in a sustainable way. Despite the predominant emphasis on rebuilding, coastal areas regularly affected by hurricanes are rethinking ruin in terms of renewal, waste, and preservation.

The potential revitalization of sites of ruin in the aftermath of natural disaster present opportunities to rethink President Trump's program of infrastructure renewal. The ruins of these disasters stimulate local economies and catalyze new building projects; however, they also stimulate debates about what kinds of building practices can create the conditions for an increase in severe weather events.[11] As a recent example, one primary criticism post-Hurricane Harvey looked to the historic practice of developing floodplains to build homes. For those concerned about sustainability, the destruction of natural floodplains not only further exposes human beings to disasters but also alters the landscape in ways that both prevent natural ecosystems from self-correcting and produce ruin. In his critique of contemporary building practices, Michael Kimmelman traces the legacy of historic decisions that led to placing homes, businesses, parks, and other habitations in locations that heightened their exposure to risk of flooding during Harvey. Current development policies enable those who wish to build in risky areas to transfer the cost of disaster from corporate developers to taxpayers.[12] In many of the hardest hit areas of Houston post-Harvey, such as the suburb of Katy, the homeowners had no warning that their

[11] Many fields, including sociology, anthropology, and meteorology, have come together to present evidence that humanity is the primary cause of climate change. These debates place us in the Anthropocene, or in a period of geologic change directly tied to human innovation, interference, and transformation of ecosystems. For a short overview of the development of this concept, see Dipesh Chakrabarty's short piece "Human Agency in the Anthropocene."

[12] Jenny Rice's monograph *Distant Publics: Development Rhetoric and the Subject of Crisis*, published in 2012, takes an in-depth look at public debates surrounding urban development to "consider how to intervene in the causes of unhealthy and unsustainable public discourse" (14). Her emphasis on public discourses moves to "imagine how we can improve discourse in order to repair damaged places and promote long-term sustainable futures" (14). While I take a more material approach than Rice, I consider the examination of ruins a complementary response to her call for intervening in public talk to promote those sustainable futures.

homes were in direct danger of flooding despite institutional knowledge that these areas were particularly vulnerable. Kimmelman's analysis of the ecology of the flood characterizes the city as "a giant spread of asphalt smothering many of the floodplains that once shuttled water from the prairies to the sea." Houston's urban sprawl into natural floodplains is not unique in terms of historic vulnerability and intra-action with ruins. The low-lying city of New Orleans also struggles with the balance between construction projects in flood-prone areas and the need to preserve the natural landscape features that can protect them. The island of Galveston has historically removed natural barriers to flooding, such as sand dunes, to make way for ambitious building projects that support tourism, such as the famous Hotel Galvez that occupies beachfront real estate facing the Gulf of Mexico, despite the mass of ruin produced following the major hurricanes that hit the island. The debates that surface around these building practices form an integral part of the rhetorical ecology of ruin.

As an example of a rhetorical ecology in motion, which I explain more fully in Chapter One, the events of natural disaster present material-discursive complications to the implicit assumptions made by the Trump administration and others who submit to the paradox that it is necessary to preserve traditional values while at the same time continuously building new infrastructures. Communities that live with ruins of natural disaster must reckon with questions of how to deal with the cyclical ruin of their architecture and this paradox. Hurricanes Katrina, Sandy, Harvey, Irma and others have all had far reaching consequences for the cities affected by them. I find the spaces of disaster fruitful in understanding the kind of rhetoricity that intrigues me because ruination that results from large-scale environmental forces is not the slow destruction of decay; rather, the disaster transforms the built into the unbuilt in what seems like an instant. To experience ruin this way offers a collection of fragments, the product of the sharp

rupture of the disaster, that are both whole and broken, man-made and unmade, and ultimately human and nonhuman. Communities affected by disaster have attachments with their architecture, the historical narratives about those places, and the exigence surrounding the value of the ruined materials. These attachments determine the kinds of engagement with the ruins left in the wake of environmental destruction.

The interferences to understanding ruin more fully, as I have just described, are part of a large network of influences that shape the responses human beings make to mate(real)ity's address. I have chosen ruins as a focus of study precisely because of the need in our digital age to become more intimate with the spaces that we create, protect, and destroy as a means of understanding humanity's place in the world. The language we use to describe ruins and the effects they have on us contain keys to uncovering the hidden rhetoricity of ruins. I use a combination of new materialist developments in rhetorical theory based on a phenomenological foundation to explore the human experience of ruin and ruins as material bodies engaged in that experience. Rhetoric, with its long history of studying meaning and interpretation, accounts for intra-actions between the mate(real)ity of ruin and the language of action, movement, and transformation. The language of rhetoric also invites reflection on the ways in which the material world influence human thought and action. New materialism's focus on a relational model, rather than a binary one, offers a path to exploring ruins that accounts for the mate(real)ity of architectural space, biological processes within that space, and the human actors who happen to be there. Phenomenology acts as a grounding theoretical presence here as well. I place ruins at the intersection of these fields and draw from them in my explorations of language, ruin, and human experience.

The Need for Rhetorical Ecologies

Rhetoricians began examining new ways of approaching mate(real)ity in the late 1980s and early 1990s, although some new materialist scholars trace a material approach to much earlier conceptions of rhetoric (Barnett and Rickert). These calls for material rhetoric claimed that discourse constituted the material conditions described by Marxism (McKerrow and McGee). Theorists in this era developed a theoretical framework to account for discourse made real through the subjectivity of the rhetor, audience, and text, and then to conduct appropriate analyses revealing the institutions of power that govern mobility for change. These responses came out of the field of speech communication, and arguments for the examination of rhetorical theory using post-modern critique circulated through this period. Critics moved to separate the classical conception of philosophical universality (inherent in Plato and others) from rhetorical theory. Steeped in post-structuralism and relying on the philosophical constructs of Foucault, Althusser, and Derrida, material rhetoric presented a critical orientation toward discourse that sought to focus on "how rhetorical practices create the conditions of possibility for a governing apparatus to judge and program reality" (Greene 22). Rhetorical theorists utilizing this framework became social critics dedicated to unmasking systems of domination through analyses of textual production.

The lure of post-modernism and post-structuralism in rhetorical theory led these critics away from mate(real)ity and toward ideological visions of it. This form of material rhetoric fails to consider matter's participation in the conversation and relies on a view of mate(real)ity that is discursively constructed. As a field of study, rhetoric needs to account for the suasiveness of matter. How that matter is constructed, disposed of, and engaged with makes a difference in the identity of all the subjects participating in the rhetorical situation. Material Rhetoric, as

conceived in the 1990s, does not adequately describe the relationship between rhetoric and the physical world outside of words and thoughts. By placing *material* in a position of adjective, the word merely describes the noun *rhetoric*. Flipped the other way, the concept—rhetorical materiality— places *rhetoric*in an adjectival position applied to the condition of being material. The sequence of the words signifies the solidity of the material and enables mate(real)ity a situated being, or ontological situatedness, *as* rhetorical. The philosophical moves that need to be made by those in the field of rhetoric require a shift in thinking from the deeply human centered approach to a more eco-ontological approach.

New materialist approaches to rhetoric work toward an eco-ontological orientation and examine material-discursive linkages by decentering the human and foregrounding the "world." Thomas Rickert's *Ambient Rhetoric* offers a definition of rhetoric that incorporates ecology, or the Greek *oikos,* into his discussion of the world. Rickert's emphasis on spatial concerns locates rhetoric in the worldhood-of-the-world and argues for an attunement to that world as an ethical principle of rhetoric.[13] He establishes four premises of a rhetorical ecology that bear on my project. First, Rickert asserts that the material world cannot be separated from knowledge production, nor can linguistic production construct reality independent of the material world. His second premise figures the realm of the symbolic in symbiotic relation to the material world. This premise assumes a material-discursive way of understanding the world. Third, Rickert does not restrict that relation to a one-sided human endeavor. The third premise requires a coalescence of human and nonhuman actors that necessitates an inclusion of material space in that relation.

[13] Heidegger's definition of the 'worldhood-of-the-world' underlies both Rickert's and my conception of the world. He describes the world as "wherein" or the "structure of that to which Dasein assigns itself" to place Dasein in a position of encountering Being 'beforehand' through the world (*BT* 119).

The fourth and final premise that Rickert describes rests on a "grappling" of "entangled mutually coevolving, and transformative interactions among persons, world, and discourses" (162). This final premise takes the material-discursive way of understanding to be a difficult enterprise that cannot be easily taxonomized into hierarchical distinctions. These four premises bring the world to the field of rhetoric in new ways and inform the foundation of material intimacy as a move to understand the ontological situatedness of ruins.

I believe an ecological approach operates as a both/and model of material-discursive networks that not only works with discourse but also emphasizes mate(real)ity's rhetorical contribution to these networks. Jenny Rice's call for a conceptual shift from rhetoric as a homeostatic set of coordinates to a dynamic and circulating set of relationships remains integral in the study of rhetorical ecologies. Rice critiques the view of the rhetorical situation as a set of definitive exigencies articulated by fixed identities. She argues instead for "an amalgamation of processes and encounters" that bleed through temporal, historical, and lived fluxes. She not only includes delineating the elements of the rhetorical situation, but also places them within the lens of affective ecology (Edbauer 8). Following this work, I situate the dynamism of the vibrant network of ecologies of ruin within a topographical emplacement that includes a where, in addition to a who and a what.

I use an ecological model that "reads rhetoric both as a process of distributed emergence and as an ongoing circulation process" (Edbauer 13). Space and location operate as structural and material elements in that circulation that inform my discussion of ruins. By positioning the social as "a networked space of flows and connections" rather than as a bounded site traditionally enclosed in the rhetorical situation, I approach sites of ruin from this distinction

between space and location.[14] Following Rice's discussion of the etymology of the word 'situation,' as a series of fixed boundaries, I see the rhetorical situation as a static taxonomy of strategy and practice that uses ontological hierarchies rather than webs of relation to represent intra-actions. Rather than delineate human-marked categories for rhetor, I seek to identify the embodied and enacted ways that contact occurs between multiple rhetors including nonhuman ones. Not only does this create a broader view of the rhythm of rhetoric as it moves among various entities, this approach complicates the structural boundaries of what rhetoric means. A key piece of Rice's argument for my conception of a paratactical approach defines rhetoric as a space of contact. Rice challenges the model of the rhetorical triangle and draws a spatialized field of interacting processes. This model resonates with a conception of rhetoric as a conversation with multiple players rather than a dialectical model between two interlocutors who have stable identities prior to the interaction.

Since Rice's landmark article, other theorists in what has come to be known as rhetorical ecologies address the long history of rhetoric. These critics argue that the field of rhetoric, consistently human centered, traditionally neglects the role mate(real)ity plays in the rhetorical situation. Scot Barnett takes a historiographical view of realism in rhetoric by tracing the "material and extrahuman realities [that] have served as conditions of possibility for numerous accounts of rhetoric from Aristotle to twentieth-century conceptions of rhetoric" (5). The material world, for Barnett, has always informed and participated in rhetoric. More extreme versions of the material turn in rhetorical theory can be found in object-oriented rhetoric that draw on theorists such as Levi Bryant and Graham Harman to flatten the ontological field and

[14] The debate between Bitzer and Vatz on the nature of the rhetorical situation underlies this conversation. While valuable in some contexts, however, their formulation of rhetoric does not quite work for an ecological model.

position humans as objects in an ontology of objects. (Boyle, Graham, and Lynch and Rivers). These approaches challenge the social constructivist nature of previous conceptions of rhetoric and locate mate(real)ity in a more prominent position for study. Discourse permeates the field, as it should; however, to those working in rhetorical ecologies, the emphasis on language as the primary mode of understanding, persuasion, and identity, needs to be reevaluated.

Perhaps, ecological approaches have not gained enough ground publicly because Western philosophy and its partnership with rhetoric is hardwired to be ego-centric rather than eco-centric. Egocentrism figures humans and language at the top of a hierarchy of value, a taxonomy of being that privileges humans (and certain kinds of humans at that) as worthy of ontological consideration. Descartes's famous "I think therefore I am" leads much of the conversation surrounding Enlightenment-style humanism. The metaphysical properties of such a thinking subject necessarily lead to a more self-involved orientation distanced from the world, rather than *in, with, and toward* the world. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman introduce alternatives to this humanism in their collection *Material Feminisms* by inviting the reader to consider broader methodologies not limited to post-modern theoretical frameworks. Their critique challenges humanism's focus "exclusively on representations, ideology, and discourse," or rather human-only interpretation, at the expense of "lived experience, corporeal practice and biological substance" (4). A reorientation that allows these types of material engagements as intertwined with modes of representation expands the field of theoretical possibility and enables a distinctly new way of thinking about the world and the human's place within it. An eco-centric approach engages in a paratactic praxis that can help us determine how much of the fertility of language is tied to the fecundity of materiality.

Sharman Gill's analysis of Terry Tempest Williams's autobiography *Finding Beauty in a Broken World* demonstrates the relationship I am describing here. Gill traces the mosaic motif through Williams's book as a metaphorical and literal "representation of the collective existence of beings (living and non-living)" (2). The mosaic metaphor provides a model that Gill finds useful to "elucidate the dislocations and relocations of an ethical and dynamic human subject in an era that is theoretically moving beyond the human being, and yet, paradoxically, in the age of the Anthropocene" (18). This approach highlights the necessity of retaining the human in posthumanism and its iterations by orienting the human toward an ethical, collective relationship with the nonhuman Other.[15] Gill posits five characteristics of Williams's ecological humanist mosaic. First, she lays the foundation for the mosaic as cooperative regeneration or "an intersection of material beings facilitated by an ethical human imagination that listens, receives, and gives toward a pattern of beauty, including, but not limited to, being human in a collective world" (2). Cooperation between beings forms the crux of this ecology and leads to four more characteristics: diversity, respect, interconnection, and a 'light' beyond the self. The autobiographical self in Williams's text and by extension other selves in other texts thus dislocate and relocate the tiles in the pattern of the mosaic. Diversity, as the next characteristic, highlights the value of contrast and tension in these encounters. The locations of various points of difference require a constant reorientation to the boundaries between people, places, ideas, animals, etc. Respect follows from the principle of diversity and allows a multi-vocal plurality of being, in and of itself. The next characteristic, interaction, "emphasizes, fades, and reorients the

[15] I extend the phenomenological designation of Other to more than human entities. Heidegger defines the Other as "those from whom, for the most part, one does *not* distinguish oneself—those among who one is too" (154). Levinas positions the Other in the face-to-face encounter that I address more fully in Chapter Two. These formulations of the Other emphasize the humanity of the Other, which I see as present even when the Other is not human.

human subject" (4). Subjectivity in this formulation is primarily relational but that relation retains mobility between subjects especially when those relations are paratactically rather than conceptually linked. Gill expands this subjectivity in favor of a humanist posthumanism and draws on a non-hierarchical model, the mosaic, to "generate a moral response to environmental dilemmas" (5). The human subject in this mosaic is one fragment in the company of others, neither privileged nor subsumed. Humans add to the harmony of the composition and have power to direct the eye, to overtake the harmony, or to blend a myriad of colors and shapes into the overall pattern.

When Williams defers then to a 'light' beyond the self, the final characteristic of the mosaic motif, she moves the human toward "a situating place of perception and ethical orientation" that includes "the human hand or heart [piecing] together the living and non-living to construct an assemblage that is charged with the play of light, creating the feel of flow in the mosaic" (5). The beauty that comes from this light and shadow that plays across the entire assemblage, a chiaroscuro effect, partly revealed, partly veiled. I return to chiaroscuro in the epilogue as the concept of chiaroscuro bookends my discussion of ruins and conjures the play of light and dark throughout this project.

Gill offers Williams as an example of "an ethical self who is in dynamic, relational becoming," and her analysis of Williams's work as an example of an ecological humanist inquiry using the mosaic (7). The power of this framework lies in its fragmented nature, of its pieces knit together in a common composition and in a paratactic juxtaposition of human, animal, and text. One disadvantage of the mosaic motif is that pieces in a mosaic are often fixed in place, cemented to form a permanent composition, by human hand or heart piecing it together. My methodology stems largely from such an ecological imagination but allows for the precarious

permanence of agential movement within the ecology of ruins. The importance of placing humans side by side with things and beings in the world necessitates an investment in all of the fragments that make up the composition.

My investigation of ruins and their influence on human experience works to bring together this mosaic by placing them side by side. The field of phenomenology, which emphasizes the human subjective experience as the primary object of investigation, informs my methodology for examining this intra-action. This requires language to describe it and a particular orientation toward the world that potentially negates other orientations. But what if, at the basic biological atomic level, we could accept the ruin as Other and language as the description of the Other's experience? In other words, is it possible using description based on "the resemblance of other bodies to one's own body" that we could make the leap toward understanding material forms as part of a rhetorical intersubjectivity (Rajal 224)? Description as a methodology has its problems. If the human is using human language for the description, the danger is to anthropomorphize the nonhuman Other in ways that are counterproductive to an acknowledgement of the Other. My purpose here is not to dismiss descriptions as overly anthropomorphized. Descriptions of ruins often are anthropomorphized, perhaps because we tend to think of ruins as being exclusively human productions (and demolitions). However, I follow Jane Bennett in embracing the potential understanding that comes from describing the nonhuman as potentially similar to the human, particularly in a rhetorically affective manner. "A touch of anthropomorphism," she argues, "then, can catalyze a sensibility that finds a world filled not with ontologically distinct categories of beings (subjects and objects) but with variously composed materialities that form confederations" (99). Following Bennett's acceptance of these confederations of mate(real)ities, I invite anthropomorphized representations, alongside the

mate(real)ity of ruins, as rhetorically engaged in shaping, influencing, and persuading the network. In other words, description as a phenomenological method operates as one of the most important components of a rhetorical ecological study of human and nonhuman relationships.

Another important reason to consider description as a method stems from the possibility of suspending judgment or definitive conclusions when describing the world. I analyze describing as a paratactic praxis in Chapter Three, but I also engage in a performance of description in some sections of this project that I want to address here. Mate(real)ity infuses everyday life, experience, and perception. As I type these words on the computer, a confederation of mate(real)ities circulate around me. My dog barking at the FedEx truck. The curtains swishing in the breeze from my open window. The pillow supporting my back in my desk chair. These factors, or the place of writing, have been discussed by many composition theorists, such as Nedra Reynolds and Sid Dobrin, and cultural theorists such as Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre. They implicate the location of writing as a participant in the writing process, cultural exchange and experience, and individual knowledge production. Cydney Alexis calls this place of writing the "writing habitat" and describes it as an act of dwelling. If that is true, then the intra-actions of writing are also intra-actions of mate(real)ity. My point here is that in the act of analysis, of examining and describing the mate(real)ity of the texts I have chosen for my archive, I am also performing paratactic praxis toward material intimacy as I take notice of and try to account for mate(real)ity and ruin in my individual human experience.

Those working in rhetorical ecologies often both perform and analyze description in similar ways to attempt to reroute previously held clusters of interpretive constellations that connect language to the human and reverberate back to the human again. One very recent example is Caroline Gottschalk Druschke's article in *Enculturation.* Druschke incorporates her

fieldwork with river herring as an example of an ecological approach to rhetoric, or what she calls "trophic rhetoric." The river herring occupies the center of her analysis both as a metaphor and as an agent in this system. Druschke resists the Heideggerean influence in new materialism in ways that I do not; however, her inclusion of her experience alongside the fish, the river, and other mate(real)ities demonstrate a performance of rhetoric that I think is valuable. She calls herself a "trophic rhetorician" and argues that trophic rhetoric "becomes that of co-laboring or equivocating across species, worlds, and registers to take seriously the physicality of relationality, but not only." Co-labor considers the role the researcher takes in the ecology and connects people and things in a paratactical way, preserving the integrity and diversity of the individual as well as finding opportunities to place individuals side by side. Druschke's description of her fieldwork includes a highly paratactic moment that I offer here as an example:

> the smell of that river, the taste and texture of the scales that inevitably fly into your mouth when you're lifting those fish. The feel of a suffocating river herring that takes a wild leap out of your net onto the asphalt below. Stooping to pick it up: slippery, almost gelatinous, with a spiny ridge that feels like it might slice through your palm. A solid muscle. Feeling the power that propels a river herring upstream in palm, fingers, forearm, bones, heart. Seeing its gills beat as it gasps for water. Staring a river herring in the eye and the river herring returning your gaze. Feeling in tired back and arms, cut up fingers, wet clothes, the urgency of migration—the compulsion for life, for *relation*.

Druschke's experience in this excerpt comes into the overall analysis paratactically, resisting cohesion, resisting conclusion. She is a co-laborer with her subject of analysis, working with the fish, and acknowledging the layers of agency that function in the rhetorical ecology. As highlighted by this example, the work of engaging with the mate(real)ities in the field generates

opportunities for description, and yet these descriptions struggle to coordinate the component parts. An ecological model situates discourse within an intertwined network of epistemes and ontologies predicated on difference and contribution rather than objective conclusions.

Like other rhetoricians, Druschke does find problems with an ecological model, primarily as a model for thinking rather than as a material practice, although she retains an orientation toward rhetoric that emphasizes mate(real)ity. Other arguments against incorporating a new materialist ecology claim that the field of rhetoric has enough to do without considering mate(real)ity, thus the ethical imperative is to restrict rhetoric primarily to language. In a recent debate at MLA 2019, John Schilb posed the question "What's the role of human beings in Posthumanist Rhetoric?" His respondents included leading scholars working with and against posthumanism in rhetoric. Steven Mailloux's answer brought rhetorical pragmatism to bear on the question as a thoughtful way to consider new work, but he insisted in his remarks that humanism still brings much to the table and should not be dismissed. The other panelists, including Kurt Spellmeyer, Michelle Baliff, and Diane Davis, offered perspectives in support of posthumanism. Ira Allen offered the most strident challenge to posthumanist rhetoric by emphasizing the role symbolic activity plays in human interaction. Rhetoricians, he argued, should study symbolic activity produced by humans *for* humans with rhetorical intent. He posed a series of questions that I think are relevant to a discussion of how posthumanism and its iterations in new materialism might contribute to rhetorical theory. His first question—"what conceptual relations should prevail between ontology and epistemology?"—addresses the tension between philosophy and rhetoric and questions how rhetoric should or should not intervene in discussions of ontology. The second question—"which humanism?"—positions humanism as a multiplicity of schools that address issues of humanism in a variety of ways.

Finally, Allen's most important question—"what does posthumanism do for rhetoricians?"—probes the implications of moving our attention away from the issues investigated by humanism. I do not claim to have all of the answers to these questions here, but I do believe that posthumanism, specifically in the guise of new materialism, brings a great deal to the table of rhetoric, and so I offer some thoughts in response to Allen's questions.

First, the connection between ontology and epistemology does not have to be a tenuous one but rather could be conceived as an intertwined relationship between the ways that existence and knowledge complement and shape each other. In humanist rhetoric, language retains its position as the shaper of reality, and, thus, epistemology becomes foregrounded. This deep reliance on discursive formulations of rhetoric resists acknowledging the agency of the material world. This perspective arguably limits the possibilities for understanding rhetoric in a 21st century, posthuman world. In response to these limitations, a backlash against postmodernism has risen in the forms of new materialism and posthumanism that does not dismiss the power of language but includes it as *one* of many forces that shape reality. Second, posthumanism is, in fact, another form of humanism. We cannot escape the Beings that we are, as humans, and thus all interpretive strategies arising from humans will include them. New materialism works along the intersections of mate(real)ities, both human and nonhuman and, like Druschke's analysis, includes the human experience as a fundamental part of that endeavor. And finally, in answer to what posthumanism brings to rhetoric, I would say that rhetorical theory benefits from attending to marginalized voices even when some of those voices come from nonhuman sources. Engaging with mate(real)ity moves human awareness away from itself and toward the Other. In calling for a more ethical mattering, which Julie Jung and Kellie Sharp-Hoskins argue is "a rhetorical phenomenon, one in which a materialized object embodies a conferral of value, and, by virtue of

having value, enacts the capacity to effect change" (163), I believe that posthumanism bring a great deal to the table of rhetoric.

Rhetoric needs to account for matter's ontological influence. How matter is constructed, disposed of, and engaged with makes a difference in the rhetorical ecologies where rhetoric takes place. The philosophical moves needed by those in the field of rhetoric require a shift in thinking from the deeply human-centered approach to the more organic, ecological approach I described above. A disruption of the system of categorization between language and reality also disturbs the tightly woven categorical distinctions between self and other, between the human and the nonhuman. My project seeks to take up the challenge of disruption by mate(real)izing an experiment in decentering human actors across a wider ecological landscape.

Anatomies

In laying out the scope of the theoretical field for my inquiry into ruins' mate(real)ity, I position my study within the territory of ecology. The evolving nature of ecologies makes it difficult to anchor the study of the rhetoricity of ruins in a single methodology that also allows for the emergent capacities of the system. This is one challenge to undertaking a new materialist rhetorical approach. Another challenge to this approach is that in order to disturb the bifurcation between reality and language, I must use language. To some extent, I agree with Hayden White that "thought remains the captive of the linguistic mode in which it seeks to grasp the outline of object inhabiting its field of perception" (xi). But that does not mean it is not worth trying.

My attempt to negotiate this challenge both performs and analyzes paratactic praxis to understand the material intimacy produced by mattering, witnessing, listening, and wandering. To do this, each chapter follows a trajectory that does not move seamlessly along causal chains. Rather, I build a series in each chapter composed of an onto-epistemological act that facilitates

material intimacy, a section on a material structure related to an active state of being that is the focus of the chapter, and an analysis of how that structure appears in a text that engages material intimacy. The final sections of each chapter look at the textual markers of paratactic praxis, as broken places in both text and mate(real)ity. These sections combine to form the ontological situatedness and rhetoricity of the ruins that move within the ecological system. By design, these sections do not always adhere in a cohesive and explicit whole. In some cases, I have left open the transitions between sections as an experiment in parataxis.

The first section in each chapter takes on an infinitive verb form that places the verb in motion. These sections—to matter, to witness, to listen, and to wander—define the scope of the verb and explore the layered meanings of movement in the verb. The verb also takes an actor, so each move is accompanied by a human mover who responds to the ruin's address (i.e., to bear witness and the witness). The infinitive form conjures an intentional response to ruins that acknowledges the ruin's rhetoricity. The second section of each chapter deals with structural anatomies of each mate(real)ity (the ruin, the storm, the home, and the apocalypse). In resisting a hierarchical taxonomy, I have chosen to place these sections at the center of each chapter to highlight their central role in material intimacy. My choice of anatomy versus taxonomy to describe these mate(real)ities arises from their connection to bodies—ruin bodies, storm bodies, home bodies, and apocalyptic bodies. In the third section of each chapter, I work through the textual markers that move through responses to ruins that elucidate the paratactic praxis that resonates with the address of the ruins and reveals material intimacy.

The first chapter describes ethical mattering, to matter, as an initial foundation for material intimacy and how mattering functions as an ecological approach to rhetoric. Karen Barad's influential article "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How

Matter Comes to Matter" challenges the "contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real," a challenge I take up as a move toward an ethics of material intimacy. Mattering operates at several levels including the verb form of making *things* significant as well as the literal texture of matter. I describe the anatomy of ruin in the second section to develop an extended definition of ruin as it matters in different contexts over time. In defining and describing the word "ruin" through its history, I layer the traces of meaning through textual invocations of the ruin's mate(real)ity. This chapter's final section, "Fractured Ecologies," describes and defines the paratactic moves that occupy the narratives in the later chapters and the mate(real)ities represented in them.

The second chapter examines what it means to bear witness as a confrontation with the face of the Other, a Being-there. Bearing witness arises from the vulnerability of exposure necessary for the potential of an ethical mattering. Levinas's *Entre-Nous: Thinking of the Other* along with Martin Heidegger's *Being in Time* (hereafter *BT*) informs this act of Being-there. The anatomy of a storm centers this chapter in the agency and observation of natural power, specifically in mythologies and scientific observations of weather patterns as "ruiners" that shape the landscape after a disaster. Witnessing that power shapes media accounts of the storm and the ruins of its aftermath. The section, "Storm Swirls," follows witnesses that fracture mythologies surrounding natural disasters to locate the ruin's potential for eliciting an ethical response to the storm's destruction.

The third chapter advocates for the paratactic praxis, to listen, as a form of Being-with that moves the intra-action with ruin toward the care and concern necessary for material intimacy. I define this as listening-with and articulate three ways that this occurs: with silence, with absence, and with gathering. These moves attend to the ruin in itself and remain open to the

ruin's affect ability. In this chapter, I place the anatomy of the home at the center of the intimate nature of listening-with and locate the powerful affects of the home within its material structure. I trace the properties of "dwelling discomposed" and find the textual markers of the three ways of listening—silence, absence, and gathering— in the first-hand accounts of hurricane survivors who have been displaced from their homes.

The final act toward material intimacy I examine in this project—to wander—loosens the anchors to place that solidify binary orientations toward the self and Other and enacts a Being-toward ruin that illuminates the sharp contrasts between order and disorder present there. This move toward material intimacy finds the sublime in the inexplicable experience of paratactic movement through post-apocalyptic landscapes of ruin. Chapter Four emplaces the anatomy of the apocalypse in the ruins that call to the survivors in post-apocalyptic narratives. The apocalypse functions as a place, a site of meaning, and as material condition of environmental ruin. This final chapter looks to post-apocalyptic fiction for "broken paths" and the three characteristics of wandering those paths that fracture the narrative flow and enact a speculative material intimacy. The poetic, mnemonic, and ontographic displays of paratactic wandering in these post-apocalyptic narratives move toward material intimacy with the ruin.

One final word about the anatomy of this project. The ecological approach I take here, as I said before, is both performative and explicative. I privilege Laurie Gries' new materialist rhetorical methodology that embraces uncertainty and follows material trails by tracing those trails through my own experience with ruin and place them in conversation with others. Thus, I interrupt my analyses with interludes that reflect, describe, and paratactically engage with the actions I discuss. In some cases, these interludes are only linked adjacently to the principles and narratives I account for in the analysis portions of the text. Thus, I ask the reader to embrace

uncertainty with me and to bear witness, listen-with, and wander-toward the ruins I describe. My project searches for material intimacy and, as a mate(real)ity itself, invites the reader to come along.

Chapter One

An Ecological Approach to Rhetoric

we are all born ruinous.

John Donne

My aim in this chapter is to establish a lexicon for describing material intimacy as an ethical intra-action with ruins, and, more broadly, with mate(real)ity. I begin with ethical mattering as an integral underpinning for engaging with ruins. I then connect the concept of material intimacy to human experience with various forms of ruin. I define ruins in this chapter as a noun, verb, and adjective for my qualitative study of the ecology of ruin. To accomplish this task, I take an ecological approach to rhetoric using what I call paratactic praxis. This practice entails a material and discursive form of proximity that not only facilitates material intimacy but also my analysis. In order to take a new materialist approach to rhetoric and ruins, I argue that the ruined spaces we intra-act *with* in the world must be seen as subjects in their own right with layers of meaning, existence, and influence.

The ethical implications here are complicated. How do different subjectivities engage in an intimate relationship? Is there an ethical imperative when dealing with a mate(real)ity such as a ruin? One of my primary research questions for this project is this: Can understanding the phenomenon of intra-action with ruin help us to better understand our relationship to mate(real)ity? I want to understand the implications of blurring the boundaries between human and ruin, between life and stone, and between language and affect. In the spaces between these concepts are mate(real)ities that often go unnoticed or, when noticed, are brushed aside,

unwanted. More specifically, ruins carry little purchase in the new-is-better philosophy of late capitalism. By examining ruins as subjects of value and rhetorical influence, I argue that material intimacy has the potential to enter the spaces between and to close the distance between entities. This intimacy requires respect and depth and thus an ethical comportment toward the Other.

In this formulation of material intimacy, new materialism's call for ethical relations and rhetoric's emphasis on ethical persuasion merge in an orientation toward the Other that considers the Other with care and concern. In other words, the crux of the intersection between new materialism and rhetoric contains an ethical relation between humans and matter. Ethics plays a key role in how these relations are addressed, analyzed, and experienced. While I am arguing for the rhetoricity of ruins, I also want to acknowledge the value of the human agent in the intra-action. Humans have a choice in how they respond to the world and how they engage with the Others they encounter. Consequently, the decisions we make on behalf of the silent Other can have a powerful impact on that engagement and its entanglements. An ethical approach to ruins, as I hope to make clear, positions the human as a respondent to the rhetoricity of ruins, and considers mate(real)ity in an intimate and ethical way.

To Matter

The question of ethical modes of persuasion has a long history and continues to plague rhetoricians. Defining ethics proves to be extremely difficult. Plato's insistence on the good life, *eudaimonia*, places ethics in the realm of a transcendent knowing that leads to happiness. Individuals who achieve this transcendence then act morally. Richard Weaver's analysis of the *Phadreus* defines Plato's ethics in terms of the role of rhetoric to seek to "perfect men by showing them better versions of themselves, links in that chain extending up toward the ideal, which only the intellect can apprehend and only the soul have affection for" (25). Under this

definition, rhetoric and ethics are intimately intertwined as potentially good or evil depending on the use of rhetoric as a *technē* for either purpose. The dual nature of rhetoric, to be both good and bad, demands an ethics for using language in a way that persuades individuals to become their best selves.

This classical conception of ethics carries through much of the Western canon. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* emphasizes the importance of choosing an internal satisfaction that is the "highest of all goods achievable by action" (1095a 15-17). The pursuit of this good life constitutes a distinguishing directive for humanity and, in Aristotle's formulation, can only be achieved by through contemplation. Scot Barnett pushes this theory of ethics beyond the good life of the human in his monograph *Rhetorical Realism: Rhetoric, Ethics, and the Ontology of Things*. His historical approach examines realism in the context of Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, and Martin Heidegger and locates traces of mate(real)ity in a rhetorical ethics through each writer's era of rhetorical history. Barnett's book serves as "both a call and a response…to try to see these engagements as evidence of particular attunements in rhetoric's history to the vibrancy and alterity of things" (215). Ultimately, Barnett's study aims to find an ethical comportment that extends beyond human-to-human relationships and into the realm of the nonhuman other. For in Barnett's view, "learning how to flourish and live well with all kinds of others is (and always should be) at the heart of any ethical theory" (214). The underpinning of this ethical relation is that the pursuit of the good life should include Others that do not look like, feel like, or think like human beings.

However, defining ethics as requiring a transcendent truth still gets sticky in the context of moral relativism. How does one define one's best self or the good life? Can it be relative? What characteristics do individuals need to possess to be ethical? These questions can lead to a

paradoxical situation in which good people need good behavior (or language) to be ethical and good behavior (or language) is needed to create good people. Within that circle is the assumption that good people are good to Others, which as evidenced by all kinds of contemporary political and social problems does not necessarily bear out in reality. To determine a stronger sense of what it means to be ethical, an ontological approach is needed.

Posthumanism and its attention toward the stuff of the world takes on the call for an attention to ethical mattering. One central tenant of posthumanism argues for a more ontological orientation toward matter. While under this umbrella term of posthumanism many configurations of an attention to matter exist, scholars in rhetorical studies such as Thomas Rickert, Byron Hawk, and John Muckelbauer see a relationship between a posthumanist ethics and rhetorical mattering.[16] Julie Jung and Kellie Sharp-Hoskins argue for what they call an emergent mattering that builds a rhetorical ethics "in which a materialized object embodies a conferral of value, and, by virtue of having value, enacts the capacity to effect change" (163). To matter is to be material, to exert influence in the world, and to value the relationships that facilitate an ontological situatedness that rests on being-in-the-world. Much of the scholarship in rhetorical ontology arises out of Bruno Latour's actor-network theory; however, I prefer Heidegger's conception of Being and being-in-the-world to elucidate what it means to matter.

While Heidegger does not explicitly consider matter in itself, by asking the question "what is Being" he begins to peel back the layers of traditional ontology and other obstacles that

[16] Object-oriented ontology, for example, works to flatten the binary of subject and object into a world composed of objects, unknowable to each other, and includes humans in this flattening. Material feminisms takes a different approach and works to enhance the value of the marginalized nonhuman Other as a way to build a stronger acknowledgement of Being in all forms. My project aligns more closely with material feminisms but broadly construed fits within the topography of new materialist rhetoric.

stand in the way of understanding Dasein's relationship to matter. Heidegger's undertaking, to disclose Being, locates ethics in ontology and considers the relationship between Being and being-in-the-world. One of the layers that must be disclosed is the worldhood of the world, or "the structure of that to which Dasein assigns itself" (*BT* 119). Heidegger says that, "Being-in-the-world shall first be made visible with regard to that item of its structure which is the 'world' itself" (*BT* 91). His definition of world in this context refers specifically to the domain of Dasein's existence as the "public we-world or one's 'own' closest (domestic) environment" (*BT* 93). Heidegger seeks to take nothing for granted in dissecting Being-in-the-world and in doing so opens avenues for seeing what shows itself. In section three of division one of *Being and Time*, Heidegger attempts to makes visible the structure of the world itself. The way to do this is through ontological explication which "discovers, as it proceeds, such characteristics of Being as substantiality, materiality, extendedness, side-by-side-ness, and so forth" (96). A prominent feature in this description and key part of my investigation of ruins is proximity. The way entities interact as they come into proximity determines their relationship and how Daseins encounter them.

To get at the kind of proximity Heidegger is looking for, he first works to dismantle the non-relational, Cartesian binary that sees the way we encounter the world through a subject/object relationship. This binary posits a distinct and closed system. The subject "I" is pure and discreet, and the object in itself is also pure and discreet. Descartes would encounter an object by knowing its parts or its substance and by severing it from the subject. Thus, a hammer's being, to use Heidegger's example, would be found in its composition—wood and steel—apart from its use or user. These two sides, use and user, are autonomous; they do not need each other or constitute each other. They can be examined or encountered in a non-

relational way. This way of knowing operates at a distance. Descartes, and much of humanism after him, seeks to sever objects from their being as a scientific means for investigating being. Heidegger's challenge to this severance is to claim that "Dasein is essentially de-severant: it lets an entity be encountered close by as the entity which it is" (*BT* 139). For Heidegger, properties merely describe the presence-at-hand and do not constitute Being. In fact, looking at things objectively does not adequately illuminate the Being-in-the-world that we are after. The world in this Being-in-the-world must be encountered in concern.

Heidegger names concern as the positive way we encounter the world, and this conceptual move takes us nearer to a definition of ethical intra-action or what I call material intimacy and an ethical mattering. Concern brings things close and in Barnett's reading includes both *"attention* and *tenderness"* as constitutive of an ethical being-in-the-world (189). Ruins call attention to Heidegger's three modes of concern—conspicuousness, obtrusiveness, and obstinacy—and contribute to our relationship with them when we become aware of them in their closeness. Conspicuousness uncovers the ready-to-hand by being broken. Ruins' conspicuousness, for example, makes visible what is ready-to-hand by being un-ready-to-hand. This characteristic, of brokenness, lets the entity be involved and be more accessible. Obtrusiveness shows the readiness-to-hand through our need of what is missing. In this mode, the ruin reveals its absences and obtrudes into the lives of the humans who intra-act with it. Obstinacy disturbs us by standing in the way of our concern. Therefore, we are not concerned with those entities that are ready-to-hand. We cannot see them or their Being. It is only through their unusability or "when an assignment has been disturbed" that readiness-to-hand shows itself in its not being ready-to-hand. Heidegger's emphasis in these three modes of Being is temporality, but he incorporates the world here in a way that concerns what matters. It is through

resistance, in the form of "disturbing, hindering, endangering . . . in some way" that "factical Dasein understand itself in its abandonment to a 'world' of which it never becomes master" (407). Ruins operate distinctly in these three modes of Being—conspicuous, obtrusive, and obstinate—and through their resistance show up as part of the worldhood-of-the-world.

These modes of Being interest me because they constitute a break in the referential totality that occurs when readiness-to-hand becomes visible through a disturbance in references or assignments. The referential totality constitutes the worldhood of the world or the totality in which everything refers to everything else. This referential totality contains relationships between entities. We cannot, therefore, avoid encountering this worldhood of the world. Our *who* then is made up of our involvement or in reference to everything else. Our *who* does not exist without the world. However, this worldhood does not often disclose itself unless the assignment is disturbed and thus made explicit through the damage of the tool (ruin) or through a break in the work. It is through these breaks in the context of equipment and its assignment that, Heidegger says, "the world announces itself" (105). Breaks allow discovery, disclosure, and circumspection. The rhetoricity of the ruin then shows itself as "the presence-at-hand of entities is thrust to the fore by the possible breaks in that referential totality in which circumspection 'operates'" (107). Breaks allow things to matter. Dasein can free things to matter by allowing them to be who they are, but in order to know who they are Dasein must see them, listen to them, and wander with them. A pure subject or object, in Descartes terms, cannot be seen because it is not open and has formed no relationships. Breaks in the referential totality make the way open for entities to form their relationships and perform their assignments.

My short overview here of some key points in Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of Being-in-the-world does not attempt to be comprehensive, but rather to set the stage for the

importance of the proximity and circumspection that is needed for material intimacy. The behaviors that I examine in this project direct the human toward matter that matters, toward an ethical mattering that arises out of concern for the Other.

The depth of investment that I believe is integral to new materialism's call for a more ethical engagement with mate(real)ity rests on what matters. Viewing relations between the stuff of the world and the human as intimate emphasizes this mattering and necessitates a shift in the binary systems that new materialism seeks to overthrow. Material intimacy requires an ontological situatedness, or a place of being, in which mate(real)ity is subjective and ontologically significant. This form of address, and intimacy is indeed a form of address, refers to a reciprocation of intense vulnerability, a movement toward an Other that invites and thrives on the connection formed by *intentional* intra-actions. The intention here is significant. Many interactions take place without claims of intimacy. In fact, I would argue that the majority of human interactions with the material world in the 21st century are *not* intimate in their nature. In the context of the ubiquitous smart phone and other technological devices, seemingly always ready-to-hand, the intra-actions between humans and nonhumans often take little emotive or intellectual investment (concern) on the part of users. While ruins break from technological usefulness and challenge some of this lack of investment on their own, my call for material intimacy intervenes further in the field of indifference and argues for an orientation to the world that acknowledges, embraces, and critiques the intra-actions between people and the ruins they encounter.

A Sense of Intimacy

The word *intimacy* typically belongs to human relationships and can take on a sexual connotation. A quick Google search for intimacy yields thousands of results for intimacy in

human relationships. While psychological definitions typically qualify sexual contact as unnecessary for intimacy, the typical view centers on human relationships and the degree in which those relationships engage in self and partner disclosure as well as partner receptiveness.[17] In the 2000 collection *Intimacy*, the authors examine intimacy through a theoretical lens regarding "the normative practices, fantasies, institutions, and ideologies that organize people's worlds" as affective and consequential (2). These practices form some of humanity's deepest potential attachments between individuals. While this research continues to be important, particularly in feminist research surrounding domesticity, the authors in this collection stay within the boundaries of human relationships, including romantic ones.[18]

Even in posthumanist accounts of intimacy the centering of the human often occludes the relations possible with nonhuman entities. In her posthumanist exploration of touching, Ann Weinstone challenges posthuman theories that preserve the spaces between individuals and argues that human-to-human relationships constitute the most intimate forms of attachment. Her notion of intimacy emphasizes "touch *all the way down*" and views fusion as the primary characteristic of intimate relations between humans (121). Stephen Dougherty challenges Weinstone's post-deconstructionist perspective as a "rhetoric of touch (i.e., the deep-down touch) [that] specifically indicates a renunciation of the deconstructivist first principle of respect for alterity" (82). Dougherty's point is that to overemphasize human-to-human intimacy leads to

[17] See Reis and Shaver's 1988 study of intimacy in interpersonal relationships and, for more contemporary studies, Sharon Manne et. al. and Gurit Bimbaum et.al.

[18] One essay in the collection, Svetlana Boym's "Diasporic Intimacy: Ilya Kabakov's Installations and Immigrant Homes," takes a more material approach to intimacy. Boym's portrayal of immigrant homes as spaces of what she calls "diasporic intimacy" develops a dystopian view of intimacy that depends on the creation of a 'second home' "which preserves many archeological layers of underground homemaking, fantasmic habitats, clandestine spaces of escape and intimacy" (230). I discuss this more fully in Chapter Four.

a collapse of the very boundaries necessary for intimacy to occur. Boundaries let things be in and of themselves. This letting be carries Heidegger's concern and is necessary for material intimacy to occur.

A materialist reading of the word *intimacy* includes the integrity of things in themselves that pertains to or is "connected with the inmost nature or fundamental character of a *thing*" (emphasis mine, *OED*). In 1678, Thomas Hobbes uses the word this way as he describes "the true and intimate substance of the earth," and this usage continues in conjunction with explorations of matter. As I just mentioned, new materialists often seek to locate this intimacy in material interactions. To understand matter, as itself, it must remain itself rather than collapse into a representation of human self. As I said before, anthropomorphism poses a problem in investigations of matter because a philosophical understanding requires language, and language is necessarily human constructed and centered. However, it is possible to draw close, to take matter as significant, without conflating the distinctions between the human and the nonhuman. In the case of ruins, all too often, representations of ruins (particularly in poetic forms) impose metaphorical similarity on ruins' relation with humanity. Material intimacy in my understanding does not rely on similarity, but rather adjacency, to inform the ethical mattering I am searching for here.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's extensive look at the properties of stone, searching for its vitality and attempting to connect with stone's inmost nature, performs this approach. He describes intimacy with stone as geophilia, or, an "elemental *philia* . . . a material magnetism and cosmic glue" that contains within it a gathering, binding, and working "against strife's entropy" (25). Geophilia works as an attachment and attraction that inhabits "all things as the principle of their formation, as that which enables endurance, including matter toward expansive connection" (25).

Cohen's personal narratives, combined with literary examples, reach\ for Hobbes's "true and intimate substance of the earth" and finds a perplexing intimacy as he explores Stonehenge and other ruins composed of stone. He concludes that when we engage with stone "what we feel spring into being is an affective interspace where the agency of stone and human ardor meet in mutual relation, in cross-ontological embrace" (252). Cohen's lyrical narrative style seeks to describe this affective interspace as in this short passage on visiting a subterranean church in Saint-Émilion, France: "The church's history is its stone. There is a power within this hill become a place of silenced prayer. In regarding the pillars that ascend into mountainous darkness, it is difficult not to feel suspended weight. A cathedral promises sky at its far side, but this church holds itself up against the mountain" (69). Cohen's "Excursus" repeatedly uses the verb *to be* to describe his encounter with the church and seeks to incorporate his own experience within the long trajectory of the properties and life of stone. He chronicles his desire to touch "agencies that spiral outside human duration" as "intimacy of movement to desire, evidences the meshes of non-intentional connection" (135). The engagement with stone, for Cohen, arises in an embodied, material intimacy whose weight is in its difference from the human.

My temporal interludes, like Cohen's, seek to incorporate my experiences into the narrative of ruin on a larger scale and to understand those experience as confrontations with difference. As an individual witness, I merely offer one perspective on the rhetoricity of ruin. To complement my personal narratives, I gather a collection of other accounts that attempt to articulate the experience of being-in-the-world of ruin and draw these together as evidence of the paratactic performance of material intimacy. I examine these narratives for extralinguistic context that includes seeings that cannot be seen, sayings that cannot be said, and practices of drawing close to the boundaries of the Other while maintaining an openness there. The difficulty

in expressing this intimacy arises from the fragmented nature of ruins and often slips into broken language as a result. The markers of material intimacy are in these spaces between words and things.

Ruins matter in these accounts as they perform a unique role in these intra-actions; they occupy a liminal physical and existential space. This conception of material-discursive relationships troubles traditional taxonomic distinctions that configure matter into prescribed boundaries, properties and meanings. To accomplish this task, I take Barad's challenge to view the world as "agential intra-activity in its becoming" ("Posthumanist" 818). I also push this intra-activity toward a material intimacy that is at once vulnerable and assertive. I examine ruins as indeterminate agencies through which specific material phenomena manifest relationality between human beings and the architectural ruin. Indeterminacy shapes, or rather dissolves, the sharpness of definitions in this liminal space and simultaneously allows the boundaries between things to remain. For Barad, this indeterminacy consists of "a radical openness, an infinity of possibilities [that] is at the core of mattering" ("Touching" 214). The dynamic play which configures and reconfigures these possibilities creates a shifting mode of being that constantly renegotiates what is inside and outside. Focused attention, a heightened attunement, and an openness to the environment around us leads to a different level of investment than a mere acknowledgement that those entanglements exist. Barad's theory presses against the bifurcating objectivity that limits that acknowledgement and describes, using quantum physics, the ways in which intra-actions shape and produce various agencies and assemblages.

In Barad's theoretical foothold, "what is needed is a rigorous simultaneous challenge to all components" of the force of humanism, which attempts to disentangle the agencies at work in the subject/object relation (135). Barad's challenge to humanism takes up performativity to

account for the possibility of dissolving or at the very least renegotiating the divisions between nature and culture, between human and nonhuman. However, even Barad acknowledges the difficulty in this approach. She concedes that "it would be surprising if my own attempt at making a successful ionizing 'quantum leap' out of the humanist-representationalist orbit doesn't fall prey to the same pull, snagged by some component or another, so great is this force" (428n3). My own discussion of material intimacy suffers from the same potential snags. The indeterminacy of boundaries, the liminality of ruined space, make a systematic investigation of material intimacy that much more complex. I forge ahead anyway. Like Barad, my hope is that material intimacy constitutes a rigorous challenge to subject/object binaries, while embracing the difficulty of escaping them.

While Barad's theory of agential realism offers a lexicon for discussing the relations between the human and nonhuman, and her grounding in quantum physics presents a scientific perspective that adds to the scope of material intimacy, Diane Davis's discussion of community in her 2010 book *Inessential Solidarity* (*IE)* makes similar moves, but she uses the language of continental philosophy and rhetoric to argue for exposure as an a priori condition for rhetoric—what she calls rhetoricity. Davis places Jean-Luc Nancy and Emmanuel Levinas in conversation with rhetoric scholars such as Kenneth Burke to develop a framework for understanding the ways that communities arise and function in order to demonstrate that "the *exposure* to exposedness issues a rhetorical imperative, an obligation to respond that is the condition for symbolic exchange" within the community (9). She defines rhetoric as "first philosophy," drawing on Levinas, and intertwines notions of identification, symbolic exchange, and finitude with an originary affectability that constitutes *mitsein* or being-with. Davis comes to a paradox in these previous texts wherein community or drawing close to the Other comes to need "the

distance, the interruption in identification, [that] they all suggest must be *achieved* somehow" (26). Affectability precedes identification and relies on being "infinitely open to the other's affection, inspiration, alteration" (26). Infinite openness comes at a price; thus, material intimacy contains a moral imperative in relations because it is possible to take advantage of this openness in unethical ways.

To illustrate this rhetoricity, Davis picks up Nancy's example of exposure and finitude by imagining passengers traveling together on a train. The passengers sit in their seats, reading or sleeping or listening to music. They are linked by location and the temporal juncture of being together in the same space at the same time, even along the same trajectory; however, as a singularity of being-with, they are "nothing but this suspension between disintegration and aggregation" (9). They are not yet a community, for "indifference is the luxury of exposed existents who are not *faced* with the fact of their exposedness" (10).[19] The passengers are gathered and exposed to danger and mortality, but they are not aware nor are they attending to the material conditions of those around them. The passengers do not need to *face* their exposure until something happens—a wreck, a terrorist attack, or some other disaster. The disaster prompts a sudden realization of their exposure to finitude that brings the passengers face-to-face and, as Davis says, shatters their egos. The shattering of the ego is grounded in the confrontation with mortality that shatters the illusion of protection. For Davis, and for me, this confrontation forms the basis of community and depends on a prior affectability that makes the conditions of this confrontation possible.

[19] Here Davis is using "face" in a Levinasean sense. To come face-to-face with the Other is to hearken to the summons of the face, the expression, and the rhetoricity therein.

As I described earlier, the affinity between new materialism, phenomenology, and rhetoric follows the trail of affectability created by the sensory experience and subsequently with the confrontation with the face of the Other. This attention to the stuff of the world and its affectability, the power to affect and to be affected, has ethical implications across multiple subjectivities, not limited to human sensibility, as evidenced by the consequences that follow such affect. I have chosen ruins as the nexus of my project precisely because of the resonance of ruins with ethical response, as well as the potentially dramatic consequences of engagement with ruination that can occur. Affective modes that inform human investment and engagement have the capacity to transform relations between humans and their built (and unbuilt) environments, and the ruins that contribute to these modes are thus rhetorical.

To come back to the example of the train, the catastrophe reveals the exposure hidden by indifference as well as the rhetoricity of ruin. Ruin, as a kind of material catastrophe of decay, loss, and absence, offers an opportunity to suspend the subject-that-therefore-I-am and invites a consideration of another subject. Material intimacy insists that the mental placement of the worldhood-of-the-world remains grounded in the recognition of matter as co-constitutive with subjectivity, in the attitude of being and becoming. Immersing one's self in concern includes the rawness of life and of the broken edges of what we might mistakenly believe is an intact image; yet ruin, as a verb, is also an act of purpose, confrontation, and change. Whether the ruin invites restoration, preservation, or even inaction, material intimacy with a ruin (on a systemic or individual level) has the potential to shift the boundaries of identity, particularly in disturbing the belief that the self is a kind of unity within the boundaries of the skin, holding us together, abhoring seepage.

The first step toward material intimacy then is an awareness of the sensorium, or, the acknowledgement that seepage does in fact happen. As I said before, much of the theory produced since "the material turn" of the 21st century attempts to reengage the body as an intricately intertwined part of material-discursive relations.[20] In rhetorical theory, Debra Hawhee's work and the earlier essay collection *Rhetorical Bodies* attempt to address the issues surrounding mate(real)ities of human bodies. Sharon Crowley's "Afterword" in *Rhetorical Bodies* argues that "no body is disinterested" and that dismissing the body (and its sensorium) does a disservice to rhetorical theory (363). As the essays in the collection suggest, the mind and body do not represent two separate and distinct entities and in this early materialist work neither do environment and body represent two disconnected entities. While the collection remains focused on the discursive constructions that shape, produce, and inscribe bodies, traces of new materialist rhetoric thread through the arguments presented there.

To see the evolution of thinking toward sensation in rhetorical theory, I take a short detour here to reflect on the historical movements associated with rhetoric and the senses through the *Quarterly Journal of Speech.* Debra Hawhee's essay "Rhetoric's Sensorium" charts the genealogy of interest in "a host of bodily processes [that] are enlisted in a speaker–audience exchange, most of them sensuous," or the sensorium, as that interest appears in the annals of the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* from the start of the 20th century to today (3). This essay emphasizes the interest in sensory perception early in the journal's history that contributes to the

[20] See Stacy Alaimo and Susan Heckman's *Material Feminisms.* Alaimo's monograph *Bodily Natures* also addresses the porosity of the body, what she calls transcorporeality, and the reciprocal movement of toxins between bodies in and of the world. A contemporary example of this is Susanna Antonetta's memoir *Body Toxic,* which specifically addresses her experience growing up in a ruined environment and the interactions between the human bodies and the ruined landscape.

investigation of speech communication as a discipline. Her analysis concludes by challenging rhetoric as a field to attend to new ways of theorizing rhetoric. Pursuing sensation in this way has the potential to energize the field and "consider more deeply the constitutive roles of sensation in participatory, rhetorical acts" (13). I will offer just a short overview to explain how sensation has entered and faded in rhetorical theory to demonstrate the importance of considering sensation, or affect as I am using it in this context, and mate(real)ity.

Early in the formation of rhetorical studies as a discipline, C.H. Woolbert laid out principles for establishing the territory of the discipline. In his articulation of the theoretical principles that might be foundational to rhetorical studies, Woolbert emphasizes the "sensation of sound" that carries "*meaning;* so we may say, then, that what the speaker gets into the consciousness of the listener is certain *meanings* that the sounds carry" (128). The psychology of sensation figured prominently in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech'*s early attempts to set parameters for speech (and by corollary rhetoric) as a field of study. Woolbert's initial understanding of sensation as an epistemological mode fades during the post-world war era (and post Kenneth Burke) as epistemic rhetoric begins to take the place of sensation as the primary focus of rhetorical studies. Epistemic rhetoric, most notably after 1945, makes its appearance in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* as a way of knowing the world that deemphasizes mind-independent realities and instead relies solely on language, rhetoric, and symbolic action to constitute that reality. For theorists such as Barry Brummett and Robert L. Scott, this turn toward language pushed sensation, and material intimacy, to the side in favor of rationality. Barnett's analysis of epistemic rhetoric leaves open the question of mind-independent realities in his discussion of the debates surrounding the construction of knowledge, but ultimately epistemic

rhetoric sets ontological concerns aside in favor of a relativist view of language and knowledge production.

Epistemic rhetoric has its merits and includes an important ethical component of using language responsibly. However, my project is more interested in Hawhee's charge for rhetorical studies to "consider more deeply the constitutive roles of sensation in participatory, rhetorical acts" and to engage in the relationship between sensation, affect, and mate(real)ity in their rhetoricity (13). Attending to the envelope, the skin as well as other means of taking-in the world, widens the theoretical view to include a host of other agencies, capacities, and possibilities. I examine ruins in the context of the sensorium to include the processes of entropy and intimacy, or perhaps what we could call the sense of finitude, as well as the human relationship with both the process and the concept to navigate a more ethical stance toward ruins.

Sensory awareness, or 'the sensorium' as it is often called, includes all bodily perceptions and increasingly appears as a subject of inquiry across multiple fields. Mark Paterson, a humanist geographer interested in the epistemological implication for haptic knowledges, takes up the challenge to establish a lexicon for researchers to utilize in response to the increase in geographical studies that focus on the interactions between bodies and the world. His lexicon builds a definition of touch as "a sense of communication . . . receptive, expressive, can communicate empathy . . . bring distant objects and people into proximity" (1). This expansive view of haptic knowledges includes an "embodied consciousness as a sensuously receptive and kinaesthetic body" (34). Paterson develops a "*felt* phenomenology" that informs my concept of material intimacy. The aim of intimacy in this case is not limited to one sensation or one sense. Rather intimacy is fully embodied, experiential, and rhetorical. The three senses I engage in this project—sight through witnessing, sound through listening, and touch through wandering—also

work across senses and incorporate a variety of ontologies that ultimately produce a sense of intimacy with mate(real)ity.

To invoke intimacy is to shift the emphasis on the embodiment of an individual disconnected from the bodies around it to the embodiment of individuals connected inclusive of humans and nonhumans. Rather than being merely discursive, the embodiment of people and things connect the material and the discursive across an ecological network of agencies. Embodiment, in this context, does not solely describe the human body. Nonhuman bodies also move toward and away from each other (and entropy) and connect in the spaces between bodies. Thinking of the body as a distinctly human entity limits our understanding of interactions between bodies. Architectural bodies often function as extensions of human bodies, or at least serve them.[21] For Karen Barad, bodies of all types function as apparatuses that "do not act in isolation from one another but rather engage in mutual intra-actions 'with' one another" (*Universe* 211). These mutual intra-actions are not without complexity and often fail to achieve a determinant relation. Curiously, or perhaps paradoxically, these indeterminate spaces occur in places of contact as well as places of disconnection. The gaps here are significant. Intimacy as a concept of intra-action maintains the distance in the material engagements and the discursive productions of that intimacy. As a material-discursive act, intimacy occurs in the moment of the practice, but also in the reflections on the experience as revealed to the witness, listener, or wanderer after the experience.

[21] Madeline Gins and Arakawa, architects and artists, relate architectural bodies and human bodies in unconventional ways. Their projects, most notably *Reversible Destiny*, work toward thwarting death by reconceptualizing the relationship between architectural and human bodies. Unfortunately, they were unable to avoid death as they have now both passed away.

Consider the sense of touch experienced through the surface of the body. Touch is possible up to a certain distance and the sensation of touch can be felt without contact. In her discussion of the physics of touching, Karen Barad describes why this is. At the quantum level of what we as humans consider the haptic experience, touching isn't touching at all. Touch happens in the electromagnetic force field as protons, neutrons, and gravitons enter into a relationship/exchange. Barad calls this field an exploration of virtuality. The space of contact in quantum physics contains multiple energies and a mutual exchange of these energies. Touch, while at the surface seems to be a space of contact, is actually a space of spaces and the relation of these spaces to each other. This is similar to what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes her book, *Touching Feeling*, as a record of "the intuition that a particular intimacy seems to subsist between textures and emotions" (17). The texture here, the material, belongs or shares an affinity with a feeling that does not ever quite make it to consumption or dissolution.

I turn now to an exploration of the category and definition of 'ruin.' Establishing the boundaries of the term feels slightly antithetical to my project, as one of my aims is to disrupt traditional taxonomies of mate(real)ity. I hope that by moving through the conceptual parameters (and traces) of ruin etymologically I will establish a clearer picture of what I mean by ruin. The word carries philosophical weight and tracing the iterations of ruin through time can unpack some of that weight or, at the very least, acknowledge it. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the rhetorical methods for investigating material intimacy and the ecological implications of ruins as participants in the worldhood of the world.

The Anatomy of Ruin

In this section, my goal is to attune to the word "ruin" and follow the traces of its meaning and mate(real)ity. Becoming attuned to the subtle rustlings of the world requires

attention to the matter around us. Ruins are not the only spaces that do this, but they elicit a unique response in our relationship with things. First, ruins challenge familiarity and make it difficult to become oriented to the space. Whereas built architecture directs and yields to human design, a ruin requires a heightened awareness to the rearranged space. Second, ruins also elicit an attunement to unexpected sounds, smells, and shapes. This attunement, according to Thomas Rickert, works to find what shows up, to find the clearing and develop an attention to that which is withdrawn.[22] Third, the difficulty classifying a ruin solicits textual markers to describe and understand the ruin. These markers, of what I call paratactic praxis, permeate ruin intra-action as points of connection useful to the development of material intimacy. I deal with parataxis in just a moment. For the purposes of definition, I first work my way through historical and etymological markers of ruin in its various iterations to develop a guiding (and somewhat fragmented) understanding of the word and its form.

In its earliest usage, the word "ruin" derives from the Anglo-Norman word "ruwine." Variations of the word appear in a variety of English predecessors such as Latin and Middle French. The noun most often refers to a decaying or destroyed structure of human origin but can apply to natural structures as well. The Latin root, *ruīna*, conjures the verb form of falling into ruin. These early meanings predate later uses, which locate "ruin" in terms of the Christian fall of humankind, angels, and the earth. Contemporary use of the "word" ruin generally follows this same definition but applies more widely to a variety of objects and states of being. Dictionary definitions can be more general, such as "to spoil or destroy something," or as action done

[22] Rickert's *Ambient Rhetoric* draws on Heidegger's concepts of dwelling and the fourfold to elucidate a conception of rhetoric that includes attunement and affect in an ontological situatedness within the worldhood of the world.

against someone or something, such as to cause a person to lose money or reputation. In each definition, the human state or action is linked to the object or thing's state or action.

These layers of meaning can be seen in the 11th century poem "The Ruin," a fragmented Anglo-Saxon selection in the manuscript known as the *Exeter Book*, which describes an ancient stronghold that has decayed. The poem opens with a wall that has survived many generations but now lies in a crumpled heap. The speaker of the poem goes on to describe the various inhabitants, battles, and buildings that are part of the stronghold's history. Paradoxically, the protective structures move through the poem in a series of entropic processes as they transform from "bright," "abundant," and "great," to "crumbled," broken," and "deserted." The contrast between the noble halls of great warriors and the gate standing open after the collapse of the city shows a concern for the past and an appreciation of the architectonics of the city when at its peak. Anglo-Saxon scholar William Johnson, Jr. traces the semantic properties of the poem to establish that "halls and bodies are viewed as living things, functioning to enclose and protect their vital inhabitants" (403). Johnson describes dwelling among ruins in terms of the "entire cosmos" and relates this kind of dwelling to a body-city composite of dwelling that is grounded in early Christian imagery (401). I will return to the concept of dwelling later, but for the purposes of definition, I want to highlight the interplay between bodies and ruin as they show up in this Anglo-Saxon use of the word. Other poems in the *Exeter Book* make similar moves to link the ruined human body with the ruined building, such as in "The Wanderer." Johnson's argument connects the interlocking body-city in these poems to the material-discursive nature of human-ruin relationships. This appearance of ruin as both metaphor and material in the early English uses of the word demonstrates the conjoined meanings that permeate the word across historical contexts and philosophical ruminations.

Christianity picks up the word from the Anglo-Saxon and makes mortality more explicit as a process of ruin.[23] Early medieval texts, such as John Gower's work *Confessio Amantis* in the 14th century, evoke imagery similar to "The Ruin" and trace the decay of empires within a religious context. Gower's ruin is also a wall and "The wall and al the cit withinne / Stant in ruine and in decas;" (line 836-837). This phrase appears in the *Confessio* as part of a commentary on the decline of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom that moves through a long list of civilizations destroyed by various forces. Gower's poem connects the famous dream of the Old Testament king and the boy Daniel's subsequent interpretation through the historical cycle of building and ruin as cycle moves into England's 14th century conflicts. The ruins of the quote above describe an apocalyptic landscape, a result of the evils of men and the resolution of Daniel's prophecy. As a representation of "How Daniel the swevene expondeth / Of that ymage, on whom he foundeth," the ruin stands for "the world which after scholde falle, / Come is the laste tokne of alle." (823-826). While the ruin does not relate to the body in Gower's invocation, the intimation of corruption, decay, and human hubris remains in the medieval use of the word.

Moving forward in time, these intonations of ruins continue to appear. In his 17th century poem "The Anatomy of the World," John Donne equates humanity with the ruin of the world and describes the way Adam and Eve propelled humankind toward the destruction of all that God created for good. The poem details the fallen nature of humankind, as shown by the

[23] Ruins appear in non-western traditions as well. Ibn Khaldun, an Islamic historian in the 14th century, draws on ruins as part of his theories of empire. In particular, his commentary on buildings, dwellings, and decay in Chapter Four of his book *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* focuses specifically on the ultimate destruction of the city in comparison with the construction of Islam as an enduring architecture of faith. Judaism also incorporates ruin imagery in terms of redemption. See Rachel Adler in *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics*. These perspectives, while certainly valuable, do not cross the trajectory I am working with in this project. However, for future research, the movement of meaning across different religious contexts would be a significant contribution to the study of ruins.

speaker's lament, "we are all born ruinous" in line 95. Donne imagines a future of ruination predicated on the vile nature of mortal beings. In his reflections on the poem, Scott Hudson describes Donne's perspective in the poem as "a long chain of worlds shattered and replaced, of men and women born and remade, of life everlasting and transfigured." Within the Judeo-Christian tradition, the latent meaning of 'ruin' contains cycles of creation and destruction. Human or not, all matter is subject to decay. On earth, at least, nothing is exempt from ruin.

The theological conception of the ruinous nature of human beings carries forward in both literary and religious texts through the Enlightenment. While shifting notions of religious interpretation disrupted the tradition of the ruined soul on earth for purpose of redemption, writers continued to invoke the ruin in relation to despicable human nature in a variety of genres, although the literary representations of ruin begin to shed their religious meanings. The equivocation of ruin and human endures in the face of the scientific revolution and its privilege of empiricism.

For example, in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, ruins serve as a warning against irresponsible scientific enquiry and, by corollary, human arrogance. Gulliver travels to Lagado and encounters a society built on science and experimentation. The people there have built a floating island that boasts of academies dedicated to agriculture, building, trade, and manufacturing. The push for innovation drives the entire culture. Gulliver's first encounters a Lord who does not practice the new way that the scientists call "projecting." The mode of scientific inquiry in this society dismisses natural laws and other procedural organization in favor of imaginative play. The Lord, in contrast, follows tried and true methods of constructing and farming to his great success. The Lord explains to Gulliver that "projecting" has become so entrenched that the entire society depends on the impression given in the projections at the

academies. He then qualifies the progress of the society with this statement: “The only inconvenience is, that none of these projects are yet brought to perfection; and in the meantime, the whole country lies miserably waste, the houses in ruins, and the people without food or clothes” (222). The contrast between the Lord’s well-built country estate and the ruins in the rest of the country serve as a corollary between rational modes of inquiry and the irrational, or perhaps between President Trump’s idealistic infrastructure projects and responsible, local building projects. One architect at the academy, “a most ingenious architect,” begins at the roof of the house and works down toward the foundation (225). Other buildings are described as slanted or decayed. Swift uses ruins in his satire to criticize the trends he sees as foolish in his own society in England in the 18th century, and we might find interesting connections with our own contemporary situation. Despite these additional layers of meaning in Swift’s satire, the relationship between ruin and human remains within the dichotomy of the ideal versus the base.

Under this rubric, there is perfection and there is ruin, two opposing adjectives that also contain opposite attachments to value judgments of the good and the bad. To be ruined is to be deemed useless. Assigning the adjective ‘ruined’ to any *thing* places it at the bottom of a pile of rubbish, undesirable and uncivilized. In fact, ruin can be associated with just about any kind of material or mental state. A body can be ruined. Art can be ruined. A mood ruined. To exclaim “it is ruined” is to pronounce judgment and to deem the noun associated with the adjective unworthy of further use or attention. Consequently, the ruined thing gets pushed to the margins, to the landfill, or to the interior of the mind, hidden from sight and banished from society.

Despite the undesirable qualities of ruined things, the prominence of the adjective in describing so many different kinds of things indicates that levels of acceptable ruin vary. If my dinner is ruined (by my own ineptness at cooking or some other reason), I immediately discard it

as a small-scale ruin, one of little consequence in my home. Other small ruins might be a ruined mood owing to a snarky clerk at Starbucks or a ruined ending to a television show. Many inconsequential ruined things permeate everyday life. The size of the object does not necessarily indicate the significance of the ruin, however. The gravity of being ruined comes with attachment. If I have prepared a dinner for a special guest or for a celebratory event and that dinner is ruined, I might work harder to salvage it or mourn its loss more deeply. If a snarky comment comes from a dear friend, rather than a stranger, the ruined mood might penetrate even more deeply. The more sensitive the attachment, the deeper the intimacy, the more weight the adjective carries.

The Romantic period in the late 18th and early 19th centuries infused ruin with this sense of attachment and added a contemplative, poetic inflection on ruins. The changes in the British Empire at the 18th century fin de siècle instigated a focus on ruins in a variety of aesthetic productions, including prose, poetry, and painting. These forms of art used ruins as allegories for human nature and fodder for meditations on alienation and death. The Romantic imagination explored ruination as a complicit process in understanding the self and the relationship of the self to the environment. These figures represent some of the 'original' urban explorers as they sought opportunities to wander among the places of the past.

Percy Bysshe Shelley's famous sonnet "Ozymandias" exemplifies the powerful aesthetic response to ruins found in Romanticism.

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;

And on the pedestal, these words appear:

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;

Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away."

The speaker of the poem in the opening line orients the reader with an ancient declaration of the ravages of time as he encounters "a traveler from an antique land." The traveler tells of an encounter with the remains of a statue in the desert. The invocation of the "antique land" and the ancient past of a great empire situate both the speaker of the poem and the traveler in the liminal space and time of the desert where the statue stands. I address temporality more fully in the fourth chapter, so here I want to focus on the material of the ruin in the desert. The images of the statue "vast and trunkless legs of stone" and the "half sunk . . . shattered visage" that endure in the sand operate as material invocations of the passage of time, shifting the Kairos of the poem from immediacy to deep time. The inscription on the pedestal calls on the viewer of the ruin to "Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and Despair!" The inscription could be read as a declaration of power, as in the works of Ozymandias should make all others who are mighty despair. Another reading would see this phrase as a call to recognize the diminished capacity of the mighty in the face of entropy. However, even in this reading the narrative includes the element of hopeful

recognition that the words, stone, and even Ozymandias in some way "yet survive." The presence of ruins provides evidence of this endurance, evidence of the power to survive. The language of the poem states the defeat of decay in the same moment staking a claim for the future reader to recognize the solidity of the remains. Even the claim that "nothing beside remains" is paradoxical because the colossal Wreck, while bare, continues to protrude from the earth. It isn't nothing. It is something, an artifact to grab hold of, to examine, and to remember. Of course, in this poem the remains are not of a building but of a statue with a face. However, Shelley's story becomes intertwined with the ruin's story as the mate(real)ity reveals itself in the sands that stretch far away. This sonnet subtly infuses the ruin with the past and demonstrates the emphasis in the recurrence of ruins as metaphor for the self.

The Romantics explored ruins in poetry and prose (and in reality) as a means of relating the human experience to a fractured and decaying world. There is also here a preoccupation with the future in the context of what survives, endures, and becomes part of a legacy. As the French Revolution became the Reign of Terror, many questions arose in British circles. "What will happen to us?" they asked. If destruction and death is imminent, how do we understand ourselves in the present? Architectural ruin served as a nexus for answering these questions and for philosophical exploration. Shelley's example represents a larger anxiety about the forces of decline (reminiscent of Apel's argument regarding the ruin porn of Detroit) and offers a sliver of hope for the future.

Wordsworth's poetry, in which the trope of the ruin appears in relationship to nature with ruined structures as wild, overtaken with the verdant life of the wood, is also worth consideration here as a contribution to an understanding of ruin in the 19th century British Romanticism. The Lake Poets, such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, sought comfort in the remains of the past

entangled with nature. While Shelley's work along with William Blake and others offered commentary on political and social decline, Wordsworth's poetry takes a slightly different approach. He is interested in life—all forms from plants, to animals, to peasants, to ruins—as inspiring mate(real)ities for understanding the nature of what it means to be human. While some have argued that Wordsworth's poetry encapsulates what is negative about humanism, I think the relationship in his work between nature and ruin shows a move toward material intimacy that I think is productive for understanding this element of ruin in Romanticism.

In "The Ruined Cottage," the narrator describes the weeds that have grown up over the walls and the trees that have risen up in the place of a complete architectural structure. The narrator listens to the old man ruminate about mortality. The old man explains, "we die, my friend, / nor we alone, but that which each man loved / And prized in his peculiar nook of earth / Dies with him or is changed, and very soon / Even of the good is no memorial left" (lines 33-37). In the midst of the broken walls, shattered pottery, and brambles, the two men contemplate the passing of a life. The ruins represent the condition of the human spirit, the remains of a record of human activity. In "The Ruined Cottage" as well as other poems that figure ruins as the demonstration of the human inability to overcome the effects of time, Wordsworth utilizes architectural spaces to stand as representatives for failed attempts at permanence. For him, the ruin is a tranquil and inviting place that yields to the Romantic notion of human subjectivity.

Another shift in thought in the 18th century arose from a more scientific examination of the past and offered a new way of encountering ruins. An increase in nationalism in Britain combined with new modes of travel fueled the antiquarian movement as well as the development of the field of archaeology as a scientific discipline as a way to understand the British identity. In

fact, histories of the field of archaeology usually begin in the 18th century in the West.[24] The Eurocentrism of the history of archaeology has been criticized, and new histories have included trans-national genealogies of the development of the field of archaeology. [25] However, even before archaeology became a codified field of study in the West, the material past attracted those curious about its secrets. So, while across continents and eras many individuals have undertaken the exploration of ruins, the field of archaeology as it developed in Britain in the 19th century took an increasingly specialized interest in the ruins of the past. As ruins became more prominent aesthetic markers of Western affluence and as evidence of the story of great empires, early archaeologists began the systemized process of listening to the stories that ruins had to tell.

While not as systematic as archaeological study, travel narratives and the spaces they discuss demonstrate the way that language interacts with the material to construct identity. First-person accounts of tourist expeditions to classical sites also contributed to the shift in responses to ruins in the 19th century. The development of the Grand Tour facilitated the increase in travel to classical sites as part of a young man's education. As travel became more efficient and the middle class arose, more people had access to visiting the spaces of antiquity and incorporating that past into the narrative of nationalism. Thus, as the 19th century progressed, young men were not the only travelers to visit these sites. Women began to explore more broadly as well, and their travel narratives became very popular. Marianna Starke, Helen Maria Williams, and Mary Shelley, for example, traveled extensively and wrote detailed descriptions of their experiences at

[24] For example, see John Romer's *The History of Archaeology* and William Stiebing's *Uncovering the Past: A History of Archaeology*.

[25]Some histories that begin outside Europe place Nabonidus, King of Babylon, as one of the earliest ruin explorers. Other figures across continents and history have searched for material evidence of the past; for example, China's antiquarianism can be traced back to the 1st and 2nd centuries C.E. during the Song dynasty. See Paul Bahn's *The History of Archaeology: An Introduction* for histories from many other parts of the world.

various sites. Mariana Stark was a widely read British traveler who implemented the "star system" of rating tourist sites. Robert Southey writes to Coleridge in December 1799 about considering taking a trip to southern Europe and asks "what sort of a book is this by Mariana Starke? Does it really give any useful information as to traveling and residing in Italy?" This remark refers to her book *Letters from Italy. Between the Years 1792 and 1798*. During her travels Stark witnessed revolution and destruction, including the eruption of Vesuvius in November 1818. Her narratives became important references for others traveling the continent and visiting the ruins of antiquity.[26]

As archaeology became a codified field of study, the material past attracted those curious about its secrets. Many cultures have concerned themselves with their origins, their material past, and the narratives that arise from the material evidence. The shift in the 18th century to a more scientific examination of the past offered a new way of encountering ruins, but it is not until the turn of the 19th century that ruins became valuable as more than just physical evidences of history. Antiquaries, poets, and artist looked for answers to questions of identity and mortality in the ruins of the past. Throughout the 19th century, aesthetic production moved alongside industrial growth as parallel forms of understanding.

[26] Travel narratives form an important archive for understanding ruin. While I do not address the genre of first-person travel accounts in this project, I do have plans for further research in this area.

Since the 19th century, the steady decline of the use of the word *ruin* (in any of its forms) indicates a shift in the significance of ruin. A search using Google N-grams shows a drop in the usage of *ruin* after the turn of the 20th century as shown in the figure below. It is possible that the number of books available for search through this set of algorithms does not show an accurate picture, however, the graph does depict a steady decline towards the latter half of the 20th century. Given the availability of text for Google to search, it is clear that *ruin* does not have the same popularity as it did during the Romantic period of the early 19th century. Curiously, this N-gram also shows a ruin of "ruin," a marginalization of the term in contemporary usage.

Figure 2: The graph shows a similar trajectory in the various forms of the word.

One possible reason for the decline in the use of the word "ruin" is the increase in the number of photographs available. Many of the initial search hits for the word offer articles on ruin porn, industrial ruin photography, and commentary on exhibits of such work. The shift from the discursive to the visual marks a historical move along the history of ruins, their value, and their definition as the capability for the dissemination of ruin images has developed

exponentially in the last 20 years. The photographers of the 21st century might see the ruins of the recent past in much the same way that the Romantic poets saw their own ruins, or the ruins they claimed as their own, yet contemporary photographers generally do not engage in linguistic description or designation of ruin in the same way. Another key move from the discursive to the visual is the emphasis on experience. The photography of abandoned sites records the explorers' experience. The ruins become an integral part of that experience and, as such, participate in meaning making that occurs from that experience. The emphasis on experience, rather than the production of language to describe the experience, could be a reason for this decline. This reasoning narrows the definition of ruin to specific sites of industrial decline and of a contemporary emphasis on the built structures of the past.

Another reason for the diminishing use of the word *ruin*, in my opinion, comes from an emphasis on continual renewal and the disposable nature of a capitalist society. Ruined dinner? Just make another one. Ruined city? Just rebuild a new one in its place. Perhaps, one prominent reason for the lack of the word "ruin" is that it simply does not mean much anymore. The earlier usages of ruin that I have described drew parallels between the human body and the architectural body and included an acknowledgment of the consistent use of energy in both bodies that leads to entropy. President Trump's speech about building infrastructure in the introduction dismisses this process and replaces it with one that sees progress as an infinitely forward motion toward perfection and order.

In contrast to this idealized motion, the process of ruin moves toward disorder and entropy. Nonhuman forces interact in ways that dismantle and reorganize the built environment. Thus, "ruin" also functions as a verb, a movement, consisting of biological processes. When writers invoke this meaning of ruin, they often lay the responsibility of destruction on these

natural forces. Situated within the verb 'ruin' are the ephemeral tentacles of agents that move according to the cyclical pattern of reduce, reuse, and recycle. Scientific methodologies can measure and quantify these forces, but the cycle also moves in a mysterious undoing. The lack of sterility in ruin subject to these natural forces enables a deep intertwining of agential forces, a collision of sensory magnification—the fertile earthiness of rotting organic matter, the tactile fur of moss creeping slowly over cold stone, and the sound of groaning echoes of fragments losing their footing and succumbing to gravity. The gerunds of motion inherent in ruining indicate a process of becoming and unbecoming—a jagged building and unbuilding. Ruin magnifies the microscopic movement of slow, oxygenated decay of compost. Of course, as Donna Haraway acknowledges, we are all compost.[27]

Ruins can seem to be static in their representations; yet change continuously occurs. The materials that shape the structure buckle under extra weight from human and animal contact, but they also direct that contact. Pockets of wear make space for bird's nests, burrows, and even human homes. Humans and nonhumans alike find value in the abandoned architecture of the past. In the 19th century, empires faded, and the ruins of the great world empires became a source of fascination and cultural value. The 20th century saw an increase in building projects that pushed ruins aside as discarded refuse. In the 21st century, abandoned manufacturing facilities, the remnants of high capitalism, have become the new ruins of empire. Tourism to the ruins of

[27] Donna Haraway's concept of the Chthulucene deliberately works against posthumanism, although she retains some posthuman terminology. In her brief discussion of the Chthulucene, Haraway claims that composting (related here through its roots to composing) "entangles myriad temporalities and spatialities and myriad intra-active entities-in-assemblages—including the more-than-human, other-than-human, inhuman, and human-as-humus" (160). This conceptual universe offers a process-based, ecological viewpoint that includes humans and ruins.

the past thrives in our current global economy.[28] The firm yet malleable nature of the materials that society and culture prizes, the nature of the built and the subjected to wear, the power of the scaffolds of beams and mortar to stave off that wear, all seem particularly ripe for metaphorical connection between the different types of bodies present in the interactions.

The word "ruin" opposes, through absence, the perfected or pristine nature of something (or someone) considered whole and complete. A ruin never constitutes a whole, whether as a process or as a thing; ruin consistently requires imagination to fill gaps in understanding (as well as being). The subjectivity of ruin must therefore be fragmented, defying tidy taxonomic distinctions. Because of the connected uses of the word, the invocation of ruin leads to a multiplicity of traces (in Derrida's terms) that occur across a wide topographical terrain. While I take the word to mean an abandoned, decaying architectural space, I also want to conjure a state of being, a noun referring to a condition of existence. Taken together, this conditional quality of the state of being and its active counterpart figures ruins as material entities with influence, personality, and story.

Contemporary critical approaches to architectural ruin lack precise definitions. Dariusz Gafijuczuk takes ruins "in the strictest of *ruina* (from Latin, meaning collapse, collapsing)— as material structures and perceptive textures that undermine the boundaries between proximity and distance, presence and absence, inside and outside, past and present, materiality and abstraction, challenging their leadership as the reassuringly predictable markers of spatial orientation" (151). Tim Edensor, noted British ruin critic, echoes this definition in his emphasis on sites that have lost "the obvious meaning and utility" along with a previously held stabilizing network which

[28] The popular travel site "Trip Advisor" has thirty-four pages of articles on ruins around the world. These range from the ancient ruins of the Romans and the Mayans to the popular ruinbars of Budapest and ruin parks of Mexico.

secured an epistemological and practical security" ("Waste" 313). Postcolonial critic Anna Laura Stoler takes an ecological view of ruins as she defines ruin as a process, a concept, and a material structure. She contrasts the Romantic view of ruins as "enchanted, desolate spaces . . . thrown into aesthetic relief by nature's tangled growth" with a political program of imperial domination (9). Stoler turns to ruins as "*racialized markers on a global scale*" and contributes a valuable exploration of the absences and markers that circulate across the ecology of ruin that shapes and destroys complex histories and national identities. In her introduction, Stoler qualifies this investigation of ruins that I think is a key difference in this orientation toward ruin from others. She says, "In thinking about imperial debris and ruin one is struck by how intuitively evocative and elusive such effects are, how easy it is to slip between metaphor and the material object, between infrastructure and imagery, between remnants of matter and mind" (22). The slippage here is important to the study of "ruin" in all its forms and contributes to the layered and entangled boundaries between human memory and experience and the ruin's ontology.

Each of these definitions circle the anchoring characteristic that all ruins have in common: they no longer carry the function, meaning, or narrative that they were originally intended to carry. As the structure becomes disengaged from human meaning through deterioration, it becomes possible to negotiate the slippage between human intention and material manifestation more clearly. To say, "what is a ruin?" and "what kinds of ruins are there?" belies an assumption that things can be categorized and defined. Thus, much of ruin scholarship skirts the line between descriptive definition and taxonomy. Delineating a system of classification for ruin limits the scope of investigation (albeit in some cases this makes it more manageable).

My goal in offering this look at various meanings of "ruin" is, in some ways, to blur the boundaries further. Ultimately, the meaning of ruin depends in large part on the human

participant in the interaction. As such, in the act of conceptualizing the material body of the ruin, the metaphorical and poetic tendencies adhere in the discourse surroundings ruins. On a global scale, narratives of the past circulate widely across national boundaries and continue to influence political and economic ecologies. Care of the mate(real)ity of ruin entails an ethical remembering that includes nostalgia from the past as well as an avenue that allows the remembering to imagine a different future. Ruins, as liminal material space, act as a bridge between the phenomenology of lived experience and the rhetorical nature of human interaction with the nonhuman. This bridge crosses memory pathways as lived experience, and the consequences of that experience shape not only views of the past, but also views of the present. The ruin comes into conversation with the entities around it, drawing close in their openness as well as their disruption of familiar pathways.

Ruins, thus, enable an intimate connection between mate(real)ities. Is it possible that the ruins of the present hold the key to reimagining the possibilities presented by a changing planet? The authors of *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* believe that it is possible to engage with ruins of various kinds to "pay better attention to overlaid arrangements of human and nonhuman living spaces" (G1). In this collection, Kate Brown chronicles the attempts by Aleksandr Kupny to photograph the radioactive decay at Chernobyl in what she calls "landscape biography." She tracks Kupny through his explorations of the ruins of the nuclear reactor because "for Kupny, crawling into the belly of the burned-out reactor was as close as he could get to entering the mushroom cloud to see how nuclear power works" (G36). His search for the isotopes of nuclear reaction "does not dwell in metaphor"; rather, "decaying isotopes *are* the raw material of his photography" (G37). Kupny's search for understanding leads him to ruins, but what he finds there is raw mate(real)ity. This attention to the rawness of the material calls for an ethical move

toward material intimacy as a vehicle for delaying interpretation and engaging the rhetoricity of ruin. My project answers this call by chronicling ways individuals and communities have attended to ruins as agents of change and memory that challenge the forward motion of modernity's progress.

Fragmented Ecologies

My efforts to more fully understand material intimacy and to understand relations with ruins requires a unique method of investigation. The fractured nature of ruins and the ecology they move within do not function quite like the simplified webs typically used to draw ecosystems. I see these ecologies more like the mosaics I described in the introduction. To construct the mosaic, I utilize a series of moves I call paratactic praxis. These moves operate in two distinct ways. The first is as a practice of material intimacy. I posit that these moves are present in interactions with ruins and that by studying them we can better understand how material intimacy functions and how to read these intimate encounters. The second way these moves operate are through my personal interludes and, in some cases, within my analysis. By drawing out the paratactic praxis of my own experience, I hope to connect (or rather to leave open possible connections) with the texts that form my archive. Thus, my method is both critical and performative. In this section, I explain, more fully, my method of paratactic praxis and draw out the ecological implications of such a praxis. The ethical import of situating the self in the intimate space of an Other necessitates an agential orientation that considers both the gaps between and the points of contact within the ecology of ruin I examine. My goal is to acknowledge those gaps and to find within them, perhaps, a rhetoric that respects and engages mate(real)ity in conversation.

The Greek term *parataxis* is useful in developing a material-discursive model for the ways in which rhetoric functions ontologically and how matter interacts with and transforms all subjects that exist within networks of interconnected agencies. Paratactic praxis builds a series of moves that can facilitate material intimacy with ruins. These moves are often also a consequence of intimate experiences with ruin. This is a both/and situation—successive and simultaneous—that works inclusively to consider ruins as a partner in constituting the past and the future. I want to resist a linear relationship between practice and effect and embrace both the existence of successive events and terms as well as the simultaneous nature of processes and intimacies. In fact, to delineate a causal relationship between parataxis and material intimacy would deviate from the ecological approach I am working with here. Ecologies work symbiotically as the elements in contact reciprocally influence each other. While causes and effects can perhaps be parsed out, the system works in a movement of back and forth and around influences.

As a grammatical function, parataxis refers to the "placing of propositions or clauses one after another, without indicating by connecting words the relation (coordination or subordination) between them" (OED). This definition arises from the original Greek meaning: "a placing side by side." As a locational term, an arrangement of words, people, places, etc. that works by 'placing' things in contiguity with each other. The discursive function of parataxis allows the emotional resonance of the relationship between things to be more visible, in part *because* of the absence of explicit coordination. Allowing the conjunctions to remain obscure involves the writer and the reader in a powerful series of moves that heighten "a sense of things piling up, a rush of ideas, a fast-moving narrative" (Hale). Piling up ideas, feelings, rubble, and bodies leads to an overwhelming combination of affects that inform the interrelation and

transformation of the various subjectivities listed in the discursive series. As a form, parataxis provides not only a method of linkage but also a method of analysis and understanding.

Parataxis functions as a linguistic structure that points "at the wide open spaces between phrases, at the phrases that are not being uttered" ("Breaking Up" 109). Rhetorically, parataxis calls on the reader or the listener to fill the gaps and to make meaning out of the resulting juxtaposition of words, phrases, or collections. This practice leaves meaning exposed and resists drawing the component parts together to form a conclusion. In contrast to hypotactic structure, which depends on subordination and deliberately maps the route the reader should take, parataxis allows the reader to approach "meaning via a trail that [s]he blazes for [her]self" along a series of unsubordinated parts (Wierzbicki 40). Drawing on McLuhan, Wierzbicki suggests that because of their openness, paratactic forms of communication are "potentially richer than their hypotactic counterparts because they require[d] intellectually creative efforts on the part of their receivers" (Wierzbicki 29). As a rhetorical function, this can appear ineffective, but it also works provocatively by placing the material of the series and the audience in a position of meaning making.

Fragments can function as sentences, phrases, words, bricks, and other materials that come into contact with each other. Each function proceeds as a marker of linguistic engagement and as a mate(real) invocation. As a linguistic structure, parataxis coordinates consecutive phrases in a series while leaving the destination or movement of the sentence or phrase obscure. This open-ended progression of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs leaves meaning and interpretation to the reader and resists forecasting conclusions. Becoming is suspended and parataxis slows progression as it trends toward disorder.

"Imagine incompleteness as a desired state of discursive affairs" (Bruns 588).

Ruins, as architectural fragments, perform a similar paratactic praxis as a material manifestation of incompleteness. Architecture as a form claims completeness for itself. Design and construction move idea towards realization in the form of a completed structure. Ruins defy this sense of completeness as structural components begin to slip away from each other, are removed or rot, and ultimately dismantle the original design. Drawing on these two characteristics of ruins and discourse, I read ruins paratactically by jumping into "the abyss of Not-Being," as Lyotard would say, or the between and investigating the spaces between people and ruins, and ruins and people, and words and ruins and people (66).

This sense of parataxis reveals the metaphysical architectonics in the material-discursive properties of the style. Parataxis composes relations but does not describe them or necessarily make explicit their relationships. N. Katherine Hayles defines parataxis as a state of being, "existing in uneasy juxtaposition, they [things and beings] push against each other, the conflicts and contradictions between them unresolved" (394). This uneasy juxtaposition calls to mind an ontological conundrum, particularly when the component parts of the paratactic construction seem impossible to reconcile. The relationship between the terms is unstable and unspecified, thus leaving open hermeneutic uncertainty. Hayles calls this "paratactic mode of experience" a postmodern phenomenon (395). Parataxis can also be seen as a posthuman phenomenon as the mode of experience I am working with decenters the human agent and forms a series of relations that may or may not privilege any particular unit. Paratactic constructions can also move in any direction because they have no direction. They can be read or understood as ecologies or systems of relations that move in response to other movements in the system—as mosaics that bring fragments together to form a larger scene. I address ecologies more fully in the context of

rhetorical theory in just a moment, but first it is necessary to lay out four properties of parataxis that inform and lead to material intimacy.

The initial property of parataxis, witnessing, operates as a form of exposure and vulnerability. This function leaves meaning open and calls on the reader to witness, to visually engage, in a process of wrestling in and with the gaps in the ruin. Visual parataxis occurs in a confrontation with a material challenge that "exposes men to the peril of the sacred whenever the gaze, through its arrogance quick to scrutinize and to possess, fails to look with restraint and in a retiring mode" (Blanchot 128). To bear witness to disaster is to fix the gaze, not as a voyeur on the outside of the experience, but as an invested participant in the confrontation of the trauma. Witnessing is not just about seeing; it is also a practice of being-with-the-Other in exposure and of bearing the weight of that exposure. As I describe in Chapter Two, an instinctual looking away often occurs as people see only what they want to see or mediate their looking through myth and media. Bearing witness stands in the space of the Other and sees-with in an attitude of vulnerability and understanding.

The second function of parataxis leaves things in their place as juxtaposed metonymic connections that allow differences to remain. Metonyms preserve the integrity of the fragments while at the same time silencing the conjunctions. This silence can be viewed as negation but also as space for the development of meaning and hope. Metonymic chains facilitate listening to the absences between those connections. This kind of listening requires an attunement to mate(real)ity through an intentional turning toward the Other. In Chapter Three, I describe this listening as an embodied presence that attunes to ruins and does not attempt to make sense of or construct a coherent narrative of ruin.

Wandering gathers together witnessing and listening as a third property of paratactic praxis. Wandering has several merits as a paratactic praxis. One, the juxtaposition of items, or units, in the series come into contact with each other through an intellectual wandering. This mode of wandering engages in a poetics that leads the wanderer toward contemplation and association. Wandering brings things together in series, lists, or sets that Ian Bogost calls "ontography" as well as in movement through disrupted space without destination (Bogost 38). As units are encountered and placed in connection, without coordinating conjunctions or subordination, the writer gathers together "surprisingly contrasted curiosities" that "function primarily as provocations" (Bogost 28). The ontology of the units in the series rise up and emphasize their disparate natures even as they are drawn together. Finally, the kineasethetic properties of this practice call on memory and lead to the sublime. Chapter Four examines the practice of wandering as it performs philosophical work by highlighting the deprivation of meaning conditioned by the lack of conjunction as well as the texture of the real items placed side by side with abstract terms.

These properties of parataxis articulate behaviors and structures that facilitate material intimacy. They also leave open the possibilities for systems to evolve. Paratactic praxis functions within the ecological framework as a loosened means of connection. There have been recent moves in rhetorical theory that posit an ecological approach and emphasize mate(real)ity's rhetorical contribution to these networks. Thomas Rickert's definition of ecology draws from the Greek term *oikos* and defines ecology in terms of dwelling, as home, and as a complex network of feedback loops that emerge within circulating sustaining activities and material interactions" (249). Jennifer Edbauer Rice's call for a conceptual shift from rhetoric as a homeostatic set of coordinates to a dynamic and circulating set of relationships continues to be integral in the study

of rhetorical ecologies. Marilyn Cooper's essay "The Ecology of Writing" also emphasizes ecology but specifically in the context of the composition classroom. While she does not account for material agency the way Edbauer Rice does, she does advocate for "a more dynamic set of theories that engage writing as complex systems, and, perhaps, most importantly, the recognition that ecological approaches have the potential to complicate things" (Dobrin 4). Laurie Gries picks up Cooper's ecology and extends it toward an agential realism reminiscent of Barad and Bennett. These theorists push the boundaries of rhetorical theory from the rhetorical triangle toward an expanded sense of the rhetorical actors in the situation.

Following Edbauer Rice's discussion of the etymology of the word 'situation,' as a series of fixed boundaries, I see the rhetorical situation as a static taxonomy of strategy and practice.[29] Rather than delineate marked categories for rhetor, audience, and text, I seek to identify the embodied and enacted ways that contact occurs. Not only does this create a broader view of the rhythm of rhetoric as it moves among various entities, this approach complicates the structural boundaries of what rhetoric means. A key piece of Edbauer Rice's argument for my conception of a paratactical approach invites a definition of rhetoric as a space of contact. Edbauer Rice challenges the model of the rhetorical triangle and draws a spatialized field of interacting processes. This model resonates with a conception of rhetoric as a conversation with multiple players rather than a dialectical model between two interlocutors who have stable identities prior to the interaction. So, what happens when rhetoric includes nonhuman actors such as ruins? This question cannot have a definitive answer, and in fact, resists the model of ecology in its construction. Yet there are potential hypotheses for why an ecological model offers a view of

[29] The debate between Lloyd Bitzer and Richard Vatz on the nature of the rhetorical situation underlies this conversation. While valuable in some contexts, their formulation does not account for mate(real)ities as contributors to affectability.

rhetoric that has ethical implications and describes relations in a way that deepen our understanding of mate(real)ity.

First, rhetorical ecologies acknowledge and investigate the connections between entities as potential sites of change. Removing mate(real)ity from these conversations essentially performs a Cartesian-like surgery on the potential actors that influence the ways that humans move and feel and live in the world, a surgery that severs the ontological situatedness of those actors. Rhetorical ecologies locate the kind of contact that occurs between humans and nonhumans without severing them and provide a more accurate topography of the ethical implications of human agency in the challenges facing our planet in the 21st century. This recognition of other-than-human actors resituates rhetoric as something that "comes into being not from *within* but from the *outside*, from a place external to and independent of our individual being or ways of knowing and understanding the world" (Barnett 7). Making these connections more visible facilitates changes in the ways those connections are made and broken.

Second, an ecological model embraces the wealth of external realities that provide material for invention. Turning our attention to patterns of human and nonhuman intra-actions expands the number of nodes that anchor those patterns. The richer these nodes become, the more concentrated the potential energy and the more efficient the available means become available. Edbauer Rice's ecological model sees the rhetorical situation as "an amalgamation of processes and encounters" that imagines rhetoric as a bleeding of temporal, historical, and lived fluxes, all of which provide material and intellectual opportunities for invention and analysis (Edbauer 8). To correct the trajectory of the future for life on this planet, new ways of thinking, persuading, and being are needed. An ecological model opens the rhetorical situation into a wider field of view that provides more opportunities to imagine and act along that trajectory.

Finally, my conception of rhetorical ecologies accounts for the rhythm of the law of entropy because systems in any form must decay. The vibrancy of an ecological network allows for elements of the system to break down, to ruin, and thus to evolve. The fragmentation of the network does not constitute a total failure of the connections; rather, the fragmentation allows new connections to form. Ruins form one part of the system that connects to human invention and construction, to natural habitats, and to memory and hope. Material intimacy engages in the ruined node of the overall ecology by drawing closer and feeling-with all the actors affected by that node.

Each principle of paratactic praxis I examine in the remainder of the project bring the ruin and the human face-to-face in an intimate encounter and to material intimacy. The following chapters attempt to move among a variety of human and nonhuman entities connected by major catastrophes (both real and imagined). The natural forces of those catastrophes, the institutions that respond, the individuals that evacuate, survive, or do not survive, the homes and businesses that fall to ruination, all combine to create the conditions possible for material intimacy.

Interlude: September 2, 2017

My perspective on ruin has shifted since going to Houston. On a Friday afternoon, I loaded my children into our truck and headed out through blue sky and empty roads. Perhaps the traffic was lighter because of the gas scare. Perhaps, people had not begun to make arrangements to go. I was grateful for the smooth drive. I left early to try to beat the sunset but did not quite succeed. We passed the sign for Huntsville (just 45 minutes to our destination) just as the sun began to descend. The closer we got, the more apprehensive I felt. A quiet fell over us as we passed the familiar towns and roadside shopping malls that we had seen on every drive for holiday celebrations, birthdays, and other family get-togethers. I know every stop along Interstate 45 between my house and my sister's house. I scanned the roadway for debris or for standing water as we approached. It was empty.

The emptiness added another layer to my apprehension. Where was all of the water? For a week, I scrolled through image after image of drowned landmarks and floating vehicles. As we drove through The Woodlands, a large master planned community on the northwest side of town, I'm pretty sure my mouth was open. A palpable change had come over us. Emotional tension charged the air. The other traffic on the road hinted at the disaster; we passed delivery trucks and law enforcement vehicles from other cities. But the trees stood straight and tall like shadowy soldiers against the fading light. The ditches along the highway looked as though there had only just been a brief late-summer shower.

I found myself wishing to see some part that was flooded. My twelve-year-old commented that he knew he shouldn't wish to see the flood waters, but he wanted to. He wanted to be a witness. I did too in some way. We felt spurred to come by a desire to serve those affected by the

hurricane, but we also came for ourselves—to see it in person. The feeling of anxiety and helplessness I had felt all week transformed into a kind of bitter resignation. I could feel the destruction, but no sensory anchor validated that internal emotional meter.

I pulled into my sister Erin's neighborhood—like I do every time. Turn right off the freeway. Turn left at the entrance to her subdivision. Then take another right down the street toward her driveway. The same houses with porch lights along the familiar and comforting path flickered at us as we passed. It all seemed so normal. I didn't know how to process such a paradox. I knew that there were places that were completely destroyed. I knew that some parts of town were still covered by murky storm surge and dam releases. And yet, I couldn't see it. That night we sat in the garage, my sister and her husband and I, like we always do—talking late into the night, watching bad reality television. The difference was the heaviness in my brother-in-law's posture and the falling sounds of my sister's voice, each of her words punctuated with disbelief and sadness. My brother-in-law just repeated, "It's bad, Mimi. It's really bad."

The next morning, we divided the work. Erin and I made sack lunches to hand out to volunteers and stacked folded laundry to return to disaster victims. We loaded the car with our contributions and our younger kids. The older kids left with a crew my brother-in-law organized to go to a neighborhood of a dear friend. As we drove up to deliver the laundry, the street we needed to access was so congested with parked cars that we barely had room to slowly thread ours through the middle. The parked trucks hid the debris already piled high near the curb all the way down the street. The brick, roofs, and windows of these homes appeared to be intact. The visual cleanliness of the houses juxtaposed with the debris littering the lawns under a crystal blue sky complicated my ability to process the landscape. Sheetrock is messy. When it gets wet it crumbles into a soggy paste that makes it difficult to pile into neat rows. Furniture that appeared

to be just fine lay thrown in the grass. I wondered aloud if those pieces would be salvageable. "It depends on the material," my sister said; "if it holds the water it will forever smell like sewage." I grieved a little for the antique pieces that might be family heirlooms and for the random pieces of memory that would be carted off to the landfill.

The woman whose laundry we had cleaned seemed dazed. She smiled at us with gratitude—and a touch of fear. How does one make decisions? Where does one even start? A crew of volunteers filled her home with the sounds of demolition as she tried to find a box or clean container for her fresh clothing. She hugged me, entered my space as a stranger, and held onto me tightly. In that moment, I felt small, inadequate. I longed to restore something to her that was lost.

I worked inside only one house. The neighborhood, River Plantation, is a sprawling golf course community. Beautiful old trees line the streets, and the custom homes from the late 1960s give the place a summer camp kind of atmosphere. It is not a pretentious place. Homes range from the 120s to the 250s, with large lots and amenities. While Erin and I were running errands close to home, the rest of our crew was "mucking" houses there in Conroe. We joined them late in the afternoon. The ride up there took us over a bridge that had clearly sustained damage from the river produced by the storm.

Figure 3: Photo Credit River Plantation Homeowner's Association before Harvey

We passed a Command Center, organized by the homeowner's association, where bottled water and other supplies lined the yard. The comfort of the car, and the fact that I was not driving, offered me the perspective of a tourist. I stared out of the window. Every single yard was covered by debris. Every. Single. One. We got to the street where we were to work and proceeded very slowly so as to avoid the hazards in the road.

Figure 4: Courtesy of Michael Kimmelman

The pictures do not adequately convey the state of things. I'm not sure that words can do it either. Somehow gravity intensified. I felt the sheer mass of the interiors of the homes seep into me. "It's bad, Mimi. It's really bad." I wanted to work. I wanted to contribute, but I also wanted to escape. These homes had brick crumbling on the outside. The structures, in some cases, were not safe to enter. Windows shattered. Furniture toppled over and wedged into spaces they don't belong. A pool table rested upended against an exterior brick patio wall. As we passed home after home, I thought, "What could my two hands do?"

We walked up the driveway to our friends, who had set up a command center of their own. This cul-de-sac flooded just one year before. This family, along with most River Plantation residents, has seen multiple floods and experienced consistent damage to their home. They knew what to do and directed the efforts on the street. They hugged us as we walked into their dark living area, stripped bare to the studs, and welcomed us as though we were coming for dinner.

They then directed us to the house that was the objective for the day. Most of the homeowners had just recently finished previous repairs. The woman whose home we were to tackle had been preparing to move back into the space within a few weeks. Not only did all of the renovations smell of dirty water, but her current rental home had flooded as well. I don't even know what to say about the injustice of that.

I walked toward the house trying to gather my confidence and file away the wells of emotion that churned my stomach. I could smell the foulness in the open air—the smell of soggy wood, human waste, and animal carcasses. The crew had already mucked most of the downstairs rooms, but a film of water still coated the floor—standing water trapped inside for several days. Water like this is not a life-giving force. I often stand at the edge of rivers when I hike. The beauty and tranquility of the water is soothing and rejuvenating. This water did not heal or quench thirst or feed the earth. The putrid wash of rainwater and debris felt stagnant and unwanted.

Figure 5: Photo Credit Mine

The dining room was the last room to be emptied of its contents. Erin and I started removing insulation, dry wall, and household items from the floor. When it is wet, insulation resists movement and tears with pressure. Some of the bulk of the insulation needed two people to remove it as it slipped through our fingers. Broken glass rose up from a china cabinet laying on its side like stalagmites lining the floor of a cave. The room might only have been a 10 x 10 space, but it felt

cavernous as we sifted through the pieces we could carry with our hands. I lifted a section of the ceiling that had fallen to the floor and found an unbroken glass lying cradled in a piece of insulation. The excitement at finding something whole spurred me to look for more, and I placed a set of two wine glasses and two tumblers carefully on a cart outside earmarked for keeps. The chandelier, still wrapped in bubble wrap, was not so lucky. Pieces of it trailed behind me as I threw it on the heap. The two hours I spent digging out that one room left an indelible impression on my senses--the sounds of fifteen or twenty other people knocking down drywall, the darkness of the space without electricity, the jumbled and confusing pile of things that could not be visually identified.

When it got too dark to continue, we gathered up the shovels, hammers, and other tools. We tried to finish just one last wheelbarrow load. We wandered back to our vehicles dazed. The rest of the crew had been doing the same kind of work for nearly six hours by the time we got there. I told myself to buck up. I told myself I had contributed. Yet, when I finally sat down on the tailgate and propped my feet up, I stared down the street toward that home, someone's sanctuary, and I cried.

Figure 6: The teenaged crew Photo Credit Mine

Chapter Two

Precarious Permanence

We are being exposed to a catastrophe of meaning. Let's not hurry to hide this exposure under pink, blue, red, or black silks. Let us remain exposed, and let us think about what is happening [ce qui nous arrive] to us: Let us think that it is we who are arriving, or who are leaving

--Jean-Luc Nancy, After Fukushima

Before I arrived in Houston to participate in the relief efforts after Harvey, I believed I had witnessed the magnitude of ruin. I had visited sites of antiquity and explored ruined structures long abandoned and forgotten. I have long been fascinated by the ruins of history. However, the sensory impact of entering such a recently ruined space overwhelmed my emotional integrity. The debris caused by natural disaster did not resemble, in any way, the mediated spaces of Roman amphitheaters or the meditative, decaying cathedrals of France. In fact, this experience of witnessing the devastation left by Hurricane Harvey confronted me, faced me with and in vulnerability—vulnerability to the emotional resonance of loss, to the scale of global natural power, and to the rearrangement of communal and individual identity. Exposed by this confrontation, the ruins of disaster presented a striking opportunity for me to bear witness to absence and destruction.

This chapter focuses on the "viscous porosity" in bearing witness and vulnerability as the porous agent that lets things through.[30] When material space has been disordered, disrupted, and generally fucked up, human interaction with such a space goes from one of control to chaos. As my narrative above indicates, ruins of natural disaster challenge the integrity of a solid position in the world and create conditions of vulnerability by letting the outside in. I want to pause here, in this space of chaos, to unpack what it means to be vulnerable and bear witness to ruin.

Vulnerability begins with the principle of understanding or to stand under. This move "stands under" one's own position to attend to an Other's vulnerability. Social scientist Brené Brown, one of the leading experts in vulnerability, defines this condition as a distinctly human quality—a state of being—characterized by uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure. In this context, vulnerability is a kind of standing under that occurs because of risk and exposure. Retreating from uncertainty, exposure, and risk conceals vulnerability and often prevents individuals from acknowledging and embracing what Brown calls "wholeheartedness" as a fertile space for transformation. In American culture, this vulnerability can be exacerbated by media narratives that bury uncomfortable feelings under displays of power. Media coverage of Katrina, for example, reinforced boundaries and power structures as the narratives of the aftermath focused on specific racial profiles, used language that reinforced stereotypes, and popularized lies about the acts of desperation committed by the residents of New Orleans.[31] In

[30] This term comes from Nancy Tuana's 2008 essay, "Viscous Porosity: Witnessing Katrina." Tuana describes the viscous porosity between "my flesh and the flesh of the world" to invoke the interactions between self and other (199). The membranes she envisions as the mediators of porosity are "skin and flesh, prejudgments and symbolic imaginaries, habits and embodiments" (200). Viscous porosity is reminiscent of Stacy Alaimo's transcorporeality in which the openings by which the body and the world interact are more salient than we like to believe.

[31] In the year following Hurricane Katrina, a significant body of social science research examined the media portrayal of African Americans in New Orleans. The studies conclude that

the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, fear of looting, rioting, and other violent behaviors led to an overcompensation on the part of government officials to impose physical and mental barriers to disorder, and media coverage of both the looting and the response exacerbated tensions by reporting unsubstantiated stories. I want to highlight here the cultural and political tendency to build increasingly strong layers of protection—in the form of myth, material construction, and military force—when threatened. In Brown's formulation of vulnerability, these kinds of behaviors constitute a retreat from the very opportunities for growth and change that are possible during and after catastrophic events.[32]

Against these feelings of threat often accompanied by scarcity of resources, physical modes of protection—such as buildings—reinforce enclosure and disconnection. Media narratives surrounding traumatic events, or what I later call "storm swirls," often distance the viewing public from the sense that danger is eminent and that we are living precariously. More ephemeral types of protection, such as ideology and myth, also work as reinforcements against vulnerability. Brown describes this reinforcement, the shoring up of defenses, as a response to "our culture's version of post-traumatic stress" resulting from the terror of 9/11 here and around the world, the race tensions that have been building over the past few decades, and of course, the catastrophic natural disasters that have rocked many parts of the country (27). This post-traumatic stress not only comes from the events themselves but also from the visual immersion

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bias contributed to the media narratives' constructed truths about human behavior in the aftermath. See Tierney, Bevc, and Kuligowski and Sommers, Samuel R., et al. for more detailed research concerning Katrina media coverage.

[32] In his essay "On Fairy Stories," J. R. R. Tolkein describes the resolution of fairy tales as "eucatastrophe," or "the sudden joyous 'turn'" that finishes the story (153). The eucatastrophe does not deny the great sorrows or tragedies that exist; rather, these challenges, oppositions, failures may serve as the vehicles for great joy. The eucatastrophe "denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal defeat" and offers the reader, not escape or deferral of suffering, but rather the miraculous transformation of grief into joy.

of these events in various forms of media. Media coverage of 9/11 reflects this immersion as the American public had no viewing choices on national television but to watch the towers fall over and over again for twenty-four hours after the event. The extreme nature of this media coverage broadcast on every channel combined with the very real effects of the attack created an intense need to build fortresses of safety to combat the feelings of vulnerability that, even now, pervade post-9/11 America.

In contrast to Brown's advocacy for vulnerability, other social scientists, such as those working in disaster management, characterize vulnerability as a negative condition of a physical place where communities and people in the path of disaster carry a high degree of risk.[33] This characterization of vulnerability works to erase risk related to human habitation. Anthropologist Greg Bankoff argues for an urgent response to climate change that "breaks existing patterns that maintain or enhance vulnerability" (7). Bankoff's transdisciplinary approach includes scientists and other researchers who locate vulnerability squarely within the human realm—particularly in terms of political, social, and cultural constructions that concern perception, knowledge, and power dynamics. This is not the individual vulnerability that Brown studies. Rather, for Bankoff, the key to negotiating vulnerability is through a revision of institutional practices that emphasize power dynamics and marginalization.

These fields blame human interference and habitation for not only the effects of climate change, but also for the disasters themselves. The efforts of humanity to tame the wild, to build and develop economic structures, and to colonize prairies and floodplains threaten the very efforts made to settle in these areas. Anthony Oliver-Smith traces these efforts to the

[33] See J. Birkmann et al. for research that specifically builds a framework with which to address vulnerable populations.

philosophical developments during the Enlightenment, which created an oppositional dichotomy between humans and nature.[34] He defines vulnerability as "the conceptual nexus that links the relationship that people have with their environment to social forces and institutions and the cultural values that sustain or contest them" (10). This approach and others like it encompass both natural and social scientific perspectives as a means of looking for causes and effects that recede into the past. The efforts to connect current climate change trends to human interference certainly offer possibilities for understanding ruin discourse. One advantage of this approach is that it allows for more accurate methods of prediction, and the ability to map vulnerability in terms of future ruin. By exposing the forces that create ruin, it is possible to mitigate their effects. However, this move remains human-centered, human-powered, and ultimately situated in a linear progression of causation.

Vulnerability from an ontological perspective shifts the place of the human from the isolation of protection to a node within an ecology of actors who all have the capacity to influence the movement of the system through their viscous porosity. Ruins also figure into this system as vulnerable entities that participate in the web of relations in a disaster. Understanding ruins in this context necessitates a need for a paratactic approach in "struggling *with* rather than *against* the world" (McGreavy and Stormer 12). Bearing witness includes a struggle with the world's capacities rather than a repellent form of resistance. This struggle can sometimes be violent. A confrontation with the finitude of mate(real)ity acknowledges that "all things exist in a limited, continuous state of being vulnerable," or what McGreavy and Stormer call "conative

[34] Critiques of Enlightenment philosophy can be found throughout posthumanism, new materialism, and material feminisms. See Stacy Alaimo and Susan Heckmans's introduction in *Material Feminisms,* as well as Karen Barad's "Toward a Posthuman Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter" for a more in-depth challenge to this particular dichotomy from a feminist perspective.

vitality" (13). Like Karen Barad's intra-action, McGreavy and Stormer begin from an assumption that all things are entangled. This move from the imposing power of resistance to ruin to the subjectivity of vulnerability demonstrates how an emphasis on vulnerability is a necessary component of bearing witness.

I want to highlight the prefix of the word "vulner-ability," meaning wound or the ability to be wounded, as it contains an element of expected, or predicted, violence. In some ways, the two terms, vulnerability and violence, collapse into each other as temporal variations located on either side of the wound. Vulnerability precedes violence and, in fact, must be present for violence to occur. However, McGreavy and Stormer define vulnerability through "conatus," and assign it "power in its finitude" rather than "frailty subject to power" (15). Viewed from this perspective, vulnerability assigns empowerment to the ability to be wounded, rather than weakness. This definition draws on Jane Bennett's vital materialism in conjunction with Spinoza's explanation of the Latin "conatus," defined as "effort, endeavor, striving" (2). The intimation here is a movement toward the Other as an assertion of "Being towards the Thing itself that is" (*BT* 260). The vulnerability of bearing witness works as a Being that embraces possibility and transformation. Bearing witness moves from violence to vulnerability, and the finitude inherent in all things becomes more visible.

I reframe vulnerability as an opportunity for things to show up, to come face to face, and in the act of bearing witness to engage in the possibilities of transformation. By approaching the ruins of hurricane and flood as facilitators of vulnerability, specifically in a state of entropy with generative capacity for change, I challenge the dominant mythologies surrounding these kinds of catastrophic events. What does it mean to be vulnerable to disaster and ruin, and how does bearing witness operate as a paratactic praxis via vulnerability? Does the vulnerability that

predicates bearing witness then lead to material intimacy? In what ways do ruins of disaster cultivate vulnerability in positive ways? These questions serve as groundwork for investigating the myths surrounding ruins of disaster and the ways that the mate(real)ity of ruin thwart that mythology.

In the first section, I define bearing witness as a paratactic and ontological act of vulnerability that facilitates material intimacy. I then move to storms as one of many agents of ruin within the context of narratives of vulnerability surrounding Texas hurricanes. I address myths as a barrier to vulnerability, like a levee holding back the flood waters, and I address the layers of myth surroundings storms as a means of clearing space in which to work through the vulnerability of bearing witness as a component of material intimacy. This section attempts to "see" through the eye of the storm to the material implications of the porous boundary between scientific knowledge, prediction, and the mate(real)ities that are observed (rather than witnessed) in that context. Media myths, or storm swirls in the following section, compound the dominant mythologies surrounding disaster events and participate in preserving networks that create uneven levels of risk. Myths often empower and justify military action and government control and deliberately create distance between people and their spaces. However, the media can also bear witness in such a way that an ethical response from those viewing from afar can provide much needed support and resources to the affected area. Finally, I turn to personal narratives that function as records of bearing witness to demonstrate the paratactic qualities of these narratives. These records are not simply a matter of seeing and recording the truth of what has been seen. The writers attempt to capture, in language, what they witness, and, in the process, the descriptions of the mate(real)ity of ruin reveal the powerful intra-actions in Being-there.

I trace the agencies in the ecology of two specific storms that have significantly reshaped the physical and sociological landscape along the Texas coastline: the Galveston Storm of September 1900, and most recently, Hurricane Harvey in September 2017. While I will address some connected issues regarding the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, there already exists a body of research devoted to the social and economic consequences of that particular storm and the power dynamics present in the aftermath. The Galveston storm, while historically significant, has not produced the same level of research related to such consequences, while Harvey remains too new to have generated as much critical attention. I devote more space here to the two storms along the south coast of Texas to intervene in the conversation surrounding disaster response and to attend to the mate(real)ities and myth-making that influence and are influenced by the ruins of such disasters. These Texas storms challenge the myths that prevent an attention to ruins and demonstrate the capacity for material intimacy with ruin that I am developing in this project.

I also concentrate on these areas for the following reasons. First, Texas has been my home for 35 years. My familiarity with the landscape, culture, and climate in these areas provides further depth and the characteristics necessary to understand it. Second, these storms contain many layers of ruination and renewal. The coastline of Texas consistently cycles through hurricane season and has built and rebuilt many times in the past century. Third, tracing the historical storm of 1900 through to more recent storms offers a temporal comparison that further supports my claim that vulnerability is a necessary component of material intimacy. Finally, the ecology of these storms is scalable. From the small neighborhoods that I am familiar with to the national oil market, the ecology of actors within these events provides a particularly fertile ground for analysis. While I cannot examine every actor within the ecology in depth, I look to

the ruins of these hurricanes and their representations as examples of the ways in which the ruins of disaster present opportunities to witness absence, entropy, and exposure. These responses to disaster highlight the ways that vulnerability precedes and contributes to rhetorical power.

To Bear Witness

Vulnerability surfaces from the fear of being seen—of being publicly exposed—but it also arises from a fear of seeing. To bear witness entails a kind of seeing that takes on the weight of mate(real)ity and faces it without looking away. This does not necessarily involve trauma as some kinds of bearing witness focus on success or accomplishment—my attendance at my daughter's recent graduation from high school, for example. Other instances of this kind of witnessing might include attending a wedding or the birth of a baby. These celebratory moments present opportunities for the witnesses to participate in the event and to share in the celebration.

Other kinds of witnessing occur in the judicial sense, and we often think of this kind of witnessing as something that gives proof of an event or of someone's behavior. Aristotle's judicial conception of witnessing as a form of extrinsic proof places testimony in the realm of the available means of persuasion and as part of the topoi of rhetoric. His two kinds of witnessing, ancient and recent, include both encomium and testimony of "a judgment about something" and thereby positions witnessing as a temporal form of proof (*Rhetoric* 105). Ancient witnesses, for Aristotle, are the most credible as they testify of past events and do not run the risk of perjury. These kinds of witnesses can be expounders of oracles, proverbs, or poets. The invocation of past witnesses emphasizes the truth over time and places the weight of truth within the temporal sphere. Recent witnesses occupy a different time but still testify of their truth. They come forward into the present to make statements concerning facts of a current case. In some ways, this is a surface-level description of the role of the witness as a judicial function, as an available

proof, and as such an epistemological enterprise designed to get at the truth. Aristotle does not consider witnessing an ontological act or an embodied, affective response to seeing. In contrast to Aristotle's definition of witnessing as an epistemological act brought to the facts of a case, I situate bearing witness in terms of the immediacy of Being-there. Bearing witness in this way constitutes an ontological situatedness that depends upon and responds to the calls made by ruins of disaster.

To *bear* witness, then, comprises more than seeing. This distinction moves away from Aristotle's understanding of witnessing as an act of telling the truth and that truth being available as a means of persuasion. *To bear* means to carry the burden of the Other, to embrace the difference between the I in the act of bearing witness and the Other that is witnessed. My concern with bearing witness as an ontological state of Being-there, in Heidegger's terms, turns toward the Being confronted with the Other rather than appropriating that Other for use in argument. The character of Being-there requires a spatial occupation, a disclosedness, that is the "existential-ontological structure of this entity" (*BT* 171). Heidegger situates the 'there' in terms of "Dasein's openness to the world," and the way that the senses work toward a state-of-mind to imply *"a disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us*" (*BT* 177, emphasis original). Bearing witness functions as one of the disclosive ways that the 'there' penetrates deeply to the "innermost core" through "pure beholding" as the present-at-hand discloses itself and the world (177). In contrast to witnessing as an objective form of sight, bearing witness draws closer in proximity and "lets entities which are accessible to it be encountered unconcealedly in themselves" (187). Heidegger's formulation of seeing extends perception beyond taking in sensory information with the eyes to a confrontation with the world that not only seeks to understand but also interpret through "the working-out of

possibilities projected in understanding" (189). Witnessing occurs in this working-out of possibilities, before interpretation and before judgement. Being-there, bearing witness, to the entities that come into sight requires a vulnerability to possibilities—toward hope and toward fear.

Bearing witness does not retreat from vulnerability or rebel against the range of affective responses that arise after a traumatic event. While individuals who confront the ruins of disaster do so with the openness of bearing witness, the range of available affects differs widely from person to person. And yet, the witness occupies the same space in confronting ruin as the face of the ruin looks back at them in full disclosedness. Rather than overemphasize layers of protection, to bear witness is to confront the face of the Other. Emmanuel Levinas describes this face, extending Heidegger, as "both the relation to the absolutely weak—to what is absolutely exposed, what is bare and destitute . . . and there is, consequently, in the Face of the Other always the death of the Other" (104). To come face to face, then, is to see the Being-Toward-Death that I am and to face the Being-Toward-Death of the Other.

Levinas positions this coming face to face as a uniquely human phenomenon and names buildings as imitators, rather than possessors, of a face. In her critique of Levinas's anthropocentrism, added as a postscript to *Inessential Solidarity* (*IE)*, Diane Davis calls Levinas on his "conviction that the ethical exigency, the rhetorical imperative he so beautifully exposes, is limited to human relations" (*IE* 145). Like Davis, I question this imperative of the human face and push the boundaries of the face to consider the nonhuman as included in the phenomenon of face-to-face. Davis pushes that boundary by undertaking the question of the animal: "But if, in my encounter with the face of the Other, what calls to me and commands me is precisely that other's corporeal exposedness and inassimilable otherness—its finitude—why would this call be

less compelling coming in from so-called pure corporeality?" (156). As Davis works her way through Levinas's various answers to the question, she comes to a point in which Levinas concedes "I don't know if a snake has a face. I can't answer that question. A more specific analysis is needed" (qtd. in Davis 157). Curiously, a similar question and answer exchange appears in Levinas's essay "Is Ontology Fundamental?" In discussing the face as a "being completely naked . . . by itself," Levinas asks, "Can things take on a face? Isn't art an activity that gives things a face? Isn't the façade of a house a house that is looking at us?" (10). In the case of the house, Levinas says that "the analysis conducted thus far is not enough to give the answer" (10). Despite Levinas's question of the house, his definition of the face leaves room for the nonhuman. Davis articulates the Levinasian face in contradistinction from 'things': "there are 'things,' which require linguistic cover to have any significance at all, and then there is 'the face of the Other,' which expresses its own significance, kath 'auto, by shedding all representational form and therefore calling me and my sense of spontaneity and self-sufficiency into question" (*IE* 156). So, the distinction here between things and face rests on the face that "expresses its own significance." Doesn't a ruin, with its scars of time and its brazen endurance, need little linguistic cover to have significance? Without human engagement, a ruin remains a ruin and an embodied place of ontological situatedness. While this chapter does not attempt to give a definitive answer to the question of the nonhuman face, nor to give an analysis to satisfy Levinas's interpretation, it nevertheless takes up the question in the hopes that an analysis of bearing witness as a reciprocal intra-action of Being-there and seeing the face of the Other might move in that direction.

I extend this understanding of the face to challenge the binary notion that these faces are strictly human. To bring ruins into the conversation is akin to acknowledging "the third man"

that invades the intimacy between humans by calling attention to itself (Levinas 19). To bear witness is to face the Other with an ethics of care, to take on the weight of the ruin which is unable to bear its own weight. Ruins of disaster provoke exposure by showing the face of "a face in which being *faces* me" (Levinas 17). To illustrate, consider the architecture that we inhabit and use every day. Homes, businesses, schools, shopping places all exist in the space of the everyday as ready-to-hand. These structures fall into Heidegger's realm of "what is ready-to-hand as equipment" and are "determined by references or assignments" (*BT* 105). I know the aisles in the grocery store near my home by the items I know will be on the shelves, for my use. I know my office by the walls that are covered with my notes and the books that line the shelves. I know my home so well that I can find what I need in the dark. These architectural structures are known to me primarily, on an everyday basis, by their assignment and by how I can make use of them. However, when these things fail, break, or even when the grocery store aisles are rearranged, the need for such things makes itself acutely known.[35] A natural disaster creates a concussive disturbance in the "structure of the Being of what is ready-to-hand" and reveals the face of the ruin (*BT* 105). Paradoxically, as the assignment is disturbed by the disaster, "then the assignment becomes explicit" (*BT* 105). Heidegger's description of conspicuousness, obtrusiveness, and obstinacy lead him to conclude that when this disturbance occurs, or when the equipment becomes a ruin, "the context of the equipment is lit up, not as something never seen before, but as a totality constantly sighted beforehand in circumspection" (*BT* 105). It is in this totality that "the world announces itself." Ruins announce the totality of decay, of finitude, and

[35] Last year, the Kroger where I have shopped every week for nearly twenty years completely reorganized the store. I found myself disoriented and frustrated as I circulated the aisles trying to locate the things I needed. All of a sudden, I became uncomfortably aware of what was not ready-to-hand.

of mortality. In the space of ruin, the nature of these things show up. That is why bearing witness, and confronting this face, has such a powerful affective nature. The exposure of pipes and beams (literal and metaphorical) and the existentiality of disordered space suspend the comforts of home and structure as well as the layers of identity typically hiding behind them. (Barthes 63). An emotional rawness remains that leaves people longing for connection and ultimately reveals the significance of those structures.

From this perspective, confronting vulnerability by bearing witness to ruin leads to a newly found intimacy with mate(real)ity and with community at the same time that these disruptions traumatically displace the routine of the everyday. Roland Barthes muses on the shifts that occur in the disruption of everyday life, and he wonders about the "celebration of catastrophe" he observed as a result of that disruption following the January 1955 Paris flood. Rebecca Solnit, another sociological researcher, echoes this celebratory tone as she traces the vulnerability of disaster to an exhilaration of survival. Stacy Alaimo questions the pleasurable possibilities that might accompany ruin in her 2016 book *Exposed.* "Is it possible," she asks, "to reenvision the home—a place constructed of literal and metaphorical walls—as a liminal zone, an invitation for pleasurable interconnections?" and further, "what sorts of practices or pleasures would foster posthuman, anticonsumerist subjectivities?" (22). I submit that bearing witness with ruin has the potential to foster this kind of subjectivity arising from the rhetoricity of ruin.

To get at the potential pleasures that are possible here, I posit two forms of bearing witness that function as a spatio-ontological situatedness: local and distant. Local witnessing occurs from Being-there and provides the distant witness with first-hand accounts. The local witness endures the full scope of sensory experience through smell, touch, and the immediacy of the confrontation with the face of ruin. First-hand accounts demonstrate a paratactic structure

that attempts to fully describe the experience of Being-there. The distant witness must depend on representations of ruin and can potentially slide into a voyeuristic and inauthentic understanding of the ruins of disaster. Bearing witness from a distance can also come with moral responsibility and can lead to positive behaviors that demonstrate resilience and an ethical engagement with the Other. In the aftermath of both the Galveston Storm and Hurricane Harvey, distant witnesses provided support and resources to those affected. The sublime, which I address more fully in Chapter Four, often accompanies this kind of witnessing and, as David Hill argues, "emphasizes its role in taking society *towards the better*" as a response to the ruins. Distant witnessing requires a stronger sense of narrative and connected parts, whereas the local forms of bearing witness operate more paratactically. Stylistically these two forms of bearing witness reveal the difference in the intra-actions with ruins on the ground versus via a form of mediation, such as text or screen.

I want to address bearing witness in three key ways. First, the objective format of scientific observation adds a layer of distance through the zoomed-out nature of contemporary warning systems. Current technologies make it possible to witness massive storms at a greater distance than ever before. Satellite imagery and the ability to observe the storm's movements from space constitute the most distant form of witnessing. Second, I examine the witness that watches from afar and bears the weight of viewing others' suffering from the comfort of their own everyday space. And finally, local paratactic practice occurs through Being-there as witnesses present at the scene of the destruction attempt to find a story that makes sense. In the space of material intimacy, bearing witness, in the act of Being-there, confronts ruin and a potentially new way of understanding the human relationship with the built environment—one

that in its ruins enhances Being and exposes the *there*. This form of bearing witness reveals the strongest sense of paratactic praxis.

Both local and distant witnessing requires a humility that translates into vulnerability. While certain populations are more vulnerable to risk than others, the condition of vulnerability (particularly to natural disasters) affects us all. Jean-Luc Nancy calls this "the equivalence of catastrophe" (*Fukushima* 3). The phenomenon of natural disaster does not discriminate across human and nonhuman experience. The desire for permanence, particularly in terms of the built environment, leads to a desire "to arrest change, to shore up solidity, to make things, systems, standards of living 'sustainable'" (*Exposed* 169). Alaimo's critique of contemporary modes of sustainability offers an alternative "ethical engagement" that sees possibility in decay rather than limitation (2). All matter participates in the dissolution of boundaries in some way. Coming to terms with vulnerability, through bearing witness, works in concert with the movement of building and shaping the world—a Janus face that looks both ways—as a symbiotic set of emergent capacities that work together.

Interlude: May 1989

I came of age in the 1980s. This decade brought with it a host of films that showed empowered children doing impossible things. The protagonist of the film Iron Eagle*, a young man desperate to save his father, steals a fighter jet to take on the terrorist compound where his father is being held hostage. Other movies such as* War Games *and* Tron *follow children who navigate complicated computer systems as they save the world. One of my favorites,* The Goonies*, follows a treasure hunt led by a young boy whose family is being forced out of their home by developers. The boy gathers a misfit group of explorers to follow a treasure map, hoping to find enough gold to save their homes. These movies filled my childhood with dreams of*

exploration and made me believe in stories as models for what a child could do. My friends and I created a group similar to The Goonies, and we spent a great deal of our free time exploring the woods along the bayou looking for mysteries and treasure.

When I was around thirteen years old, my neighborhood flooded. I lived just north of downtown Houston in an area called Inwood. My house, situated on the main street, backed up to the bayou (pronounced bye-yo by many Houstonians), and I often went exploring through the wooded area that lined the deep channel that carved its way through the city to prevent flooding. My section of the White Oak Bayou branches off from the larger Buffalo Bayou as a main watershed for the city of Houston. This area behind our neighborhood was a source of fascination for most of the children in the neighborhood, despite the disapproval of their parents. My friends and I threw sticks in the water to see how deep it was and even climbed across a pipe on our hands and knees twelve or thirteen feet in the air. We enjoyed the thrill of surmounting seemingly insurmountable obstacles and in doing so prove that we were as adventurous as the kids in the movies.

The flood early that summer filled the streets, covered the lawns, and entered the homes of many who lived along the bayou. It was late May, and school was nearly out. Naturally, the kids in the neighborhood celebrated when classes were canceled due to the flood. My house did not take on water, but we could not go to anywhere. While the adults fidgeted over the possibility of damages, the children watched the rain accumulate in the street and speculated about friends who might be in lower lying areas, wondering if they were all right. This flood occupies an acute spot in my childhood memory. It was the most severe flood of my childhood, and the aftermath of the flood marked a specific change in my perception of the world.

The year the streets flooded was the peak of my childhood as I moved into adolescence after this summer. At thirteen, I was discovering a great deal about the world. One of my dear friends committed suicide that spring. The Iran-Contra hearings dominated the news. The Exxon Valdez oil spill brought home the consequences of corporate expansion. Our family faced uncertainty as my father worked for Exxon and his job became tenuous in the aftermath of the oil spill. Later that year, the Berlin Wall would come down and other powerful democratic movements would begin to dismantle the Iron Curtain. My sister and I (she is just 20 months younger than me) faced the next stages of our life with some trepidation, and the flood provided a kind of "last time" to live this mythical experience constructed for us by our favorite films.

When the rain stopped, my sister and I went down the street to our friend Lara's house, and the three of us pulled her dad's fishing boat into the waterway that used to be the road. We walked through the water (barefoot mind you) towing the boat down the street and toward the back of the neighborhood where we could push the boat into the bayou. We had no way of steering the boat, no oars, nor any practical knowledge about boats; yet we were confident that we could figure out a way. We pushed the boat into the water at a shallow place and climbed in with visions of sailing our way down the White Oak toward the Buffalo Bayou and then toward Galveston Bay. A small distance in our minds, yet, in actuality, this network of waterways runs nearly 150 miles. The water filled the landscape and flattened the familiar markers that provided our normal depth of vision. We did not even notice the homes that were in the path of the flood.

Once in the bayou, we realized our error and naiveté. We had no means of direction, no ability to pull back to the shore, and no food or water. We sat in the boat, powerless to escape without jumping into the very full and rushing bayou. Our fathers, on realizing what we had done, came to find us and were able to grab hold of the bow of the boat just in time to pull us to

safety. I remember the look of intense fear on my father's face as he strained to reach us and my own fear as the realization of my vulnerability sank in. This moment marks a key shift in my development as the mythology I had accorded the stories of my childhood took on new meaning.

The Anatomy of a Storm

I turn now to the storms, in themselves, as agencies of ruination. The natural forces that produce ruin are part of the ecology and have rhetorical power to shape human behavior, institutional response, and potential futures. Past understandings of the violent storms that we call hurricanes placed the agency of these storms in the realm of myth, thereby locating the blame for ruination on an entity outside of humanity. However, as scientific observation and technological capability increased, storms have come to be viewed as knowable entities. The responses to the ruins arising from this increase in disasters over the course of the 20th century have ramped up the dominant mechanisms of control that operate as part of the techno-global epistemological program. Acts of bearing witness are informed and transformed by these narratives.

Hurricanes and the floods that result from them are anchored to the oldest and most commonly known myth of the flood—the Great Deluge. The story of the flood that wiped out the entire planet's living creatures can be found in many ancient traditions. In these stories, the flood results from divine retribution as a god-like figure seeks to cleanse the earth of humanity's wickedness. In most stories, a hero builds a vessel for the safety for his family and the animals of the world, thus enabling the perpetuation of living creatures on the earth. The Judeo-Christian tradition names this hero Noah, who becomes the progenitor of postdiluvian life. In addition, *The*

Epic of Gilgamesh and Ovid's *Metamorphosis* both chronicle this archetypal story.[36] The significance of this myth can be seen in its prevalence across cultures and epochs. Even the word "hurricane" comes from the ancient Tainos god of evil, "Huracan."[37] The Caribbean perspective on hurricanes echoes the Christian version of the flood as perpetuated by an angry god using his power to punish humanity. In many of these eschatological figurations, storms acquire an ominous and treacherous character.

I trace these patterns of ruin-myth associated with catastrophes through Roland Barthes's "myth of the flood" to parse the various influences that determine the ways that these narratives are constructed. To get to the heart of Being-there, the layers of myth must be accounted for. The more distant the witness is from the mate(real)ity of ruin the stronger the opportunity for myth-making. Barthes organizes his system of myth into layers composed of signifier, signified, and sign, which in turn structure the concept and presence of the mythic form. These components are "made of a material which has *already* been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication" (219). Meaning operates in the literal, sensory layer through the signifier. Sensory reality has a "richness" in Barthes's description, or, as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen says of stone—a thickness. It is through the connection between this signifier, or mate(real)ity, and the signified that the sign becomes the sign. The signifier plus signified combination gives form to

[36] The myth of the flood also circulates in eastern traditions. However, in many of these figurations, the flood does not entail a divine act, but rather an act of nature that invites divine intervention on behalf of the human race, including the creation of humanity. In Hinduism, Manu (or "first man") survives the flood with the aid of a fish to give birth to humans. Gun-yu, in Chinese mythology, also participates in creation after taking refuge in a tortoise shell or gourd.

[37] Cuban historian Ivan Rodríguez López argues for a comparative analysis of the religious beliefs in the various groups that comprise the Tainos people. He demonstrates that creation myths throughout the region figure the hurricane as a divine punishment. See also N. J. Saunders and D. Gray for a discussion of the archaeological evidence of the myths associated with natural phenomena.

the second layer in Barthes's semiological system—the concept—through the texture of its sensorium. The movement to myth from the sign holds meaning at hand, empties the sign of its value, and thus "draw[s] its nourishment" from the form of myth in the process of becoming the concept (Barthes 227). In other words, the material of the first-order of the system provides the fodder for the myth to gain traction. Ruins of disaster, particularly those associated with floods, carry with them both the mythic form and the concept.

In the mate(real)ity of physical space, fragments of power adhere to the fragments of architectural communication in the mythic form. As a type of speech, grounded in material manifestations, myth incorporates a variety of mate(real)ities; however, the absence of intimacy with mate(real)ity more often leads to networks of mythology that shape behavior in the face of natural disaster. These absences expand to create pressure points that allow myth to "protect power by converting historical and contingent social formations into natural and necessary ones" (Porter 60). Power fills what Barthes calls "the concept," which operates at the level of the signified, "at once historical and intentional," and "is the motivation which causes the myth to be uttered" (228). The concept connects the signifier to the signified through the process of signification, which then links causes to effects and ideologies to mate(real)ities. Barthes uses the word situation to describe the solidity of the concept as infused with the presence of its signifier. The concept becomes a stand-in for the mate(real)ity of the Other and strips away the material manifestation of the myth. By emphasizing the concept rather than the material particularity, the myth appropriates the mate(real)ity, in this case the storm, for whatever narrative best serves the locus of human power.

Myth essentially constructs relations of *deformation* (Barthes 232). As the myth of the flood above demonstrates, representations of danger and vulnerability present in the films of my

childhood filled the gaps in my experience with distortions. My concept of danger and disaster relied upon these representations to provide a sense of security. My home, as a non-ruined material entity, even contributed to this conception of security and reinforced the culture of the films. In this cocoon of safety, I did not realize the extent of my vulnerability. Only the act of bearing witness to the flood water, and experiencing the danger associated with exposure, shook the myth from its place in my imagination. The exposure to decay and destruction led to a confrontation with the precarious permanence that my homeplace provided much like what happened to those who believed they would be safe from the Great Deluge. The concept in this case leads toward institutions of protection and power through political and social regulation.

The cataclysm of the global flood takes this form of the myth and shifts meaning away from the immediate effects of the event to the conception of power that appropriates the meaning. The signifier, the storm, through the process of signification links the cause (the storm) to the effect (the ruin in the aftermath). These mate(real)ities, the storm and the ruin, then become enveloped in myth generated by their attachment to power. As I explained in the previous chapter, the Early Modern understanding of ruins linked the material ruin to the human ruin. The myth of the Great Deluge reinforces this understanding and places humanity in a position of subservience to power. The destruction of human creation in favor of divine re-creation negates human power in favor of a divinity in control of planetary happenings.

This is particularly visible in Early Modern readings of the Genesis narrative of the flood. In the 16th century, Noah's flood represented a crucial process in the transition of earth from an Edenic state to a fallen one. Michael Kempe's analysis of Early Modern and Enlightenment interpretations of the Great Deluge traces the myth through its various iterations to describe the loci of power present in these two different time frames. Two contrasting viewpoints emerge

from his analysis. One perspective places the nexus of power within the natural realm as a purification process designed to renew the earth. For example, the Swiss naturalist, Johann Jakob Scheuchzer, believed that the deluge marked a developmental stage of Earth's life history. This view presents catastrophe as part of a cycle unrelated to the behavior of humanity. In contrast to the Scheuchzer's deluge, Thomas Burnet, an Anglican theologian interested in the science of the flood, figured the flood as an agent of ruin exacted upon humanity for their unwillingness to repent of sin. In his *Sacred Theory of the Earth*, the flood narrative describes the origin of humanity. Burnet justifies the pursuit of the origin story in this way: "we are endow'd with Reason and Understanding; doth it not then properly belong to us to examine and unfold the works of God in this part of the Universe, which is fain to our lot, which is our heritage and habitation?" The role of history under the rubric of Burnet's religious tradition is to look back through time to make sense of the genesis of humankind for the purposes of understanding the mechanisms of habitation on earth. These two views of nature contribute two seemingly contrasting positions on the role of nature in catastrophes—nature as a mirror of mankind versus nature as a balancing force that sets natural order to rights. However, in both interpretations of the myth of the flood, the location of power (in the concept) rests with forces outside of humanity. Whether as nature or God or, more importantly, the human stand ins for these concepts, this power destroys human creation.

In commentary on the Deluge (through the medieval period through the early modern), many writers understood the worldwide flood "to mark an absolute historical, ecological, and textural rupture" (Cohen 103). As a cataclysm, a storm event resulting in a flood leaves very little human construction intact. The water works as an eraser of memory, of architecture, and of text; the signifier is evacuated of its meaning. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen discusses this rupture in

terms of the endurance of stone; however, he qualifies his commentary on the lithic record, quoting the Roman poet Lucan, to acknowledge that "even ruins perish" (103). Narratives of the myth construct places of security that rise above the water in order to preserve humanity from demise. In the face of catastrophe, the human response is to build. Cohen's argument for stone as the vessel of temporal endurance invites contemplation on the vessels that transmit knowledge and meaning. Architecture, even following a disaster, is often all that remains as evidence of human habitation and contributes to the transmission of memory. However, the Great Deluge erases even these remains. This historical mythology, while not currently exerting as much influence as in Early Modern ideology, continues to be present in the face of an increase in flood disasters in the 20th and 21st centuries. Kempe claims that now "what is left is a metaphorical use" of the flood, particularly in terms of questions of complicity as more evidence of humankind's role in disasters comes forward (157). The form of the myth remains attached to the concept of power.

In our current moment, the scientific anatomy of a hurricane replaces the story of the Great Deluge as a way to assuage the anxiety around vulnerability I discussed in the introduction to this chapter. Burnet's emphasis on the scientific exploration of the Great Deluge can be traced from the Enlightenment to a contemporary emphasis on science as an epistemological weapon against natural phenomena. While scientific data provides needed resources in addressing the outcomes of massive storms, the tendency to appropriate this data for the justification of increasing barriers of protection has its problems. This data centers largely on understanding the storm as a manageable natural phenomenon and on the property loss associated with the effects of the storm. These two forms of data constitute a distant kind of witnessing that is often used to construct narratives of the flood that reinscribe disproportionate power structures. The story of

Hurricane Katrina was used in this way to justify occupation by government agencies in New Orleans during and following the storm. Some media accounts appropriated the ruin in the aftermath of the storm to conceptualize the black population of New Orleans as deserving of the storm's destruction and to justify the intervention on the part of state and federal agencies. This example of the myth of the flood distances the witnesses from the mate(real)ity of ruin and evacuates the signifier to build the concept that most conveniently reinforces the power that depends on it.

The science of hurricanes, in part, returns to the material of the signifier. Methods of scientific observation attempt to arrest the propensity of the process of signification to evolve into myth. I circle back now to the Galveston storm to examine the role of scientific observation in bearing witness to ruin. The study of massive hurricanes became a science in the early decades of the 20th century in part because of a man named Issac Cline. Cline worked at the Galveston weather station in 1900 when the devastating storm hit the island. His observations combined with his personal experience offer insight into the way that ontology and epistemology can work together as a form of bearing witness that proceeds ethically *toward the better*.

Isaac Cline manned the Galveston weather station from March of 1889 to August 1901. Cline's methodical approach to measuring and predicting weather patterns changed the scope of the Weather Bureau, which at that time was a division of the Department of Agriculture. Accurate weather prediction meant increased success in every business sector and contributed to decreased losses in farming, shipping, and daily life. Cline's approach relied on measurements of barometric pressure to track weather patterns as well as observations regarding tidal movements. Using these methods, the Cline was able to predict that the storm of 1900 would be catastrophic. Despite Cline's observations, however, the Galveston Storm's effects were unabated. The

difficulty tracking and predicting the severity of the storm led Isaac Cline to change the trajectory of his career. In his memoir, he reflects on that time, saying, "The Galveston hurricane changed my objective. The destruction wrought by the storm tide caused by the winds of the cyclone and the appalling loss of life in other tropical cyclones from the same cause convinced me that with proper knowledge as to the cause of these storm tides the tremendous loss of life and property could in a great measure be prevented" (104). Cline's subsequent study of tropical cyclones led to a more accurate system of prediction that has, indeed, prevented a similar scale of destruction.

With its limited technology, the Weather Bureau in 1900 collected information from ships in the Gulf of Mexico that reported a tropical storm moving over Cuba and issued warnings for lower Florida on September 5, 1900. These reports reached Cline at the weather station, and he began measuring the barometer readings in earnest as he realized the potential severity of the oncoming storm. On September 7th at 8 a.m., the barometer read 29.70 inches and the winds had increased to 10 to 20 miles per hour. Cline estimates that at that time the storm was nearly 400 miles from Galveston Island. He notes that the barometer reading changed very little from the morning of the 7th to the afternoon of the 8th. Cline's reports to the national office provided the only source of scientific data collected before and during the Galveston Storm. His attention to detail shows in the description of his measurements recorded in his memoir. He observes the rising tides and attributes this to the oncoming storm system. "The storm swells were increasing in magnitude and frequency and were building up a storm tide," he records, "which told me as plainly as it was a written message that great danger was approaching" (93). In response to the rising tide, Cline and his brother telegraphed the Washington weather bureau office and began warning people along the beach to seek shelter.

Cline's knowledge of the weather patterns of the island resulted in his ability to bear witness locally to the residents of Galveston. He observed weather patterns there for eleven years leading up to the storm and had an intimate understanding of the relationship between barometric pressure and storm severity. As a local witness, Cline's ontological situatedness in relation to the storm was Being-there. While Cline could measure the pressure from the barometer, he possessed few other instruments with which to mediate his observations. On their own, these measurements work paratactically as series of data occupying the same space, and it is for this reason that some weather bureau employees failed to issue warnings to the residents in the affected areas. Cline's intimate relationship with the island, its residents, and the weather patterns enabled him to provide significant advance warning—for him to make sense of the contiguous events that came together before him.

Cline's early work with tropical cyclones laid a foundation for a scientific understanding of hurricanes that is now more comprehensive. Hurricanes in the western hemisphere, or typhoons and cyclones as they are called in the east, are the largest storm systems the earth can produce. Understanding the dynamic movement of water and earth in these systems continues to be valuable in terms of thinking of future programs that work with (or against in some cases) populations in coastal areas. The hurricanes that make their way toward the U.S. coastline originate in Africa, often around Cape Horn. Hurricane Harvey's center formed this way but did not gather strength until it became a tropical storm east of Barbados. Hurricanes form when the temperature of the water reaches above 80 degrees. Thus, warm water, such as in the Gulf of Mexico, facilitates the organization of storms typically between the 8^{th} and 20^{th} degrees of latitude. Warmer water rises at the convergence of cumulonimbus clouds while cooler air above the storm sinks into the center. The eye of the hurricane gathers the thunderstorm clouds into a

swirling pattern of rising and falling air pressure as it moves its ways through warmer waters, picking up speed.

In contrast to the organizations in place during the Galveston storm, large institutions are now able to produce significant amounts of data tracking the speed and direction of the storms as well as make more accurate predictions. These centers tracked Hurricane Harvey from the Lesser Antilles as it fell apart and then regrouped over the Bay of Campeche. What began as a small tropical depression on August 18, 2017 became a large hurricane by August 24, 2017. Harvey made landfall along the southern coastal region in the town of Rockport and then continued to dump water over a region encompassing approximately 23,000 square miles for over four days. Observing satellite imagery gathered from several institutions allowed agencies such as the U.S. Air Force Reserve Command and the NOAA Hurricane Hunters to provide real time, in-depth data to disaster management agencies. In addition, hourly reports tracked the storm surge and subsequent flooding and were updated through social and mainstream media. The public nature of this information generated informed reports that contributed to the successful search and

rescue efforts that came after the storm passed.

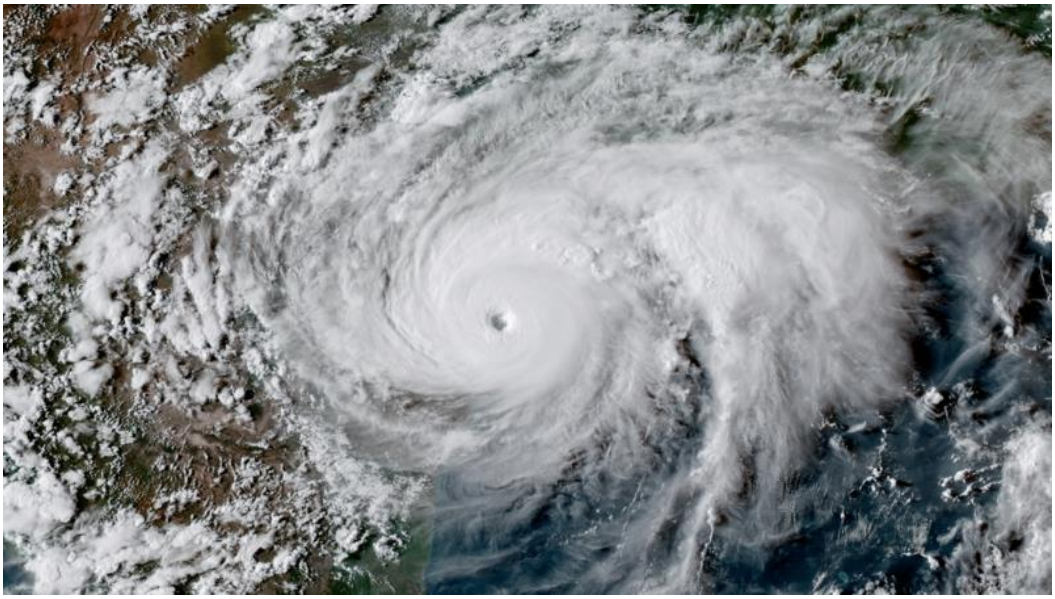

Figure 7: This image was captured by the GOES-16 satellite on August 25, 2017 at 11 pm and shows Hurricane Harvey as it reaches peak intensity of Category 4 with maximum sustained winds of 130 mph.

The National Hurricane Center's extensive report on this hurricane contends that Harvey "was the most significant tropical cyclone rainfall event in United States history, both in scope and peak rainfall amounts, since reliable rainfall records began around the 1880s" (6). The highest rainfall measured at 60.58 inches in Nederland, Texas, and the Harris County Flood Control District estimates that over 136,000 structures had been subsumed by this water in Harris County alone, while overall estimates put the total in the 300,000 range. According to FEMA reports, estimates for water rescues tally to about 30,000. Preliminary estimates of damages place Harvey as the second-costliest U.S. tropical cyclone, nearly tied with Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Early calculations place the damages at $125 billion; however, over a year later more claims are still processing. The overall damage to infrastructure and property places Harvey in the unique category of a national emergency. These statistics also reveal an attention to matter that provides a much more comprehensive understanding of the function of storms and the ruins they produce.

This form of bearing witness, while distant, contributes to the possibilities for ethical human responses following a catastrophe.

While Harvey did astronomical damage, the city of Houston is no stranger to severe tropical storms and hurricanes that cause widespread flooding. From Houston's inception in the early 19th century, its residents, like those of Galveston, have worked to control the flow of water from the Gulf. The Harris County Flood Control District was created in 1937 in response to consistent damage caused by severe weather events. Still, despite continued efforts to direct excess water to areas away from property, the city still experiences a major flood event nearly every two years. In the years since my exploration of the bayou by boat, several major storms have hit the Gulf Coast and caused significant damage, and in the past three years many areas have flooded even more often than is typical during hurricane season. The 21st century has brought with it a consistent barrage of storms that does not appear to be letting up.

One major response to the increase in storms has been a reliance on improved warning systems and computerized models that synthesize observations made by satellites. In 1900, the National Weather Service had only a small staff stationed in Galveston who possessed primitive tools for assessing and observing the power of the hurricane. Technological advances have made it possible to gather much more comprehensive data about the development and trajectory of such storms. Today, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration hosts a complex network of departments that track, record, and predict weather patterns across the United States and around the world. Under the Department of Commerce, NOAA provides detailed satellite imagery and forecast models monitored by the National Weather Service and its local offices. The primary goal of this network is to "support all aspects of keeping the public safe from weather, water, and climate hazards and meeting the NWS mission to protect lives and property,

and enhance the national economy." The comprehensive nature of this mission engages in a distant witnessing that seeks to provide information and to observe patterns of ruin in disaster affected areas.

Curiously, the advances in this system of data contribute to impressions of security and permanence by mitigating feelings of vulnerability. Even with more sophisticated satellite monitoring, ample historical data, and research investment, the forward progress of development in these areas continues unabated. Coastal communities, and Houston in particular, have grown exponentially in the past two decades. Scientific evidence collected on storm patterns demonstrates the heightened risk for building in these areas; yet more people are settling in coastal areas alongside complex ecological networks that must adapt and respond to the continued exposure to extreme weather.[38] Low-lying regions near major bodies of water offer flat plains upon which to build and port availability that increases economic prosperity. Other factors include scenic landscapes and an increase in leisure time that supports tourism in these areas. Both Houston and Galveston (and to a lesser extent New Orleans) experienced a period of rapid growth leading up to these disasters, in part because of these factors. The growth of these cities contributes to the anatomy of the storm, and it is important to include those developments in urban growth as part of a description of how these storms produce ruin.

The year before the Galveston storm marked one of the most economically successful years of Galveston's short history. The city had become a thriving metropolis of some 38,000 people and a crucial port in national exports. In 1838, the island had only 100 buildings, but by

[38] Simonovic and Peck estimate that 21% of the global population lives in a coastal area. A recent study conducted by a team of international researchers found that socio-ecological resilience in coastal ecosystems requires significant adaptation. One key area of this adaptation is real estate development.

1899 the city had grown to include fifty houses just for prostitution as well as stone mansions, theaters, and other elaborate architecture. Industries developed along the coastline, including manufacturers of goods such as pickles, crackers, and rope, in response to this development as railways, ship channels, and other means of transportation enhanced the ability to move these goods. The cotton-bagging mill on the island was the only one south of St. Louis, Missouri. The city prided itself on its architecture. St. Patrick's Cathedral and the mansions commissioned by wealthy business leaders lined the main thoroughfare, Broadway, from the sea to the bridge to the mainland. Newspapers and other publications of the time extolled Galveston as the great seaport of the west and, as historian Susan Wiley Hardwick describes, the residents' belief that the city could endure such prosperity forever functioned as part of the ethos of the city (60). Yet, while the topography of Galveston contains a natural harbor and a tropical environment that make it prime real estate for developers, industrial centers, and tourism, unfortunately, this topography makes the city more susceptible to ruin by storm.

Like Galveston, Houston experienced growth in the decades leading to Hurricane Harvey. Between 1996 and 2018, the city expanded 67%. The number of residents in Harris County alone totaled 4.6 million at the end of 2016. That rise can be traced to successful oil markets, an increase in employment rates, and the relatively low cost of living on which Houston prides itself. A large network of tollways connects the outer suburbs to the city and the increase in transportation efficiency has contributed to the overall growth. A thriving arts center, Houston also boasts "more than 500 cultural, visual and performing arts organizations" according to the city's website. Food culture has risen in prominence as well as local venues, such as the Livestock Show and Rodeo, that draw crowds from all over the world. When Houston surpassed Galveston as the major port in the southern United States early in the 20th century, the city

followed the same pattern of growth and expansion as Galveston did in the 19th century. Improvements in technology changed the topography of the coastline and made Houston more attractive to those industries that depend on an easily accessible port. The growth Houston has experienced comes, in part, from this rearrangement of topography. Housing developments near the ship channel have spread out over the western floodplain nearer to the coast. These are some of the areas hardest hit by Hurricane Harvey.

The anatomy of the storm and the prosperity associated with large scale economic growth contribute to the mythology of permanence. Orderly systems that encourage development, industry, and government services provide a sense of security and a belief in the human power of building to overcome natural obstacles. Vulnerability, under these circumstances, gets side stepped in favor of progress. These two significant hurricanes, and the ruins that accompanied them, dramatically altered the landscape of security in place before these events.

Storm Swirl

In this section, I want to push beyond the witnessing offered via scientific observation to the kinds of narratives that get perpetuated across various forms of media. Media coverage often perpetuates panic and reinforces the need for an intervention by a larger authority, but the media can also offer a closer view of the ruins of the disaster as a call for resources. In Galveston in 1900, this authority came from the local leaders who survived the night of the storm. The influence of external force (from the federal government and even from the Red Cross) remained limited throughout Galveston's reconstruction period, and, as a result, the primary source of media coverage came from local witnesses, those who survived the storm and those who came to the island to bear the weight of the devastation first-hand. The island, insulated in part by its geography and by its economic independence, stayed in the hands of the residents of the city. By

contrast, during Hurricane Katrina, local leaders were dismissed as inept and unprepared. The federal government came to aid in relief efforts through FEMA; however, according to a report by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs in May 2006, failures existed at all levels of government. The situation in Houston during and after Hurricane Harvey showed a stronger sense of reliance on individual citizens rather than large government agencies, a reaction due in part to those failures during Katrina. These three large-scale disasters highlight the "contrasts associated with disaster responses and myths concerning disaster behavior" and also the way that bearing witness, as a practice of material intimacy, fosters a different kind of response to ruin than myth (Tierney, Bevc, Kuligowski 58). The power dynamics present in each of these disaster situations contributed to the distribution of risk and vulnerability, and in each case media narratives played a key role in the perception of that vulnerability.

The social geography of Galveston in 1900 resembled many major cities in the United States at the turn of the century, yet in some ways was very progressive. In the post-Civil War South, people of color had few rights and were marginalized and vilified. Galveston was more progressive in some ways. African Americans held positions in local governments and in local unions, could find work as the city's growth required a strong labor force, and moved through society with fewer restrictions than in the Deep South. Unfortunately, following the Galveston storm, some media outlets latched onto rumor perpetuated by distant witnesses and followed a historical pattern of blame that retold unsubstantiated stories of violence on the part of the city's African American citizens. The inflammatory nature of these stories led to exaggeration and fear and led to a tightening of control by the city's elite white population in the years after the storm.

The further away these media outlets get from witnessing the ruin, the more exaggerated the claims become. In the *Ohio Farmer*, an unnamed journalist describes the city before the

hurricane as a kind of utopian oasis to throw the destruction into relief. The contrasting account offers a move toward parataxis: “the town submerged, buildings wrecked, human bodies by the thousands carried before the angry waves, the town in total isolation, all communication severed.” This move is reflected in many attempts at description, and the paratactic style offers a distant witnessing that could have the potential for generating support from the readership. However, in this example, the writer moves to a short explanatory, hypotactic sentence: “Worse than this was the state of affairs when negroes and low-minded whites began to rob the dead.” This paragraph dismisses the paratactic in favor of a statement on human behavior removed from Being-there. *The National Police Gazette* in New York reports a similar post-apocalyptic violence far removed from the actual city of Galveston. The headline reads “Scenes of Unspeakable Horror Follow the Calamity and Angry Citizens Shoot Down Ghouls Caught Robbing the Dead.” Few local witnesses report wide-spread violence in the Galveston storm’s aftermath; however, media outlets seized upon the stories of ruin to transform them into myths that perpetuated the need for forcible intervention. The distant nature of these reports contributes to the dilution of material intimacy.

In contrast to the more generalized, stereotypical reports, journalists and relief workers traveling to Galveston in the immediate aftermath faced the confrontation with ruin in a paratactic mode of bearing witness. In the local accounts, the statements on looting and plundering tend toward the speculative, and the writers state that they have heard rumors but have not witnessed this looting. Those in close contact with ruin offer specific examples of violence rather than generalizations. By confronting the full sensory impact of the devastation, these accounts provide testimony by Being-there. Distant reports take narratives of ruin and work to construct holistic views of the destruction by zeroing in on negative behavior and place that

behavior in conjunction with the ruin. Local witnesses who visited the site still make attempts to describe the ruins of the disaster, but they do so with a stronger sense of ethical engagement with the ruins—a result of coming face-to-face with the ruin in itself.

Winifred Black, from the *New York Journal*, arrived in Galveston on September 13th. Her account contains dialogue, graphic descriptions, and pleas for help. Journalists like Black came to the city to provide information to the rest of the United States and to bear witness to the scene. The dissemination of accurate information depended on these correspondents who went to the scene to bear witness of the destruction. Black "writes in an almost glorified manner to capture her readers"; however, her account bears witness to corroborated facts (Greene and Kelley 36). Black arrived by small sail boat after talking her way past armed guards protecting relief supplies. On the boat, she met men who had worked through the night to dispose of the thousands of bodies, who had lost their families, and who were sworn in as sheriffs to create some semblance of order. Black includes a plea from one U.S. Marshal who asks her to "impress it upon them [the American people] that what we need now is money, money, money and disinfectants" (39). The call for immediate supplies went out from these kinds of reports, and the public responded with millions of donations. Clothing, money, lumber, and disinfectant poured into the city as a result of accounts like Black's. The media in this case prompted ethical action by Being-there and bearing witness to the ruins of the city.

Black's account displays the paratactic when she describes the ruins of the city. She does describe one scene of plundering but quickly moves on to a lengthy description of the scene of ruins. "The abomination of desolations reigns on every side," she explains. With that introduction, she slips in and out of lists that include roofs gone, windows broken, high-water marks, heaps of kindling wood. These fragments display the difficulty in coming face-to-face

with ruin. Bearing witness occurs in visual bursts, sights framed by debris, and a trail of details disconnected from the whole. This parataxis reveals the condition of Being-there, of trying to gather the details of the scene into something recognizable. The ruins' influence on the witness suspends subordination and conjunction as the ontological situatedness of people and ruins becomes entangled.

Another example of local witnessing came from Clara Barton, founder and President of the Red Cross, who arrived in the city just days after the storm. The American National Red Cross operated as a key relief agency in the aftermath of the storm, one of its first after gaining congressional charter. Barton organized the partnership between the federal government and the Red Cross as a relief organization, and on September 13, 1900 she accompanied a team of relief workers to Galveston. Her 94-page report to the "People of the United States" tracks the relief efforts and the scenes of devastation. Barton opens the report stating the difficulty describing the scene as "a glance of that . . . destruction, ruin and death was sufficient to show that no exaggeration had been possible" (5). The most vivid language seems unable to capture the ruin.

One curious feature of Barton's account of the ruins in Galveston places the ruins in a position of witness as well. She says: "The sea, with its fury spent, had sullenly retired. The strongest buildings, half standing roofless and tottering, told what once had been the make-up of a thriving city" (qtd. In Bixel and Turner 45). Barton arrives to provide relief and aid but also to bear witness to the collective loss experienced by all who survived; however, she acknowledges the role of the ruins in bearing witness to the disaster. The ruins as witnesses contributed to the relief efforts as people took shelter in buildings that survived the storm. In fact, many journalists who took shelter in Galveston comment on the remaining architecture, the dangers of the

buildings, and the difficulty locating appropriate shelter. The ruins become contributing witnesses to the destruction and death in the wake of the storm.

21st century media coverage hardly resembles the telegraphed newspaper stories that circulated in 1900. In 2005, media coverage of Hurricane Katrina took the form of helicopters circling overhead and journalists moving in and out of the city gathering video of the scene in New Orleans. Despite the technology to present the ruins of Katrina in a similar manner as the accounts I reviewed above, one predominant response by the media during Katrina was to vilify the residents, report inaccurate and biased testimony, and ultimately to position the city of New Orleans as a recipient of divine retribution. As I stated earlier, the media coverage of Katrina displayed a distant form of witnessing that provided little evidence of material intimacy. Other studies have focused on the storm swirl of media in the aftermath of Katrina. I turn here now to the role of media after Hurricane Harvey as a contrast to the reports of the Galveston Storm and of Katrina.

As with the Galveston Storm and Katrina, the real danger from Harvey came in the form of the storm surge. The flood waters brought on by the storm surge placed the entire city of Houston in a panic to seek higher ground. As the rain continued to fall, residents of Houston spent their nights on top of furniture or kitchen counters, or they huddled in upstairs bathrooms. One of my sister's neighbors spent the first night of the rising flood waters on top of his kitchen island curled around his wife and pets. They did not think they would be able to survive the rising water; however, my brother-in-law was able to get into their home and evacuate them. Stories like this came from all over the city. As the water came indoors, residents experienced an intense vulnerability and came face-to-face with mortality and ruin. Curiously, the response of many witnesses was to extol the rescue efforts on the part of many individuals (such as my

brother-in-law) who contributed to the evacuation of thousands of people from dangerous conditions. Hurricane Harvey's unique relationship to social media provided on the ground information from local witnesses to rescuers so that the mortality rate for Harvey remained very low.

Studies completed by researchers at the University of Texas at Austin examined the role of social media in rescue efforts conducted during and after Hurricane Harvey. These studies found that "three themes describing the key social media challenges, incomplete feedback loops, unclear prioritization, and communication overload, led to an overarching finding: interviewees painted a picture of the disaster response as one of untapped potential" (645). The overwhelming response to the ruins of Hurricane Harvey presented a different picture than the one broadcast following Katrina. Local witnesses utilized social media platforms such as Zello, an app which functions like a walkie-talkie, and groups created through Facebook to locate stranded people and animals and perform rescue operations. Calls for help like this one from Debora Pizzolo, "Does anyone know of rescue teams taking people to Dallas? Trying to get my family

Figure 8: Social media posts such as the one in this image went out through various groups as people tried to coordinate local resuces.

here," circulated on the many pages dedicated to finding displaced people and relocating them to safety. The Facebook account, "Hurricane Harvey 2017: Together we will make it; TOGETHER WE WILL REBUILD," is one example of such a group. In these conversations, people posted their location information, neighborhoods they were patrolling, and calls for help. These conversations later made national news in the form of heroic stories and calls for monetary assistance from the general public. In contrast to the limited accounts from journalists who could make it into the city of Galveston, these witnesses could provide not only rescue information but intimate accounts of the ruin in localized areas. One disadvantage found by Stephens and her team of researchers was that the disorganized flood of information, the storm swirl, meant that in some cases the resources available were not used to their capacity. However, the accounts of individuals, carrying their cell phones as they patrolled neighborhoods on boats, offered real-time descriptions and information that could provide immediate relief.

Conclusion

In these short examples of paratactic praxis, the outsider bears witness to the ruins as the ruins reciprocate as witnesses of the disaster. Reports of destruction, from witnesses present and face-to-face with the scene, contribute to the responses from distant witnesses. Typically, the claims and cultural logics circulating post-disaster draw heavily on the mythology I have described in this chapter. However, in the brief temporal space (the suspension of becoming Barthes describes) following the catastrophe, Being-there calls for witnesses to reveal the emergent capacities of the human and nonhuman agents involved. This positive approach to ruins arises as much from the ruins as from their inhabitants and involves bearing witness as an ontological act that confronts vulnerability and ruin. The eye-witness accounts are significant evidence to the power of bearing witness as a paratactic praxis of overcoming myth and

revealing vulnerability. The evidence I present here suggests that the ruins of these storms play an ambient role in dismantling the myths I have described above. The physical remains of home, in a damaged and exposed state, not only offer opportunities for individual transformation (in the form of beliefs and behaviors) but also rearrange the power structures and communities affected by those ruins. The mate(real)ity of ruins presents a capacity for change and for realizations that can, when witnessed, have a positive effect on humans and the environment.

To witness the ruins of a Category 5 hurricane is certainly to reckon with a force beyond human intervention. The connotations that underlie the words for storms assign nefarious intention to the storm—an intentional ruiner. The latent meaning of the word hurricane and the mythology surrounding it influences public perception of these storms. However, unlike past iterations of the myth, now blame is often placed at the hands of an agential nature (rather than the divine) intent on persecuting humanity. The 2011 reality show *Eyewitness to Disaster* includes this line as part of the title sequence: "At the core of the planet lies the heart of a killer." The show uses raw footage from journalists, storm chasers, and residents of disaster areas to show destruction caused by storms, fires, earthquakes, and other kinds of large-scale forces of nature. In many reports on storms, nature in this show and others is depicted as a kind of maleficence, cutting its own path through human settlement without reason but certainly with ill intent.

Despite these so-deemed evil tempests and the underlying mythology, the design of infrastructure to overcome the prevalence of disasters often contains an underpinning of both arrogance and control. The aim in figuring natural phenomena as a destroyer to be conquered enables a justification of battle against such forces. Building projects are typically designed in terms of their power to erase vulnerability to the kind of violence present in the earth's dynamic

movement of destruction and regeneration. The façade of power leads to significant dismissal of the danger from natural forces and to a perception of permanence. Disasters, historic and present, flatten the playing field, so to speak. The flow of water, especially when accompanied by hurricane-force winds, creates a swirling mess of ruin. Boats (like arks) are made to keep water out—to resist ruin—and homes are also built with this purpose in mind. However, the protection of home leads to a shaky foundation of security grounded in the epistemological program of data collection and scientific intervention.

As evidenced by the flooding during Hurricane Harvey (and other major disasters), the expectation that a home will hold in the face of a deluge changes people's behavior and often surprises those who believe they are invulnerable to flood waters. The metaphoric use that Kempe refers to arises out of a dismissal of apocalyptic narrative as overdramatic and disconnected to technological advancement. However, present cataclysmic events combined with "the contemporary use of the [apocalypse] leads to a rejection of the revelatory potential" of the physical consequences of such events (Gilmore 392). In the narratives surrounding cataclysmic events, an increased reliance on scientific explanation, climate change narratives, and technological advancement often shifts the balance of power from God and nature to human intervention. Denial of the powerful effects of nonhuman forces speaks to an underlying fear that Timothy Gilmore calls biophobia. This fear, or at least latent anxiety, leads to a repression of "the brute fact of the decay, corruption, and death necessary for the continuance of life" (391). The anxiety surrounding the construction of homes and other secure structures leads to a kind of enclosure that suspends the doom of the present by attempting to contain or arrest entropy. Gilmore predicts that the "desire to avoid the unpleasant" and the "avoidance facilitated by our prevailing concept of nature" leads to a collapse of current modes of production and other failing

systems (395). He recommends attention to the nonhuman, specifically in terms of wildness, as a remedy for thinking in such binary terms.

The balance of power that gives rise to the mythologies surrounding cataclysmic events negates the ecological relationship between actors. Bearing witness to the ruins of disaster shifts the emphasis on the human/nature binary in myth to a more expansive, and realistic, view of potential futures. In the case of Hurricane Harvey, the ecological network of individuals, flood waters, animals, social and mainstream media, and institutional support created a unique level of material intimacy with the ruins of the disaster and invited participation from a variety of actors. The optimism displayed in the interviews conducted as part of the ongoing research on Harvey response reflects the possibilities for hope in responding to the ruins of disaster. In the context of the apocalyptic mythologies I discussed in this chapter, "the end" as an eschatological certainty becomes, in these narratives, less about annihilation and more focused on emerging futures. Ruins offer a way of approaching those futures with optimism rather than despair; they disrupt myth and generate adaptations and possibilities. I discuss these futures more fully in Chapter Four.

In the next chapter, I draw even closer to the ruins of these disasters to look at the metonymic properties of the absences in ruins and their narrative accounts. Listening, as an embodied act of material intimacy, provides a further level of attunement that complements and extends witnessing even deeper. The stories of loss presented by survivors of the aftermath reveal a tendency to slip into metonym as a paratactic praxis of expressing the intimate absences left in the wake of the storms. The letters and memoirs of the survivors of the Galveston Storm offer a historical portrait of these textual traces. Harvey survivors also display some of these markers. The remains of daily life figure prominently in the writers' efforts to describe and

‘stand under’ the ruins. The phenomenon of dwelling in disaster presents an opportunity to gather the ontological situatedness of survival into a paratactic reality, fragmented by the ruins, and ultimately portray the ruins of disaster as gathering entities that provide shelter, community, and relief.

October 23, 2007

The dust of your remains

Makes my lungs ache.

I choke. Sputter. Lurch.

Slam. On. The. Brakes.

Your house, so empty

Yet so full of dust,

and frozen hummingbirds

left still on the shelf.

The backyard is filled with life,

Hummingbirds and sparrows

Chased away by your gun,

Nutshells on the porch left by the squirrels.

Evidence in your feeder the sweet nectar.

Your house, so empty

Yet so full of dust,

and glassware.

The cracked dish sits quietly on your coffee table

Says the things you wished to say,

The day my son broke it.

Your house, not so empty,

I know you are there.

Figures smirk out of the glass

Filling the space with your candid humor.

The candy jars are full waiting for me to empty them.

In the dust that remains

On carcasses of crystal.

Pictures tell our story.

Faces in the hallway, mute

Faded, wrinkled, vibrant.

My parents in-between

Posing in their Sunday best, frozen.

Your house, so empty,

Silent.

I choke on the smell of your sweaters.

Corn syrup, 1987, in the cupboard,

The dust of you, remains.

Psalms 30:9

Chapter Three

(Dis)Composed Dwelling

I recall
How we huddled all night in our small house,
Moving between rooms,
Emptying pots filled with rain.
The next day, our house—
On its cinderblocks—seemed to float

In the flooded yard: no foundation

Beneath us, nothing I could see
Tying us to the land.
In the water, our reflection
Trembled,
Disappeared
When I bent to touch it.

--Natasha Trethewey, "Providence"

As I argued in the previous chapter, vulnerability can lead to bearing witness, and through vulnerability the ruin invites the witness to face the Other with concern. Coming face-to-face with ruin disrupts mythologies surrounding human-centered notions of permanence and power and prods the witness toward material intimacy. Bearing witness to ruin decenters the human and blurs the demarcations between the wild, untamed outdoors and the constructed, tame indoors. While bearing witness has the potential for material intimacy, particularly in facing the

Other with concern, listening as I describe in this chapter moves deeper into the space between the outside and the inside. Listening as a paratactic praxis brings the outside close in an embodied engagement that responds to the address of the ruins of the home following a natural disaster. As a moved connected to bearing witness to mate(real)ity, listening-with further stands under the ruins of home and takes a position of humility—a measure of acquiescence to natural forces outside of human control. The balancing act between outside and inside shows up in life narratives as the writer listens in the liminal space of ruin and composes, or rather (dis)composes, a response. It is in the space of (dis)composition that material intimacy is revealed.

In this chapter, I examine the act of listening as an engagement with the ruins of home that furthers material intimacy. First, I introduce (dis)composition as a form of life writing composition that performs the paratactic praxis of listening-with. I then move to listening-with as an ontological situatedness that tunes into the worldhood-of-the-world in three ways: silence, absence, and gathering. These three ways of listening-with function as agential moves that move the listener from occupying the space of home toward dwelling in (dis)composition. The anatomy of the home occupies the center of this chapter as a bridge between the act of listening and the act of writing. The affective space of the home provides both the mate(real)ity of invention and the emotional resonance that informs the language production about that affect. Finally, I trace the three ways of listening present in life narratives that write the ruins of home, or dwell in (dis)composition. Description, metonym, and encomium function as linguistic markers of the paratactic praxis of listening-with silence, absence and gathering—ultimately moving toward material intimacy.

I use the term (dis)composed to articulate the disordered nature of life writing that responds to the ruins of home produced by natural disaster. (Dis)composition shares the territory of composition but attends to disturbance and displacement rather than cohesion and coherence. If, as Nedra Reynolds argues, writing "takes place" and depends on material geographies, then the *site* of writing should be accounted for when developing theories of composition.[39] The implication for this emphasis on the place of writing imagines "acts of writing as material—carving text out of time and space, in particular circumstances that differ for each writer" and "opens up new spaces in which to study and understand literacy and the construction of meaning" (4). (Dis)composition also carves text out of time and space and places the relationship between ruin as a material space and ruin as a composition. I shift from composition to (dis)composition to allow for the disturbances in writing that occur when the human listens-with the ruins of their home.

(Dis)composition works as a fracturing from composition, rather than a complete disconnection from the process altogether. Composition functions, in part, as an act of linguistic control that attempts to order mate(real)ity, to write a cohesive narrative, and to construct a coherent subject. The act of composing then can be formulated as an epistemological move that locates "language at the center of the formation of discourse communities which in turn define the self, the other, the material world, and the possible relations among these" (Berlin 184). Through this model, access to reality occurs through language and rests on the control of language. However, mate(real)ity does not always fit neatly into discourse. (Dis)composition

[39] Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson prefer the word 'site' to something like 'place' or 'setting' because 'site' "speaks to the situatedness of autobiographical narration" (58). I follow their use of this term as both a place and an ontological location in life narratives of ruin.

moves between the process of control and the unsettling of that control—it is a composing process, but a messy one.

Life writing engages in (dis)composition in ways that illustrate the significance of place in the composing process. The life writer works self-referentially, moving back and forth from the self to the material and back again, to constitute the autobiographical subject. Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson define the constitutive processes of the subject through memory, experience, identity, embodiment, and agency. These five characteristics of life writing do not necessarily construct a unified, coherent autobiographical subject; rather, the self that is constructed in (dis)composition is "always fragmented in time, taking particular or provisional perspective on the moving target of the past, addressing multiple and disparate audiences" (Smith and Watson 47). The autobiographical act engages in the construction of an argument that puts forth an identity, one that negotiates a tightrope between the self that others see in the external world and the private subject of the "I," a tightrope stretched between the inside and outside. The ruins of the home, as *sites* of the life writing of disaster, invite specific textual markers that negotiate this tightrope.

The site of writing the ruins, of the home as well as the ego, contains an "exposure to exposedness" that comes with starts and stops and measures of absence and cannot be fully composed in a syntactic way (*IE* 9). While the temporal elements of life writing are particularly suited to syntactic connection (think chronology), the spatial elements of life writing slip out of the syntactic wholeness that can be achieved in more traditional (temporal) forms of autobiography. In their introduction to *Life Writing and Space,* Eveline Kilian and Hope Wolf call attention to the space of life writing that "in turn provokes explorations of the interdependencies between spaces and selves and the extent to which selves are constituted

through the spaces they traverse, inhabit, or move away from" (2). Notably, the displacement, destruction, or disturbance of 'the home' figures prominently in self-referential writing because of the interdependencies between spaces and selves. To (dis)compose is to attempt to order these disturbances and fail to complete the narrative.

By examining the matter of ruin in life writing and drawing a blueprint of the ontological situatedness of human and ruin, I trace the properties of listening-with ruin to find the potency of ruin's capacity for influence. The locational boundaries of the autobiographical act, especially in terms of a ruin with displaced boundaries, shift in ways that allow for the ruin to have a profound rhetoricity in terms of the stories told about them by the human writer. This rhetoricity can be seen in the three ways of listening-with I explain in the next section. These ways of listening-with invite an attunement to the ambient nature of the ruin and an attitude of drawing closer to the worldhood-of-the-world that sits in the tensions between the outside and the inside and listens-with the creaks and groans of the fractured subject.

To Listen

To listen-with the ruins of home is to sift through the ruins of identity and to face the texture of reality in a series of complex visceral reactions. The affective quality of the texture of ruins calls attention to other textu(r)alities such as the texture of time, death, loss, and memory. To write the ruins of a disaster a writer must listen-with the echoes of the past that remain in the absences, listen-with the pieces left behind in the present, and listen-with the potential futures exposed in their exposedness. The spatio-temporal collision in the ruins of home fractures the architectural solidity of the home. Listening-with moves deeper into these reverberations of the self as the ruin and the human are thrown haphazardly together in (dis)composition. To listen-

with, as I describe in this section, centers attention and detail in a spatial relation that has the potential (and often the imperative) for material intimacy.

Listening-with extends the Heideggarean concept of Being-with toward an active participation in the world. "The world of Dasein," according to Heidegger, "is a *with-world*" (155). Like the existential spatiality of Being-there, listening-with locates the "I" by designating the "thou" in terms of care and concern. Heidegger offers two forms of positive solicitude in Being-with. The first, "which leaps in and dominates," takes hold of the Other and binds them together toward a common concern (158). In this form, the Other becomes subsumed in the care of Being-with. The other form of Being-with "*leaps ahead"* rather than leaps in, "not in order to take away his 'care,' but rather to give it back to him authentically as such for the first time" (159). This form liberates the Other and reflects a consideration of the Other that more authentically frees the Other for disclosedness. Listening-with resides in this second form of Being-with as a move to encounter the Other with a solicitude that arises from an a priori understanding.

I define listening-with in three ways: with silence, with absence, and with gathering. These three ways of listening-with constitute a way of being, or Being-with-the-world, that releases mastery and control in favor of reception and letting things be in themselves. Listening-with enables the listener to inhabit a state of mind that opens to emptiness and uncertainty. To listen-with is to receive the alterity of the Other and loosen the impulse to impose habitually formed conceptions of the being of the Other. This is akin to Thomas Rickert's *attunement*, which draws on Heidegger's *Stimmung* to articulate the result of "the co-responsive and inclusive interaction that brings out both immersion (being-with) and specificity (the way of our being there)" (9). For Rickert, attunement arises out of an originary rhetoricity, a presence in the

world that is not subjective but rather "an affectability inherent in how the world comes to be" (9). Although attunement plays a role in the conditions of listening-with, it differs slightly from this conception of attunement. The movement of listening-with encounters difference with a *choice* to be alongside the Other to inhabit "a kind of dwelling place from where we offer our hospitality to others and the world" (Lipari 102). Listening-with occurs out of an agential human stance that faces the Other with care and concern and chooses in that care to be affected by the experience. Whereas attunement acknowledges the ways in which mate(real)ity already permeates occasions of rhetoricity, listening-with extends attunement toward a conscious effort, "a contingent discontinuity of incongruities and faith that opens a space of being in which we may hear things not otherwise audible: the absent, the broken, and the radically strange" (Lipari 103). It is in the silences, absences, and gatherings of listening-with that material intimacy shows up.

Listening-with silence covers the first way of listening that appears in (dis)composition. In the case of many trauma narratives, the writer often keeps to the silence for a long period of time. However, this kind of silence arises from the effort to hold onto the words of the self and resists speaking personal truth. The life writer's impetus for writing, a desire to speak the truth of the real of life experience, provides a fertile ground for speaking through silence and drawing strength from writing that experience. Azar Nafisi's *Things I Have Been Silent About* functions this way as a speaking of the things she was not allowed to say. Even more poignantly, Helen Fremont's *After a Long Silence* attempts to navigate her family's secrecy surrounding their experience during and after the Holocaust as she figures out how to say the things that cannot be said. These memoirs and others like them arise from the necessity of storytelling that breaks through barriers to giving voice to the truth. Truth-telling and the effort of narrating trauma help

disclose human experience in powerful ways. Listening-with silence in this context responds to and resists the oppressive structures that impose the silencing. The kind of listening-with silence that I am articulating here comes after the destruction of those structures. The ruins of the home effectively erase those barriers and leave the writer exposed.

The distinction I want to make here, in terms of writing, is a particular orientation toward the spatiality of the experience. The memoirs I just mentioned, along with many others, seek for a listening-with the self, to articulate the internal movement of the emotional and intellectual landscape toward healing. These memoirs work toward closure and compose a narrative that completes the story of the internal experience. Listening-with silence in my formulation stands aside and quiets the self in attention to what the Other has to say. Krista Ratcliffe's work on rhetorical listening is instructive here. She challenges the emphasis on metaphorical relationships as too dependent on similarity and as a barrier to effective listening. Rhetorical listening engages with difference by inhabiting "a *place* of non-identification that functions as a *place* of pause and reflection" (93, emphasis mine). Ratcliffe's rhetorical listening embraces silence as an opportunity to understand the Other from "a third ground where rhetorical negotiation is exposed as always already existing and where rhetorical listening is posited as one means of that negotiation" (27). This third ground, or place of pause and reflection, allows exposure to be a form of understanding and complements listening-with silence, as it is in silence that the substance of things, the ruins, the Other, has an opportunity to contribute to discourse.

To better understand listening-with silence, it is important to extend listening beyond the auditory process of sound waves crossing the eardrum. The physical properties of hearing do not fully describe listening as a holistic, embodied process. Listening in this context involves a turning, a mode of heightened sensory awareness that draws together the sensorium in an attitude

of being affected.[40] This kind of listening operates at an ontological level that communications scholar Lizbeth Lipari describes as "a multimodal process that involves (or can involve) all of our senses" (51). Lipari's ontological mode of listening, or what she calls "interlistening," argues for disruptions to habitus as a way to "listen to people and things in themselves" dissociated from the imposition of culturally embedded interpretations and significance (54). Listening-with does not wholly disconnect association from these interpretive interferences, but rather brings them to the encounter and engages with the vibrations circulating through the encounter with the Other. Vibrations produced by matter, its movements, and its contact with other matter not only connects to the ears but enters through the sensorium. Considering matter, or mate(real)ity, in this way accounts for the numberless vibrations that are "all linked together in uninterrupted continuity, all bound up with each other, and traveling every direction like shivers through an immense body" (Bergson 276). This holistic mode of listening reveals the potential affectability present in mate(real) intra-actions.

To illustrate, let me describe a recent encounter of listening-with. I found myself in a stairwell alone and, as I descended the stairs, I thought I heard singing. The echoes in the concrete stairwell distorted the sound. I continued moving. I dismissed the singing as a trick of the ears. I heard it again. I paused on a landing, halting the sound of my own footsteps, and tuned into the sensory information I could gather. In this moment, I listened-with silence. The hard surface beneath my feet, the dripping cacophony from the rain outside, and the combination of metallic clangs of machinery in the walls created an eerie kind of chorus to the singing I first heard. I had to stop, to engage in an attention to the mate(real)ity of the space, in order to listen-

[40] John Mucklebauer's formulation of a new materialist rhetoric relies on this turning. He uses the sunflower as an example, which when beckoned by the sun turns toward its address. He figures forms of address in this context as extralinguistic, but rhetorical nonetheless.

with. In this pause, I felt rather than heard the material space around me. The voice of the song paused. I patiently listened-with silence. I waited for it to resume.

Even now, I have difficulty describing the affective properties of that experience. The previous paragraph attempts to do that; however, language in this case fails to encapsulate the experience. The difficulty connecting causes and effects, in creating conjunctions between the mate(real)ity and the affect, show up in the paratactic nature of this description. The voice prompted me to stop. The texture of the steps under my feet. The resonance of the vibration against the walls. The renewed attention to the sensory intra-actions in the space facilitated an intimate moment with the stairwell—an affective moment—that stayed with me, but that I still find difficult to compose into a narrative that reaches a kind of conclusion or closure in the experience.

Silence in this context is more than being still. Rather listening-with silence allows the Other to make themselves heard. While the stairwell and I came together in an encounter, and I heard the sounds as I moved down the stairs, it was not until I paused to listen-with silence that the mate(real)ity of the stairwell came forward. And yet despite my attention to the material in my narrative, the subject 'I' still appears as the primary subject in the narrative that experiences the sensation. In this way, my description remains focused on human subjectivity, my subjectivity, in relation to the stairwell. My experience highlights the ways in which listening-with silence reveals a coalescence of phenomena, suspends the habitual moves of interpretation, and encounters the Other through the uncanny resonance that sounds being in a deep, full reverberation. But it also highlights the challenge of stepping aside as a human interlocutor to allow the material to occupy the subject position in the intra-action. Investigating the nature of listening-with silence and other forms of paratactic praxis carry with them this challenge.

The challenges here come in part from the messy nature of (dis)composition. The desire to (dis)compose experience accompanies the desire to navigate loss and reconstruct some semblance of order. However, ruins resist the ordering of language. Life writers who listen-with silence take up the task of voicing what cannot be said and apply words to a set of circumstances that resist encapsulation in language. These silences, a kind of Morse Code, move through the text in starts and stops as life writers of disaster insightfully interact with their silent broken homes. The work of de-scribing ruins, as a way of listening-with silence, organizes the experience by placing the ruins in a contextual order, or, at least, trying to find language to arrange the disorder into some kind of rationality. The experience of disaster does not follow a logical course, cannot be scripted or understood in a rational way, and so the randomness of the disaster makes it difficult to contextualize as the writers must work to create a mosaic from the pieces of what was once the whole structure of their lives. The marker of listening-with silence can be found in deferrals that break the narrative as the writer comes back to the idea that they cannot find the words to describe the scene over and over again. The repetition of this refrain shows the difficulty in de-scribing but also shows the powerful juxtaposition of resonance and dissonance in the spaces that need de-scribing.

The textual markers for listening-with silence show up in descriptions of the ruins of disaster, especially those considered 'the home.' The composing act of description works to disclose "networks of mediation in such rich detail" that explanation falls by the wayside (Gries 101). Attempts at description permeate narratives of ruin because so often there is no explanation for the destruction, no conclusion to draw, no closure to obtain. Laurie Gries formulates description, or "de-scribing," as a research strategy for foregrounding the mate(real)ity of the image in her new materialist rhetorical study of the Obama Hope image (101). De-scribing, for

her, assists in new materialism's contribution to rhetoric and allows mate(real)ity's "complexity and transformations" to come forward "without 'taming' its wild eventfulness" (102). Composing description functions as an attempt to allow things to show up in themselves, without imposing interpretation. Description, then, enacts a listening-with silence as the attempt to narrate experience makes space, or discloses, the Other and attempts to "make transparent their own multiple, divergent rhetorical becomings" (Gries 103). Life writers rely on description in this way to be "fully attentive to the traces of activity that [they] discover by following an actant intra-acting in a current state of affairs and making the connection, movement, and work of actants fully transparent on the page" (102). While the life narratives I study in this chapter do not necessarily intend to perform this kind of work, the textual markers of listening-with silence nevertheless show up in the responses to the ruins of home I am examining here. Listening-with silence arises from the desire to de-scribe the presence of the ruin as an acknowledgement of the discourse that may or may not be like one's own and letting the ruin 'speak.'

Another way of listening-with attends to absences. Listening-with absence attends to the gaps and to the unsaid, the absences in discourse, but does not fill them with conjunctive moves that disintegrate the gaps. While de-scribing listens-with silence in an orientation of Being-with the Other, listening-with absence does not attempt to fill the gaps with imagination or to impose a set of connections that lead toward a conclusion. Listening-with absence willingly "articulates a space within which we must interject our own agencies" but does so by listening-with "(un)conscious presences, absences, unknowns" (Ratcliffe 30). Similar to Ratcliffe's acceptance of absences, Lipari pushes listening toward resistance to "closure, categorization, and the imperatives of narrative flow" (102-103). Listening-with absence resists closing the gaps and embraces the inability to fully know the Other.

Heidegger's notion that the world continually withdraws from disclosure operates in these gaps between people and things. Object-oriented ontologists such as Graham Harman and Ian Bogost include Heidegger in their exploration of this fundamental unknowability and seek ways to overcome it. Despite object-oriented concerns about the obscurity of knowing mate(real)ity, most theorists consider it possible to approach mate(real)ity "*as if* [it] were understandable, while simultaneously realizing that the essences of objects—all objects—are unknowable" (Rutherford and Palmeri 98). Bogost uses the term metaphorism to tackle the paradox of knowing some thing and being unable to know the thing in itself. He argues for metaphorism as a move in what he calls alien phenomenology that "grasps at the ways objects bask metaphorically in each other's 'notes'" (67). This kind of relationship figures the apparatus of metaphor as a trope for taking in the Other's experience and addressing the way that that experience relates, from an alien point of view, to the human's experience. Certainly, the withdrawal of the Other into unknowability creates a problem of how to understand and ethically engage with the Other. However, Bogost's metaphorism effectively takes that which is withdrawn and brings it into the light of its relationship with human knowability. It would seem that metaphorism would offer a key to material intimacy and, as a trope, metaphor brings much to the table to facilitate understanding and knowledge of the world. Yet, metaphor also erases absence and does not articulate the material connections that manifest in narratives of ruin.

As a textual marker of listening-with absence, metonym, on the other hand, offers a "mental process of connecting things that are familiar to the self" while at the same time preserving the gaps between what is familiar and what is unknown (Nagy 3). Listening-with absence allows disconnection and unknowability to function as ontological and ethical positions. Metonyms work by proximity and contact and by a sort of shorthand that connects parts to

invoke wholes and direct association between sense and mate(real)ity. Contiguity, as a principle characteristic of metonymic linkage, calls to mind attachment through adjacency, closeness, and even touching. This requires a listening-with absence to allow that contiguity to maintain the integrity of all the parts invoked by the metonym. Metaphor substitutes something familiar for that which is alien in ways that can illuminate the relations between human and nonhuman, but metonym as a trope of combination does not function as a substitution in this sense.

The properties of sensory and emotional metonymy in (dis)composition reveal an a priori being that is "infinitely open to the other's affection, inspiration, alteration" (*IE* 26). As I explained in the previous chapter, Diane Davis's rhetoricity locates identification in this a priori being as an exposure to the confrontation with the Other. The exposure in material intimacy often arises from identification because an affectability must be present. However, listening-with absence means that the available properties for identification are missing or hidden. The withdrawn nature of the Other further supports Davis's call for exposure as a moral imperative within the web of relations we inhabit. The exposure comes from a shattering of ego, an ego that is grounded in finitude. A confrontation with the mortality of the Other fractures—or diffracts, to use Karen Barad's term—the illusion of non-exposure and thus facilitates material intimacy. The metonymic chains in life writing show an effort to move toward that identification, yet it continuously fails to integrate the Other and the self. The power of metonymy is in what it cannot join—in what is (dis)composed.

A final note about metonymy moves us toward listening-with gathering, the third way of listening-with. Metonymic chains link perspective to perspective, material to immaterial, substance to state. The role of metonymy in linkage conveys, in Kenneth Burke's terms, "some

incorporeal or intangible state in terms of the corporeal or tangible" (*GM* 506).[41] These relations appear in the combination of terms in the metonymic chain. Gregory Nagy makes an interesting observation about the function of metonym as a relation between intangible and tangible states. He discovers this relation in a *New York Times* obituary. The article, "Arthur D. Hasler, 93; Deciphered Salmon's Homing Instinct," chronicles Hasler's life and his discovery that salmon migration patterns depend on 'olfactory imprinting' or the smell of home. Nagy's interpretation, or rather what he calls his metonymic reading of the obituary, calls to mind the directional power of metonymy as that which "leads the self *back home* to familiarity," and "familiar things are those kinds of things that make the self feel at *home"* (Nagy 76). The emphasis on homing as a property of metonymic power positions the grammatical function as a material one. The mental processes that combine the familiar with the familiar (or what can become familiar) act as a trail of breadcrumbs that lead home. This component of metonymy can be seen in the way of listening-with absence that occurs in the aftermath of natural disasters.

Finally, the third way of listening-with attends to the work of gathering. In fact, the hallmark of ruined spaces provides new ways of gathering that can be instructive in understanding and engaging nonhuman entities. Rather than gather human inhabitants the way a building gathers people together, the ruin also gathers the sky as the roof is opened, gathers the earth as water or mud seeps inside, gathers the animals, plants, and other life forms as they seek shelter from the storm. The gathering in this context looks less like a magazine ad for a beautiful

[41] Burke's discussion of the master tropes argues for a metaphysical understanding of tropes' "role in the discovery and description of truth" (503). Burke's definition of metonymy is instructive, but his equation of metonymy and reduction is problematic. He places the substance of relationships within a hierarchy of being that I find does not adequately describe the potential for linkages in metonym. Metonym as reduction, particularly in terms of hierarchy, does not serve material intimacy; nevertheless, Burke contributes to an understanding of metonymy as a material-discursive device that facilitates the movement between matter and mind (503).

kitchen and more like (dis)composed dwelling that strips away the aesthetic adornments so emphasized by contemporary home-making media.[42] I situate this way of listening-with in the context of Heidegger's four-fold. For Heidegger, the fourfold expresses the "most primary circumstances of existence" and provides opportunities to orient the self "to reach accommodation with one's surroundings" (Sharr 32). The fourfold works as a compass for the four cardinal points of being: earth, sky, mortal, and divine. Like gathering the corners of a sheet into a parachute, the fourfold's quadrants come together proximally and highlight "the play of presence and withdrawl in our everyday life" (Rickert 168). Heidegger's fourfold becomes the surround in which dwelling occurs, which I explain in more detail in the next section, and slows the pervasive mechanisms of human control by acknowledging the earth, sky, and divinity that coexists with mortals.

The ruins of home might seem antithetical to this kind of gathering, and yet in the aftermath of disasters the ruins of home function precisely as gathering spaces for humans and nonhumans alike. Disasters undo the mechanisms of building and control, rearrange human arrangements, and expose the weaknesses in human construction. Heidegger's notion of dwelling in the fourfold includes an "activity conditioned by the land and the things of the world" which contains a manifest vitality that reaches across the subject-object divide and gathers the environment into a participatory, agential ecology. The fourfold does not give itself away, nor does the presence of the fourfold manifest itself entirely. The gathering of the fourfold that occurs after a disaster does not reveal the fourfold in its entirety. And yet, that is what makes it

[42] I am thinking here specifically of the social media platform *Pinterest*, which constantly updates new images of aesthetic gathering for all of the homemakers who engage in this platform. This might seem to be a gendered way of looking at the aesthetics of homemaking, but in fact many men use this platform as well to "pin" images of homemaking projects in addition to the stereotypical female homemaker.

so valuable. In tracing the fourfold, Rickert makes the crucial point that if we are "to dwell in such a manner [in the fourfold] as to attune ourselves to what is noninstrumental, nonrepresentational, then this withdrawl becomes essential" (244). Listening-with as a way of gathering and attending to the work of gathering further positions the human listener in a kind of humbleness that leads to material intimacy. Dwelling in the fourfold "makes being's concealment an occasion for joy and humbleness, thought and insight, guidance and action" (Rickert 244). Like the celebration of the catastrophe noted by Barthes and Solnit that I discussed in the previous chapter, listening-with the work of gathering leads to a material intimacy that manifests vitality in the aftermath of natural disaster.

The textual markers that I examine as listening-with gathering are located in encomium, or more specifically in the descriptions of heroism that are threaded throughout the narratives of disaster. Heroic human acts respond to the ruins of home as opportunities to develop an ethical relation between human and ruin and lead to more ethical relations between humans. Many narratives of the ruins of home function as encomiums of human responses to the disaster. This feature of listening-with positions the ruin and the human respondent as gatherers creating new connections and new communities. Encomiums function paratactically in the combination of seemingly disparate entities and ideas. The encomium brings together praise (and sometimes blame) for the actors in a given environment in ways that often lack connection, explanation, or conclusion. While the ancient form of the encomium encapsulates a life in a complete narrative, the form I examine here in listening-with gathering lacks completion. The focus on heroic acts in the face of the ruins of disaster attempt to show the ethical responses to ruin that are possible; however, they also articulate absences, disconnections, and affects that reveal the gathering of the fourfold in the search for the home and dwelling.

The Anatomy of Home

While habitation constitutes a significant human intra-action with mate(real)ity, homemaking moves habitation toward an even deeper ontological complexity. The ontological situatedness woven into the ordinary and repetitive movements of daily life layer memory and experience in the home place. A home is more than a place of domesticity; a home does not merely consist of bricks and mortar constructed as a shelter; nor does a home necessarily represent a gendered prison.[43] The word home can and does signify, in the words of Gaston Bachelard, "the topography of our intimate being" (xxxvi). I take this consideration of home toward dwelling to develop the material intimacy of listening-with ruin. If the home functions as the topography of the innermost form of being by acting as a material anchor in the world, then understanding this site is necessary to understand how listening-with the ruins of home operates as a response.

At its foundation, habitation, or the building of shelter in which to conduct and sustain the activities of everyday life, accommodates human needs. Human habitation occurs at and in every stage of civilization. Even prehistoric architectures, however primitive, mark sites of human habitation. I make no claim toward a universal definition of home or habitation. Rather, I believe that the making of habitation occurs in all forms of life—both human and animal. Habitation makes a place, or in Heidegger's words "a clearing," fit for settlement and use. This clearing, according to Rickert, "sketches an overall comportment within the world toward the world" that "creates an open region" (175). In the space of this clearing, building fixes a location for an individual, family, or community. Anthropologist Tim Ingold calls this the building

[43] Domestic space has been heavily criticized as a gendered prison, as it should be; however, I find that the concept of home functions much more broadly as the site of dwelling I am examining here.

perspective which adapts the environment according to need and use. Through this perspective, the clearing operates as a canvas, in some cases a blank one, on which the human imagination creates and designs modifications to the clearing to suit humanity. The environment of habitation exists as a given and stationary location upon which to shape structure to fit the enclosure of human beings. In Heidegger's essay, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," he describes habitation in terms of shelter and views the construction efforts in post-World War II Germany as "well planned, easy to keep, attractively cheap, open to air, light, and sun" (144). The limitation of building this kind of shelter rests in the overarching goal of building not only to control the environment but also to take shortcuts to construction as means of maintaining boundaries and securing places of enclosure.

Houses fit into this function of constructing boundaries of enclosure and have the potential to become homes through everyday use. The collision between human beings, objects, and the space they inhabit combine with memory and experience in an emotional connection that Jean Baudrillard argues "serve[s] for us as boundary markers for the symbolic configuration known as home" (14). The symbolic and the material coexist in the architectural features, in the resonance of daily life in its repetitive movements and memory, and in the discursive representations of the meaning of home. Bachelard figures the home, as a material anchor in the world, in terms of these boundary markers between the interiority of being and memory and the exteriority of the space. Bachelard describes the home as a reflection of the intimate interiority in which the "localization in the spaces of our intimacy" is an urgent matter in need of close inspection (9). In my poetic interlude preceding this chapter, I attempt a close inspection of the material and symbolic markers present in my grandmother's home after her death. In the "dust that remains," the objects of her home come to represent, for me, the interiority of my own

memory, my parents' memory, and my children's memory. My attempt to describe these objects also attempts to process the emotional terrain of my grandmother's death. The boundary markers in this instance between the symbolic and the material shift in my poem and express the struggle to make connections as my own location of home (interior and exterior) slides out of place.

Homemaking as a practice of keeping one's place solidifies the boundaries of identity, something I appreciated about my grandmother's house before she died. The enclosure of home, from this point of view, provides boundary markers that situate identity and position on solid footing. So, what happens when those boundaries are disrupted? How does one respond to a ruined environment that presents itself as a shifting, moving, and unpredictable becoming? Constructing houses works to keep disorder away by containing one's place in the world; however, as Stacy Alaimo warns, this is a dangerous delusion of permanence. The danger of domestication, she goes on, "may undergird the sense that environmentalism is only about . . . distant places or calendar-pretty" versions of home and environment and that the tidy spaces of developed cities and landscapes only continue the delusion (22). Traditional ways of homemaking serve to reinforce these calendar-pretty expectations and to shore up the anchors that make the home an expression of the solidity of an individual or family's identity. [44] Unfortunately, very little about any of these entities remains solid over time. Families change; individuals change; homes change. When these changes occur, it can leave fear and anxiety in its wake, particularly following the trauma of a natural disaster. These responses are certainly valid

[44] Robert Newirth's *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, a New Urban World* describes thriving communities in the context of exponential population growth and the ability of these communities to make use of the available means of building. These shadow cities look to the Western mind like ruins, and yet home-making, dwelling in the everyday, flourishes in what appears to be ruins. It is not the ruins alone that I am interested in here but rather the ecology of ruins (dis)composed by disaster and the attempts to (dis)compose them.

and have their own role to contribute to the networks following the disruption of home life. However, there are other possibilities as well.

One solution Alaimo proposes re-envisions the home as "a liminal zone, an invitation for pleasurable connection" that reverses the tidy interiority of domestic space by letting the outside in. Her discussion of architecture as a mode of protection moves toward vulnerability and exposure as part of an ethics of inhabiting the home. "Just as an ethics of inhabiting entails turning the human outdoors," she contends, "it also entails, conversely, inviting what is out of doors in" (32). This formulation of inhabiting can be seen in the ruins of disaster as the outside comes in (albeit without invitation) and those inhabiting that space must reckon with the ruin that becomes a collective refrain across the landscape.

In moments of dramatic (dis)composition, mate(real)ity shows up as an integral participant in habitation and homemaking and moves toward dwelling. The manner in which we dwell at home opens the vista of the home landscape to more than building, more than the everyday, more than mate(real)ity. Dwelling can certainly occur in the everyday as the structures of everyday life contribute to the manner in which we dwell. My earlier question surfaces again in this context: What happens when the everyday nature of dwelling is disrupted? How do we dwell in (dis)composition? Alaimo calls this "dwelling in the dissolve" as a way of dwelling in the Anthropocene which calls to mind the precarious nature of the current climate situation; however, I prefer discompose because the connotation of dissolve seems too ephemeral for the kind of dwelling I want to articulate (1). Dwelling, or homemaking, as Rickert describes, "is distributed, ecological, and attuned doing," and, as such, "we are gathered by things" in dwelling (225). This dwelling is "materially enworlded," a kind of "flourishing in an ecological key" (223). The disruption of the everyday and the ruins produced in this disruption flourish as a

condition of the "nearness and remoteness between men and things" ("BDT" 106). Architectural theorist Adam Sharr describes this kind of dwelling as "a challenge to resist extending the tentacles of human control ever wider into the world" (45). To consider dwelling in this way leads toward (dis)composition as a way of answering to the ruined home's call for this resistance. Dwelling in the fourfold slows the extension of human tentacles through an acknowledgement and awareness of the earth, sky, divine, and mortals revealed in the wasted space of home. Listening-with depends on dwelling in this ecological key.

One further characteristic of dwelling needs to be addressed here. Heidegger's discussion of dwelling in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" (a paratactic title), includes a key component in the word dwelling connected with the characteristic of home. Heidegger traces the etymology of the word *Bauen*, or building, to uncover the early Old English and High German roots that describe a fundamental property of *Bauen* as remaining in place. He then moves across verbs and nouns that layer the meaning of *Bauen*, in *Nachbar*, or neighbor, *buri, beuren, beuron*, all of which draw together to form dwelling. These layers coalesce to form "the way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth" (145). This form of dwelling connects to construction (in the form of building), to relations (in the form of neighbor), and cultivation (in the form of care). Dwelling as a means of construction, relation, and cultivation works "to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine" (145). These activities undergird the way of being that is dwelling and, rather than fix a sense of location in the home, mark a movement in and connection with the outside.

The home as a place of dwelling, particularly in terms of the location of identity, bridges listening-with and writing. Heidegger uses the image of the bridge to illustrate this betweenness as a literal and metaphorical vehicle to make the contrast between thing and object. A bridge

crosses a river at two points, anchored opposite each other on either side of a crossing. The banks that support the bridge come into being by virtue of their role as support. The object of the bridge can be admired aesthetically, but the 'thing' of the bridge changes the way dwelling occurs. For Heidegger this distinction demonstrates how things allow "people to negotiate and renegotiate their relationship with earth, sky, divinities, and mortals" (Sharr 49). As a revision of the following sentence by Adam Sharr to describe the relationship between object and thing, consider the substitution of the word 'bridge' with the word 'ruin:'

> The primarily visual object, [a ruin] is something to be admired; but as a Heideggarean thing, the significance of [a ruin] consists in how its physical presence can influence the parameters of people's daily lives (Sharr 148).

The thing in this case facilitates the conditions of existence in gathering the fourfold by enabling a movement across the literal and metaphorical and across building and dwelling. The ruin as an aesthetic object to be admired, such as the Coliseum, does not influence the daily life of its inhabitants. It could be argued that such an aesthetic object cannot be inhabited. On the other hand, the home with its resonances, attachments, and presence can influence the parameters of people's lives. Dwelling in (dis)composition, in the ruins of home, does not negate those influences; however, the ruins of home add dissonance, detachment, and absence to the mix.

Dwelling (Dis)composed

I turn now to some specific examples of listening-with silence, with absence, and with gathering. The comportment of listening-with in these examples can be seen in the textual markers that reveal the way that the paratactic praxis of listening-with dwells in (dis)composition. The life writers I examine here write in the spaces following the Galveston

Storm of 1900 and Hurricane Harvey. The narratives they construct move toward dwelling as they try to de-scribe, create linkages through metonym, and construct heroic stories that attempt to make meaning from the disorder of the ruins of their homes. These characteristics of listening-with appear in many disaster narratives, from nuclear fallout to tsunami to earthquake and fire. My goal here is to demonstrate these characteristics in the life narratives following these massive storms in order to elucidate the way that material intimacy appears in the textual responses to the rhetoricity of the ruins of home.

In the immediate aftermath of the Galveston Storm, the residents took to writing letters to friends and family to give them news of their safety and of their predicament. These letters present the raw and intimate response to the ruins produced by the storm and have an immediacy that reflects listening-with. Interviews with Harvey survivors in the immediate aftermath of the storm also contain markers of listening-with. These narratives show how the rhetoricity of the ruins of home resists description and how dwelling occurs, even in the withdrawal of the ruins, an acute kind of material intimacy. The further in time the writer is from the event, the more coherent the narratives become; thus, the narratives in the immediate aftermath provide the strongest sense of paratactic praxis. The letters and interviews contain a heightened level of (dis)composition as the self grows quiet and the description comes forward.

George Hodson immigrated to the United States from England in 1879, when he was twenty-four years old. Like many of Galveston's residents at the close of the 19th century, Hodson came to the city to start a new life. He married Alice Minot in 1892, and at the time of the storm, they had one daughter, Rebecca. Alice and Rebecca had gone to the mainland to visit relatives so Hodson weathered the storm on his own. His letter, written September 11 just a few days after the worst of the storm subsided, surveys the scene and attempts to de-scribe the ruins

that surround him for his wife. His first line reads: “I will begin by saying I am alive and unscratched” (Greene and Kelly 20). Immediately, Hodson directs his wife’s attention to his physical condition. He also uses the phrase “well and sound” to de-scribe himself. This emphatic statement of his condition shows his wife he is safe. However, in the next sentence he says, “it is such a story of wreck, ruin, and loss of life that I hardly know where to begin first” (20. Hodson struggles to find the language he desires for his description of his environment. In this paratactic proximity, Hodson places the story of wreck, ruin, and loss of life in juxtaposition with the condition of his body. This listening-with silence de-scribes the world around him. In this instance, the ‘it’ of the story becomes linked with the body before and the ruin after. The integrity of the self, Hodson’s self, which is “well and sound,” exists as only a part of the story.

He next recounts the efforts to move several individuals to safety, and after a harrowing, wet night, he remarks how grateful he is that his wife was not in town because, as he says, “I do not know what I would have done for the worst is not yet told” (21). This section of the letter marks some elements of listening-with gathering, which I will get to in a moment, but I want to focus first on the efforts Hodson makes to tell the worst, which ultimately fail to capture what he is describing in words. Hodson falters three times, first in the instance I just mentioned at the opening of the letter and two more times in his desire to de-scribe the ruins surrounding him. The second instance comes in reference to the ‘spectacle’ at Tremont and Market streets, which he says, “beggars description” (21). Here the act of de-scribing attempts to fuse the sensory details of his experience with the ruin around him. Sight, in the spectacle, reflects Hodson’s move to bear witness to the ruins, but he also moves from ruin to self and back again in an act of listening-with silence. Following his claim that the scene beggars description, Hodson fires off several short descriptions in paratactic style: “The entire roof is of the Ball School is off, the City

Hall is one mass of ruins, the Opera House is entirely gone, the First Baptist Church and St John's are a mass of ruin" (22). This list attempts to order the ruins of Hodson's home and his neighborhood into a series that ultimately cannot de-scribe the topography of Hodson's city or his being.

Hodson falters in his description because the familiar (his home and his city) have become so foreign to him that he cannot find the language to capture them for his audience. His wife and daughter do not have access to the scene and so cannot smell or touch or hear the destruction, but Hodson cannot seem to find a lexicon that articulates his sensory experience. Listening-with silence in this way is characterized by an affect so powerful that language becomes inadequate. He leaves out many details, silencing his own interpretation and understanding, because he admits in the third instance of descriptive failure: "this is something utterly beyond my ability to describe" (22). Hodson's dwelling is (dis)composed and in the starts and stops the hallmarks of listening-with silence mark the act of de-scribing.

Hodson's letter also carries markers of listening-with absence. The gaps between his acknowledgement of his own safety and the ruins he encounters remain in metonymic chains that move through the story he is trying to tell his wife. Both the topography of the city and the terrain of human mortality come together in these chains. The section above, which shows listening-with silence, also includes listening-with absence by using metonym. The metonym functions as a marker of absences and deferrals that serve as space for placing the emotional trauma of the event. Toward the end of the letter, Hodson reveals his connection to the ruins of his neighborhood. He lists his immediate acquaintances who survived the storm: the Conlons, the Shaws, and Fannie Peacock (who "gets off lightly by losing the tin roof"); but he qualifies these survivals with the phrase "but the house we lived in fell to the ground" (23). His list of those who

are safe is interrupted in the narrative by the destruction of his own home. The connections come together in this paragraph when Hodson makes a full stop: “I could go on indefinitely describing things but I must stop” (23). Of course, he does not go on indefinitely. He relies on the metonymic chains, of parts with parts, to represent the whole of the destruction and to link the relationships between Hodson and his neighbors, Hodson and his home (now a house in its ruin), and Hodson and his city (which contains “not a building . . . but has suffered more or less). These linkages contain no interpretive conjunctions, no move toward a conclusion. The series could in fact go on and on indefinitely.

Before I move on to another writer, I want to highlight the final way of listening-with in Hodson’s letter. The gathering of the fourfold in the ruins of the disaster functions as an opportunity for heroism and for the efforts of individuals to listen-with opportunities for gathering. Hodson’s efforts as he realizes that the homes in his neighborhood are unsafe appear as the residents take shelter in multiple locations as they try to survive the effects of the storm. Upon realizing the storm is going to devastate the island, Hodson’s concern moves to his friends, Mrs. Robinson, a fifty-four-year-old widow, and her single friend Kate Jenkins. These women were preparing to take shelter in the Marwitz House, a castle-style mansion that had been converted to a rooming house for women. In an effort to offer sound advice, Hodson encourages them to stay in their own home. He says, “I was afterwards sorry I did not let them go, as I finally had to take them to the brick house, and this was one of the most serious and dangerous tasks I have ever had to undertake” (20). The home, in the process of being ruined, provides the conditions for Hodson to gather the people and things together in an act of care and concern. He does not write this as a typical encomium by praising himself for his heroic efforts. Hodson takes an attitude of listening-with the gathering that acknowledges the precariousness of the ruin and

works in concert with it. The parataxis here is in the connections between human and ruin that resist narrative conclusion or completeness. Hodson's story of heroism includes silences about his own power and leaves meaning exposed. His wife, the audience for this letter, must invest in locating the absences, the things he does not say about his trauma or his emotional exhaustion, in the ruins of their home.

Sarah Hawley, a native of Galveston, records her description of the storm and its ruins in a letter to her parents, the Davis's, who were vacationing in Europe in September of 1900. Hawley, her husband, and their children were staying in the Davis's home at the time of the storm, and her letter reflects a deep anxiety about the condition of the home. She closes her letter by asking her mother to "think we acted wisely and not thing us neglectful of your house and things" (Greene and Kelly 36). Hawley attempts to de-scribe the ruins of home contain metonymic chains that work as deferrals similar to Hodson's account. Hawley includes more details but also displays the paratactic praxis of listening-with.

Listening-with silence appears in a section of the letter in which Hawley attempts to de-scribe the ruins of her parent's home room by room. This concern for the material condition of the house shapes the content of the letter as Hawley attempts to provide a detailed account of the damage. Hawley's description provides her with an opportunity to defer her own state of mind by focusing on the state of the ruin. First, her sister Mary's room lost the windows and blinds, but "that is the only damage done to Mary's room except a few spots on the ceiling" (30). Then comes a paragraph devoted to her mother's room where the majority of the damage is in the walls and on the ceilings. "The Parlor and the hall are right good, also the sitting room," she continues, "the north room ceiling is wet and the dining room hall too" (30). These descriptions continue to catalogue the ruin for her mother until she ends with a short sentence to soften the

blow: “But my dear Mother you got off very easily for most people haven’t a roof to cover them nor a thing to wear” (31). The exposure here reflects the deep intimacy with the home and the necessity of it, while listening-with silence on the part of explaining or describing that intimacy. The description in this section of the letter functions in part as a silence on the subject of Hawley and her emotional response to the ruins and in part as a metonym of linking familiar to familiar in searching through the remains of her home.

Another section of the letter demonstrates listening-with absence as the properties of metonym show up in the lists of those effected by the storm. “We hear horrors every hour too awful to think on,” she says after reassuring her mother that they got off easily (31). The delay in coming to an account of the loss of life acts as a deferral, a way to contextualize the suffering her parents might experience upon returning home. However, Hawley cannot escape the metonymic fusion between the ruin of homes and the ruin of lives. As Hawley moves to account for family and friends, she intersperses the architectural ruin with the human loss. The Porters are first in this list: “We went in to see the Porters and found their house off the piles on the ground full of mud and plaster two inches thick” (31). This statement of the condition of the Porters’ house (are they alive of dead?) connects Hawley’s difficulty processing the scene, “I had to keep my eyes turned from many a sight,” to the architectural ruin in a move that listens-with absence. The subsequent sentences follow a similar movement. “The hospital is badly injured and over one hundred patients dead” follows the mystery of the Porters.

> “The forts are nothing but mounds of dirt, at the camp out at the Denver thirty-five soldiers were lost.”
>
> “The Davenport children, Miss Rebecca Harris, Mrs. Heideman’s house is no where to be found and she is most likely killed.”

"Mrs. Kopperl's house is a ruin—roof sliced off and the pillars standing without support. The chimney fell into the dining room and all most [sic] killed Nana and family."

"Mr. Palmer lost wife and child. The Comptons have a ruin for a house also Eichlitz."

Each move in this series (and there are more that I have not included) joins the disjointed, from death to ruin and back again. In between these lists are fragments about Hawley's own state and her difficulty getting passage to the mainland. This fragmented narrative links the pieces of Hawley's childhood home and memory by way of association but without the connective tissue of conjunctions or interpretations. Fragments, such as the "men everywhere are ruined" and "most have lost relatives," list facts and observations, but the affects remain in the gaps between them (34). The combination of men and ruin in this example highlights the eventual chain of association that Hodson works through as well. People and ruin become intertwined in an intimate series that channels listening-with absences.

Hawley's letter also discusses listening-with gathering. In several places throughout her narrative, she mentions instances of people gathering in the ruins. One inclusion in Hawley's letter, which appears in many letters, is the gathering of people and ruin from all sectors of society. The social landscape of turn of the century Galveston reflected the racial divisions prominent in the rest of the country. Hawley mentions the dissolution of these social boundaries in the gathering of people from all walks of life—a subtle encomium to the power of the ruin to function as a gathering force of earth, sky, mortality, and the divine. Hawley and her husband take in people from the neighborhood to offer what little shelter and food they have to offer. "While I was sitting holding son," she says, "two colored women passed famished" (33). Hawley gives them what little food she can and then later gives a straw hat to another woman and invites her to bring her family to stay in the house. Hawley's attention to those around her and to the

clean-up efforts in the ruins of the homes in the area constitute a listening-with that gathers the fourfold.

Other letters chart a similar fractured course in these ways of listening-with. In a letter to his wife and daughter on September 14, Martin Nicholson makes only one comment on the devastation: "The ruin and desolation is indescribable—the loss of life appalling" (43). The dash in this sentence marks the difficulty in de-scribing in a similar way to Hodson's. Walter Davis, a salesman passing through Galveston at the time of the storm, spent the duration of the storm trying to survive in the Tremont Hotel mentioned by Hodson. Between eight hundred and one thousand people took shelter in the Tremont, and the forms of listening-with become more convoluted in the mess of bodies—human and architectural—thrown together during the storm. Davis musters "the courage to venture out" after the storm passes and finds that "the newspapers cannot describe half and have only given a partial description of the calamity" (47). His mention of this wreckage precedes his mention of the "dead bodies . . . everywhere to be seen in all kinds of shapes" (47). These writers move through the places they are familiar with, linking architectural bodies to human bodies, and attempt to give voice to the things that resist language.

The letters written in the week immediately following the storm carry an intimate portrayal of the limitations of language to convey the spatial disruptions that these writers encounter. James Brown tells his sisters in his letter that "human thought cannot grasp it [the destruction]" (64). Perhaps, he is right that in the aftermath of a disaster language lacks the capacity to contain material intimacy. The difficulty describing, linking, and gathering threads its way through all the letters I have examined. This difficulty exemplifies the dramatic association between ruin and mortality, between speaking and listening, and between inhabiting and

dwelling. Not only do these letters follow a pattern of listening-with, they also follow a path toward (dis)composed dwelling in material intimacy.

Hurricane Harvey survivors use similar patterns to describe, link, and gather the weather, writing, and loss associated with the storm. The similarity between the two storms makes them an interesting comparison in how listening-with functions as a component of material intimacy. One key difference in the ecology of ruin present after these storms is the introduction of technology, which I discussed in the last chapter. The technology available in 2017 prevented the death toll from rising above 100, although the property damage due to flooding matches comparably to the Galveston Storm. This difference shifts the tenor of the narratives told in the aftermath of the storm as the emphasis on listening-with gathering comes forward as a primary principle of material intimacy and of making meaning from (dis)composed dwelling.

My experience mucking a house post-Harvey, de-scribed at the beginning of the previous chapter, contains some of these characteristics of listening-with as well. While not confronted with a scene of bodies and rubble tumbled into heaps along the beach, I still found myself listening-with the silences, absences, and gatherings in the spaces of ruin. The effort I made in the space of ruin left by Hurricane Harvey required an acknowledgement of the material Other, the nonhuman Other, in concert with the homeowner who experienced the loss. This relation with the Other also required an ethics that identified that Other as one with ontological value. In contrast to my poem at the beginning of this chapter, the narrative of my experience of entering the ruined home of a stranger offered a different kind of emotional resonance, one based more on the death of the house than the death of a loved one.

Still, the intimate spaces we call home invite a reverence. In many cultures, that reverence is displayed by removing one's shoes. In my own experience, cleaning the debris in

this woman's home felt reverent. In fact, many of the site leaders who were directing volunteers reminded those working to be respectful of these people's homes in a manner they might display at a funeral or other solemn occasion. We found ourselves whispering and delicately lifting items from the floor. Even the sound of the removal of drywall, which requires force and heavy tools, dampened in the dark and cluttered space. Why do these work crews fall silent? Why do they speak to each other in hushed tones? What is it about the space that asks the humans to enter with care? My contention is that listening-with silence in this liminal space, the hallmark of material intimacy, became the primary affect in entering the ruin of home.

The next example, drawn from a blog post entitled "Elegy for a Home," encapsulates the powerful impact of listening-with absence. The writer's family evacuated before the storm and came home to a house full of water. The distinction here between house and home constitutes the loss, the absence, present in the narrative. Jennifer U writes:

> But this wasn't just a loss of "stuff." We had a life here. It looked a certain way and smelled a certain way and followed a pattern and a routine. We had habits and favorite places to sit on the couch that I bought right out of law school and had sat on for the past 14 years, first with my cherished dog and then with one child, then two, and then three. There were mornings with coffee and cartoons under quilts on that couch. There were beloved stuffed animals that were worn from years of "love" almost to the point of "becoming real" in that very *Velveteen Rabbit* sort of way {another book lost}. It was "stuff" but it was the stuff we loved and it was the background canvas on which we painted our lives.
>
> And it's gone . . . discarded like it, and the life we lived there, meant nothing.

The description of the house listens-with silence, but also contains metonymic chains that attempt to order and record the remains of the life that the family lived before the flood. Jennifer U's transition from the previous paragraph to the next one I have included below demonstrates the affective and traumatic part of this response to the ruins of home:

> It's in a rotting pile filling up our front yard, halfway up to the house. It's covered with flies, it smells, and human vultures have dug through all of the bags and scattered them around so that every time the kids and I drive into my driveway, we see again a beloved item from our past, a Christmas toy or a baby blanket and the memory of what that thing was to us comes flooding back, superimposed on the vision of it sitting among a pile of garbage, waiting to be taken to the nearest landfill.

The contrast between the home that the family made before the storm and the house that it became after comes together in the absences in the ruins of the life they lived. The task of sifting through the stuff, trying to find some meaning or order to the destruction, and finding the ruin causes Jennifer U to mourn the loss of her home. This is (dis)composed dwelling's most affective state of mind. In these two paragraphs, the textual markers of listening-with carry the weight of the family's past experiences and also bears the weight of the future. The closing of the post looks forward with hope to a time that the family can have dinner at the dining room table and remember the time that Harvey flooded their home.

The mate(real)ity of the ruin shows up in these textual markers of listening-with. The emphasis on the silence and absence in these narratives, along with the gathering of earth, sky, mortals, and divinity, uncover the embedded nature of material intimacy in the ruins of disaster. Jennifer U even remarks that if she had only known what the home would become, she would have paused before evacuating to appreciate, to see and remember, what the home was like

before it was ruined. This longing marks the power of the ruins within the ecology that reflects a rhetoricity and the necessity for a response. While the responses of these survivors do not resemble a traditional rhetorical response, they respond to the address made by the mate(real)ity of ruin.

Listening-with facilitates the material intimacy necessary to relate to the mate(real)ity of the world in an ethical way. This comportment leads to intra-action that has long-term residual effects. In many ways, the move to listen-with the ruins by writing in (dis)composition makes meaning through language in ways that support a constructivist view. However, the impetus for the writing, the spatial orientation of the writer and the intimate engagement with the texture of that reality, shapes the writing as the ruin reveals itself in the textual markers that permeate the response.

In the next chapter, I shift to a future-oriented examination of textual markers as I wander with and among the ruins of the future in post-apocalyptic fiction. This shift, a sharp instance of paratactic praxis, moves away from the immediacy of first-hand accounts of ruin and takes on a wandering of its own. Imagined ruin contains its own markers of bearing witness, listening-with, and wandering that develop a material intimacy through fictional accounts of global disaster. These narratives are instructive for the ways in which we might find more ethical ways of engaging with mate(real)ity and respond better to its rhetoricity.

Interlude: June 17, 2014

I took the metro to Père Lachaise alone. I tried to go with a partner, but we didn't make it in time. My efforts to order my trip included consulting the map of the appropriate Metro stations, the purchase of the correct tickets, and little else. I did not prepare a bag for the day with maps of the cemetery, background information on what I would do there, or even snacks. I entered the gate between two large stone walls with a small bag across my shoulder, determined to let fate direct me around the 109 acres of the buried past. Just inside the gate, I found a map with a plaque that showed a list of famous people resting under the headstones in the crowded landscape. A group of visitors gathered around a box to grab paper copies of a map as they made plans to visit certain graves. I decided to walk ahead and wander the cemetery, only briefly noting a few names I wanted to find. Surely, I could find my way along the brick paths.

The initial entry into the cemetery contains wide brick lanes that direct the visitor to neatly arranged grave markers. Just past the entry the tidy paths begin to crack and lose their own way. I picked my way through the labyrinth of decaying, moss-covered stones and glass trying to find . . . something. At first, my excitement carried me forward as I brushed aside debris on fallen and broken stones to see what lay underneath. About fifteen minutes into the cemetery, I lost my way. The cemetery's large trees close in over the stones, and the vines growing up from the ground merge with the floor. The canopy created by the tunnels of green make it feel claustrophobic. I soon felt disconcerted at uncertainly choosing paths only to find them ending in a crumbled grave marker. Many of the burial sites are unrecognizable as such, and each carries traces of its time. The newer spaces, less than one hundred years old, are clearer of debris and easier to navigate. The oldest parts of the cemetery are a conglomeration of tree roots, broken

monuments, and low-growing flowers and mosses. The loss of human energy in these places makes room for other life to spring up on the foundations of human entropy.

I made it to a far wall, a landmark I felt I could follow. Placing my hand along the wall, I kept to the path created by the structure. At least, I could touch a marker of direction. In the eastern corner of a section of graves in neat rows, I found Gertrude Stein.

Startled by the name carved on the upright stone, I stopped and stared for a moment. I know her name. Her poetry stands the test of time, I think. I'm not sure who she is in this shrine. She is a she but not a person. The stone marking her name speaks her into the world, and the rocks that fill the rectangular bed hint that something lies beneath. How does this stone remember a life?

I continued along the tidy grid of paths I found moving in the direction that I thought was the entrance. I came to a headstone naming Edith Piaf. Her grave along a clear throughway held fresh flowers, and I found more people milling about taking photographs. Like Stein, a name, a she, an entity unknown. Uncomfortable with the sounds of people and the juxtaposition of human life and death, I plunged back into the undergrowth. A man began walking next to me, chatting away about how he knew where to go and how he could show me all of the most famous names. Suspicious, I walked away from him certain he would demand payment for revealing the burial places of those people wanted to know. Still, he led me to a large monument labeled "Stroganoff" and eagerly pointed to what was the heiress's mausoleum. What kind of satisfaction comes from visiting the dead? In this place of decay and the slow violence of time, I wondered what I was doing there among strangers.

By this time, the sun had grown warm, and my stomach was churning. I desperately wanted a drink of water, and the muggy air rising up from the dank earth did little to quench my thirst. I began to think I might never find my way out. Lost. Tired. Disoriented. Homesick. Hungry. Frustrated. I did not know how to get back to the beginning, to wander my way toward a destination. I eventually found a chapel atop a hill, situated in an open space. I could see the cemetery stretching out in all directions. At least from that vantage point, I could figure a direction to go. I sat on a bench and stared out over the trees that obscured many of the layers of stone underneath.

My initial intent was to wander meditatively through this monument to death as a searching. I had an inkling of finding Jim Morrison's grave owing to my love of The Doors *and, perhaps, finding Balzac or La Fontaine. What I found instead was my own fear of mortality, my own thoughts drifting toward death. I wandered the necropolis for two hours, climbing over*

crumbling headstones, reasserting my own living embodiment, as I encountered the ruins of lives lived. I thought a lot about all of the people, the bodies of the famous and not famous, the known and obscure. All dead. As my stomach turned and my limbs grew weak, my body pressed me to consider the effects of spending the day within these ruins.

Chapter Four

Broken Paths: Wandering-Toward the Ruins of the Apocalypse

Because survival is insufficient.

Emily St. John Mandel, *Station Eleven*

Even in a desolate landscape, such as the one in Chernobyl, the obstinacy of life protrudes from the ground. Thirty-two years have passed since a controlled safety test went awry and nuclear fallout spread across the power plant and into the surrounding towns. The emptiness of the city of Pripyat can be seen in Jorge Franganillo's photography exhibit "Chernobyl: City of Silences." His images chronicle the evolution of plant life as it invades and takes root in the abandoned city. Just ten kilometers from the epicenter, the inhabitants of Pripyat evacuated immediately after the meltdown. The residents of Chernobyl, the city named for the power plant and thirty kilometers away, evacuated a week later.

Figure 9: From "Chernobyl: City of Silences" Jorge Franganillo

These cities were not visibly damaged by the accident in the nuclear reactors. They became ghost towns, full of architecture, artifacts, and radiation, but no human life. The residents of Pripyat were told they would be able to return to their homes within a few day, but they never went back. Many of them left everything they owned. On the thirtieth anniversary of the disaster in 2016, Kim Willsher reported that the residents remember being "advised to take the minimum: identity papers, documents, food and clothing. None ever returned to live in Pripyat, declared too radioactive for human habitation for at least 24,000 years." The wanderers of the disaster, the evacuees, eventually settled in a nearby town built just for them—Slavutych. The individuals displaced by the ruined atmosphere comment on their love for Slavutych but qualify that it will always be their second home. In fact, evacuees tell this narrative often, of leaving behind their home and being unable to find a replacement. In a more recent example from hurricane evacuees, reporter Jenna Lyons' interviews of four families evacuated from New Orleans after Katrina to the San Francisco Bay Area speak of the loss of their city and the difficulty of planting new roots in California. After resettling in San Francisco, Amber McZeal still says, "Louisiana will always be home. My roots aren't here. My roots are there. My entire family's from there." The other evacuees make similar comments. Like the residents of Slayutych, they are forever wanderers.

In the intervening years, unlike New Orleans post-Katrina, Chernobyl has lain quiet—the area still quarantined from human inhabitants. However, life has gone on among the ruins of the city of Chernobyl and the power plant itself. Michael Marder recounts his experience with the radiation from Chernobyl in *The Chernobyl Herbarium: Fragments of an Exploded Consciousness*. His reflections on his own experience move alongside global nuclear concerns. Photograms of the plant life at Chernobyl, taken by Anaïs Tondeur, illustrate Marder's

fragmented personal and philosophical meanderings on the disaster. These photograms trace lines of light across an exposed page to reveal the shapes of plants growing in the nuclear fallout zone as markers of the living growth in the exclusion zone. Marder's narrative fragments occupy the spaces between the photograms to juxtapose the text and the images as a rumination on the plant consciousness that remains in the city like a "sarcophagus encasing the reactor mangled by the accident and like our pre-Chernobyl systems of thought shattered by what happened there" (28). The plant life among the ruins of Chernobyl calls us "to come back to our senses" and "to awaken and, literally, to be reunited with the sensuous experience from which we have been expelled, to reenter our senses and to re-inhabit them" (62). Marder's description of life after catastrophe centers on the ontological situatedness of exposure and the resilience of life—human and nonhuman—and invokes wandering as a marker of material intimacy. Marder's invocation of plants along with Tondeur's arresting images of them produce a paratactic response to ruin and reveal a lesson from Chernobyl. "Plants teach us that there is no infinite growth," Marder explains, "no growth without decay, itself the precondition for future growth" (48). Rather than a rejection of ruin as merely a defective product to be destroyed, Marder's collection of fragments resituates ruin within a cycle of building and decay that argues for resilience.

First-person accounts of ruin, such as Marder's philosophical memoir and the accounts I have chronicled in the previous chapters, recount the past and reflect on the meaning of ruins as they already exist. In contrast, post-apocalyptic fiction explores the imagined ruins of the future. While first-person accounts offer an immediacy and an intimacy associated with events that have already happened, post-apocalyptic novels offer an imagined landscape of ruin that calls the future into the present and circulate possible futures for consideration by the reader. I turn to post-apocalyptic fiction in this chapter to locate the textual makers of material intimacy in

imagined futures and to understand the temporal parataxis that works through these novels to blur the lines between past, present, and future. The hypothetical nature of post-apocalyptic fiction (speculative fiction as it is sometimes called) calls into question the predicative hypotheses that arise in many climate change narratives. Of course, in some cases the fictional narrative reinscribes the predictive, scientific narrative. The novels I examine in this chapter function more in what Kevin Porter calls the prospective function of hypothesis, that is to "make sense, however fallibly and perhaps even 'deceptively,' of what we are doing in a present that confronts the *futural"* (94). These hypotheses have the potential to become true based on subsequent action that fulfills the initial statement. Much like the kinds of bearing witness and listening-with that I have discussed so far, writing the future also displays an intimacy with mate(real)ity in the act of writing the ruin. However, unlike these more immediate actions, wandering-toward as a paratactic praxis operate at a farther distance from mate(real)ity and thus the "prospective hypothesis is not *hidden* from us, but *deferred*, for subsequent events cannot be *unveiled*, but only *awaited*' (96). The prospects of wandering-toward the future can fulfill a present trajectory based on the present perspective.

Survivors of apocalypse exist in that future in what Jean-Luc Nancy calls "the sphere of a projection of possibilities at once fantastical and technological that have their own ends, or more precisely whose ends are openly for their own proliferation" (*Fukushima* 12). Nancy's commentary on the nuclear disaster at Fukushima echoes the sentiments of Michael Marder. Both writers argue that humanity has risked its existence through the development of powerful and uncontainable technologies and a concentration of energy toward destructive ends. Marder calls for "a fundamental rethinking of the meaning of energy and its procurement" whereas Nancy relates rethinking energy not just to the general use of nuclear energy but to "the nature of

the general disposition of force in this world we have given ourselves" (24). The systems currently in place, existential and technological, then are moving toward entropy; at some point they will experience energy loss and fall into disorder. The loss of energy in the systems of the world catalyzes the apocalyptic event.

I open this chapter with Chernobyl specifically to place this past event within the stream of apocalyptic atmospheres that inform the affectability of the ruined landscapes in those atmospheres. I follow Ben Anderson's conceptualization of "affective atmospheres" as "the uncertain, disordered, shifting, and contingent—that which never quite achieves the stability of form" (78). The term atmosphere can invoke a variety of intangible presences from the force of wind to the collective affects that circulate in groups or spaces. Apocalyptic atmospheres, as I demonstrate in this chapter, provoke and affect collective and individual emotional responses to ruins as both a spatial and temporal form of the chronotope. This conception of atmospheres also echoes Thomas Rickert's "ambient rhetoric" that includes "the materiality of our ambient environs, our affective comportments, the impact of that which escapes conscious notice, and the stumbling block presented by the finitude of knowledge when facing the plentitude of the world and its objects" (x-xi). Rickert's definition of ambience accentuates the spatial nature of the 'world' and invokes the attention to the intangible tangibility of the atmosphere. I use the word *atmosphere* throughout this chapter to describe the ways in which these various intangible influences show up in post-apocalyptic fiction.

In this chapter, I also address the temporal parataxis of the atmosphere of ruin before, during, and after the apocalypse to examine the nature of wandering as a practice of material intimacy. The post-apocalyptic chronotope, as a method of analyzing apocalyptic atmospheres drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's generic system of the chronotope, situates my analysis of

wandering-toward as a paratactic praxis that exists in the very real present of Chernobyl and in the novels I consider. The chronotope as a means of analysis locates the spatial and temporal markers that express the unity of the work and the way that the human image interacts with those markers. Time, particularly at the end of modernity—or "ruin time," as I describe it in this chapter—moves at a different pace and operates spatially for the human wanderer or the hero of the novel. Like the survivors of the accident at Chernobyl, post-apocalyptic wanderers inhabit a space of displacement; they can never go home. I describe the wanderer as the human image in the chronotope and connect this wandering to Heidegger's Being-Toward. I then move through the space of the apocalypse and its related space of ruin as contributors to the apocalyptic atmosphere that I address as the anatomy of the apocalypse and as a maker of displacement. The apocalypse represents both the spatial and temporal elements of the post-apocalyptic chronotope. The fictional accounts of wandering that comprise the "broken paths" taken at the close of the chapter wander-toward an analysis of the post-apocalyptic chronotope in each form of wandering. Three modes of wandering-toward—the poetic, mnemonic, and ontographic—demonstrate the ways that the wanderers spatialize their temporal paratactic experience and move in and through material intimacy. Each broken path consists of temporal paratactic markers that delineate the mode of wandering-toward material intimacy.

I shift in this chapter to a series of fictional accounts of the atmosphere of ruin present in post-apocalyptic landscapes because these texts work in the realm of imagined future and draw inspiration and mate(real)ity from the past and present. Because the previous chapters dealt primarily with first-person accounts of ruin experience the shift here might seem overtly disjointed. However, as I said before, the textual markers in the first-person accounts that demonstrate the practices of bearing witness and listening-with also appear in these fictional

accounts as well as lead toward vulnerability and toward dwelling more ethically with the environment—toward material intimacy. As I have described these moves, and attempted to perform them, I have worked to practice material intimacy even as I have located it in the narratives under consideration. In this chapter, I examine the potential futures in post-apocalyptic fiction to locate similar moves and to explore the rhetorical presence of ruins in the imagination.

For both the characters in the novels and the reader, the atmosphere of ruin in these narratives implicates Being-toward-death, or Being-toward-the-end, as a consequence of a fragile environment. Ultimately, this final chapter wanders-toward an indeterminate understanding of the future and attends to the apocalyptic atmospheres that ambiently influence our contemporary understanding of climate change, natural disaster, biohazards, and other threats that propel our current apocalyptic atmosphere. With these challenges in mind, I examine the speculations of the 'after' in post-apocalyptic fiction as paratactic wandering-toward that engages both witnessing and listening, but also plunges forward into uncertainty and hope.

To Wander

In contrast to the disorientation produced in the immediacy of ruins of disaster, post-apocalyptic ruins occupy a speculative space that wanders away from this immediacy, and while the 'before' always figures into the narrative, the wandering occurs at a distance from the intense destruction of architecture caused by the shattering force of hurricanes and other dramatic events. The temporal entanglements in this chapter are complex. I develop ruin time more fully later in the chapter. This section concerns itself with both the acting of wandering-toward and the human image of the post-apocalyptic chronotope that performs that act. The immediacy of bearing witness and listening-with engages in a different level of material intimacy than wandering but is no less impactful. Rather than the stillness of witnessing, wandering's presence draws itself

outward in a sensory engagement with the space that reflects and contemplates the ruin's relationship to the self and to history as a movement toward discovery rather than an anchoring to a specific destination.

To wander then is to embrace the challenges that come from uncertainty and exposure by suspending destination. The movement, the 'toward' of both the state of mind and the kinesthetic engagement, paradoxically lacks direction and destination. In fact, a condition of entropy as a physical process and a concept *is* uncertainty and exposure but also hope. Entropy does not follow an ordered trajectory toward closure; rather, the release of energy that arises from entropy leaves possibilities open. Of course, death as the ultimate closure is one of those possibilities, but it is one of many. To wander, particularly in post-apocalyptic fiction, means to confront a variety of encounters that reveal the individual wanderer's Being-toward-death. Heidegger's formulation of Being-toward-death as the penultimate state of Being reflects, in part, the inescapable nature of ruin and the culmination of entropy. Being-toward-death is a facing, an awakening to and acknowledgement of ends. Levinas describes this Being in terms of finitude "in which the finite being is moved *by* its finitude *for* that finitude itself" (131). Levinas situates this mode of Being in the context of fear for the death of the Other, yet fear of one's own death permeates the relation between beings. The collective wandering of Being-toward-death, present in all matter, exacerbates this fear, and the movement toward finitude often creates conditions of exploitation, greed, and deprivation.

My construction of wandering-toward, as a paratactic praxis of openendedness, resists Heidegger's Being-toward-death as the fundamental state of Being-toward. Rather than Being-toward-death I want to explore the idea that the fundamental state of Being-toward is survival. Heidegger's Being-toward takes no less than twenty different forms in that Dasein can be-toward

just about anything including itself, but these different formulations are concentrates of Being-toward-the-end. Eschatology, which I address in the next section, figures this end in the apocalypse. Heidegger's Being-toward-death is inescapable because of entropy; however, I want to reorient this way of Being-in-the-world to consider a wayfaring or wandering-toward that acknowledges the towards-death but embarks anyway and endures. For my purposes, wandering-toward aligns most closely with Dasein's "essential tendency towards closeness" (*BT* 140). Heidegger explains this closeness as ontological de-severence that "amounts to making the farness vanish—that is, making the remoteness of something disappear, bringing it close" (139). Without a fixed end point, such as a program of reconstruction or a reconstitution of human systems, wandering-toward ruin brings things close and as a mode of Being-in-the-world is "guided beforehand *by the circumspection* of concern" (143 emphasis original). The distinctions here between wandering-toward and Being-toward come primarily from the distinction between the former as the scale-free movement toward the future and the latter as toward the end point of death. Heidegger leaves room for this distinction in his explanation of Being-toward-death but anchors his state to the "constant threat to itself arising from Dasein's ownmost individualized Being" (*BT* 310). This state manifests as anxiety, and post-apocalyptic narratives certainly project that anxiety into the post-apocalyptic ruin. However, this projection also disperses energy throughout the system, leaving room for new injections of energy to arise. Post-apocalyptic storytelling injects this energy through the relationship between humans, ruins, and other entities—the wandering survivors.

Wandering-toward then constitutes an embodied movement and a state of being, like the verbs bear witness and listen-with that I have already discussed. The movement of the body, a perambulatory movement, puts one foot in front of the other, touches the ground, forges a path.

The state of being suspends the destination and as a verb embraces the uncertainty of the unknown while moving toward the unmapped places the wanderer encounters. Anthropologist Tim Ingold describes this as wayfaring "where inhabits meet, trails are entwined . . . every entwining is a knot, and the more that lifelines are entwined, the greater the density of the knot" (148). For Ingold each knot is a place, and the "threads from which they are tied are lines of wayfaring" (149). The wanderer's movements are these lines, but the lines do not have to follow a straight course or a course at all. Rather, the lines crisscross and encounter each other paratactically and unpredictably. Post-apocalyptic ruins occupy some of those knots, and as the wanderer approaches the knots, he or she must negotiate the entanglements of paths present there as a kinesthetic challenge and as a state of being uncertain.

Ruins are not typically thought of in terms of forward motion; in fact, it might seem odd to include them as part of the wandering. Most often, ruins are seen as relics of the past and not much more. Ruin scholar Andreas Huyssen calls the ruin a cipher for the nostalgia of the past and argues that the "contemporary obsession with ruins hides a nostalgia for an earlier age that had not yet lost its power to imagine other futures" (7). From this point of view, ruin nostalgia dismisses the inevitability of decay in the future of all life and instead attempts to revisit a time before the ruin. Yet, ruins can invite the wanderer to consider the progress of decay *as progress*. Subject to entropy, the material reality of ruins reflects a physical reminder of temporality and change. When we view ruins as static or fixed spaces (as many people often do, especially in photographic representations), we miss the potential for entropy to become a paratactic experience of fragmentation that invites material intimacy.

Before I move on to the human figures that wander this chapter, I want to make a few more distinctions concerning orientation, navigation, and space. First, the prepositions 'toward'

and ‘through’ mark two different movements. In most cases, in this chapter, the ‘toward’ happens ‘through.’ Wandering-toward, in this case, is both an orientation of movement and a stance of experience rather than a technique of navigation. Brian Massumi explains this sense of navigation in terms of what he says “is rotten on the shelf of spatial-experience theory” (180). His issue with more popular conceptions of spatial experience arises from the difference in proprioceptive sense and visual sense. Theories of navigation that emphasize visual cues as the primary mode of orienting diminish the capacity of other sense systems. Massumi challenges the overreliance on sight in this mode of movement. Massumi uses an example of an individual making her way to the refrigerator to find food and argues that “orienting is more like intuitively homing in on the food with your eyes closed than it is like reading a map” (179). Likely, most of us could close our eyes and could autopilot our way to the fridge (especially if hungry) without even the visual memory of furniture placement and relying on sight as a guide to navigate the path to the fridge. Movement and proprioceptive sense, he goes on, enables the mover to combine both the cognitive mapping available through vision and the “nonvisual sea of self-related movement” that brings the mover in direct contact (feet on the ground) with the space. Both systems of navigation contain holes, empty spots on both physical and intuitive maps, that require reorientation. They also represent temporal collapses in the past memory of a space and the present experience of the space. This is another uneasy paratactic construction that troubles the directionality and linearity of navigation.

Massumi’s exploration of the human’s relation to buildings and to the navigation of space accentuates the affective properties of the ‘world.’ In the case where landmarks, architectural features, and systematized pathways are disrupted, the human enters into a state of wandering-toward relying on proprioception and other senses that take precedence over cognitive

mapping—the lack of familiarity in a ruin produces a different kind of relation here than a reliance solely on visual cues. These movements engage the three somatic senses—vestibular, proprioception, and kinaesthesia—in an intense and unpredictable responsivity. Disruptions to these senses through intra-action with ruin throw the wanderer off balance (vestibular disruption), challenge the body's orientation in the space (proprioception), and impede the body's muscular effort to move through the space (kinaesthesia). Mark Paterson's study on the phenomenology of these senses describes the "affective relationship between built space and individual resonances" and considers how this affective relationship works both ways as we touch and affect space and "we are correspondingly touched and affected" (101). From this point of view, ruins similarly produce sensations for the human wanderer through an intimate engagement with ruined forms. If, as Paterson argues, "the transcription of properties of the body into material properties of stone and structure" constitute a proximal intimacy with architecture, then ruins dramatically alter the transcription process (99). Wandering-toward, as a paratactic practice of engaging with the indeterminacy of ruin, facilitates the reorientation, rebalance, and renegotiation of that relationship.

However, the indeterminacy of wandering often leads to suspicions surrounding wandering as a practice. Societal pressures often restrict or punish the wanderer because throughout history "the wanderer was perceived as an uncanny figure, whose identity it was difficult to 'locate'" (Edensor 86). In our age of digital navigation services, it seems antithetical to the rhythm of everyday life to choose a meandering movement in the world. The ubiquitous nature of GPS systems seemingly always ready-to-hand creates a consistent barrier to wandering. Amy Propren's exploration of the visual-material rhetorics of GPS concludes that the use of GPS has "real and corporeal impacts for the navigational choices that we make while driving" (156).

The mediation of the bodily experience of navigation by the GPS works as a posthuman knowledge-making that co-constructs "an interactive agency that has the capacity to inform purposeful decision-making" (156). Propren's argument tackles the entanglements of navigation from a posthuman perspective but neglects the ontological situatedness of being lost. GPS informs so much of our current wayfaring practices that, in fact, knowledge-making has even become neglected. The knowledge resides in the GPS, either on a phone or other device, and the user simply navigates via obedience to the technology's instructions. Wandering-toward, as an ontological situatedness, either refuses to engage in the epistemological production of navigation or cannot because technology has failed. Those who choose to let it go often come under censure or punishment because, really, why would anyone *want* to be lost?

In the 21st century, the wanderer has even come to signify an individual with diminished mental capacity or an overly romanticized adventurer rather than a state of being that could lead to material intimacy. A significant body of research in the health sciences attempts to address the difficulties associated with mental health conditions because of the danger associated with this kind of wandering.[45] For example, individuals suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's who wander require constant care and attention. These individuals are not so much suspect as in need of constant orientation to their surroundings because of damaged memory pathways. Homelessness also tends to be viewed as sinister and a result of diminished mental capacity. Drifters, as they are sometimes called, who travel from place to place are often seen as dangerous. I admit that I tend to dismiss the individual standing at the road beckoning for a ride

[45] See Roger Byard's study on the challenges of treating those with wandering dementia. This study associates wandering dementia with dangerous implications. There are certainly potential hazards to wanderers who cannot mentally orient themselves in space. My concept of wandering, however, requires a mental awareness that is not present with this kind of mental disability.

as a little crazy and have never picked someone up. The suspicion that follows these wanderers does not enhance the kind of wandering-toward I am working with here.

In contrast to the more sinister connotation of wandering, other forms of wandering, such as living in a van and traveling across the country or selling off all worldly goods to backpack across continents, have gained social purchase in online spaces. Some individuals or couples do this and chronicle their journeys (and monetize them) on blogs. For example, Jodi Ettenberg quit her job as an attorney to travel for a year. Her blog "Legal Nomads" became her main source of income, and after the first year, she continued to wander the world. The success of her blog, along with many others like it, show an appetite for readers to live vicariously through the brave wanderers who tell their stories.[46] The combination of images, video, and text offer visitors to these sites a broad picture of a wandering life. Yet, these writers still face criticism for their choices. Ettenberg receives what she calls "creepy emails or . . . screenshots of tweets that are problematic or threatening" as well as questions such as "how do you pay for a life on the road, aren't you forgoing security?" and "do you feel like you are missing out on a more stable community by traveling or living abroad in roving chunks of time?" While Ettenberg has her own story to tell, many others follow a similar route that generate similar criticisms. The blogs convey a sense of voyeuristic pleasure at viewing the wandering life while allowing for the cynicism of it simultaneously.

In daily city life, there is little patience for wandering as an everyday practice of engaging with the world. Setting out on foot in a neighborhood, city block, or park without a clear destination or purpose can potentially lead to judgment or punishment. A police officer stopping

[46] Derek at "Wandering Earl" writes about his 18 years of non-stop travel, while Sarah at "The Wander Blogger" targets family travel and moves with kids in tow.

someone on the road will often first ask: Where are you going? Signs direct traffic (foot and motor) toward destinations and prescribe a set of expectations designed to move bodies in concert with institutional demands. Tim Edensor calls this governing of bodies a "choreographed performance in which bodies communicate meaning through stylized movements and stances and are cloaked in self-consciousness" (125). This choreography is reminiscent of Propren's study of GPS and certainly represents a rhetorical program of navigation. The meanings communicated in this context arise from the bodily movement along a designated pathway that leads toward the expected destination. Orientation in space requires straight lines and markers that give definition to prescribed boundaries and flatten movement in such a way as to minimize the sensual experience of wandering. The choreography of walking in the city leads to a practiced and habitual disengagement from the environment.

I contend that wandering-toward more actively engages the environment and that post-apocalyptic narratives magnify that engagement through the knots of ruin encountered in that wandering. Wandering, in part, depends on letting go of the epistemological need for certainty and destination and the human image in the post-apocalyptic chronotope has no choice but to do so. I turn now to the three wanderers that I include in this chapter: Lionel Verney, Kristin, and Jimmy/Snowman. These three wanderers move through the ruined landscapes of their post-apocalyptic worlds in unique ways. They also participate in collective wandering-toward that reveals the ways that communities form in (dis)composed dwelling and in the post-apocalyptic chronotope surrounding the physical space of the ruin.

Personhood in the post-apocalyptic chronotope takes two forms—the wanderer and the prophet; however, in this project I deal only with the wanderer. Although more recent post-apocalyptic fiction, such as Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*, includes the stories of those

who do not survive the event, most post-apocalyptic novels trace the human story through the time before and the time after. A comparative reading of these novels grants a useful, paratactic contrast that reveals the shift in the human relationship with ruin between the 21st century and the romanticized representation in the 19th century. Like other "last man" narratives—a tradition that stretches from the late 18th century to the 21st—the nature of solitude present in these novels acts as a reckoning with the material forces at play as the characters are surrounded by the ruins of their civilizations and compelled to become intimate with the material spaces of their former lives.

The protagonists follow a similar trajectory despite major structural differences in the novels. The reader is privy to the events that cause the apocalypse and is given access to the thoughts of the protagonists in each case, whether through a first-person narration or an omniscient narrator. A decline of civilization prefigures the event (a waterless flood in the form of a plague in each iteration), and the survivors act as witnesses to the destruction of their culture and livelihood. These points of similarity make the novels ripe for comparison. The juxtaposition of the characters' relationship with ruin helps to elucidate the function of the human image in the post-apocalyptic chronotope and the evolution of material intimacy from the industrial revolution to the digital revolution.

Like ancient wanderers, post-apocalyptic wanderers "search [ruins] out in order to linger amid their tottering, moldering forms—the great broken rhythm of collapsing vaults, truncated columns, crumbling plinths—and savour [sic] the frisson of decline and fall, of wholeness destabilized" (Saunders). Mary Shelley's late novel *The Last Man* tells the story of Lionel Verney, whose first-person narrative chronicles both 'the before' and 'the after' of a devastating global plague. Verney's account is found on Sibylline leaves in a cave by a 19th-century explorer

who pieces together his 21st-century account. I address the temporal concerns more fully in just a moment, but Verney as the human image in this post-apocalyptic chronotope wanders through both time and space. His first-person account of the apocalyptic events that render him the last man on earth wanders to the past so that the narrative can be found by a 19th-century reader as both a narrative of ruin and as a prophecy of the future. Verney functions as a prospective storyteller, projecting the future possibilities into the past—a wanderer-toward both the 19th-century reader's present and his own uncertain future.

Despite his solitary wandering-toward, Verney does not seek out the ruins of his contemporary life. Throughout the novel, Verney encounters and lingers among the ruins of the ancient past and consequently discovers a correlation between his feeling of brokenness and the spatial confrontation with destruction and decay. For Verney, the affective resonance of these spaces does not easily, or hypotactically, fit into language even though he is highly educated and articulate. His describes his encounters with ruin poetically as the ruins draw out his lyrical 19th-century style. This poetic wandering invokes an affect of despair in his encounter with ruin, a being-toward-death that almost misses the power of survival.

Like Verney, the protagonist Kristin in Emily St. John Mandel's novel *Station Eleven* comes into uneasy contiguity with ruins and must reckon with the implications of that closeness that is difficult to describe, quantify, or explain. Curiously, the release of expectation for Kristin leads to an ontological situatedness engaged in the mnemonic properties of wandering-toward the ruins. In the ruined landscape of this novel, the choreographed habitus of everyday movement loosens its directionality and program of closed destinations as the characters of a

traveling symphony, including Kristin, choose a nomadic life performing Shakespearean plays.[47] As the band of actors and musicians encounter the ruins of 'the before,' the memories of the characters surface. Kristin's memory takes precedence throughout the novel because she is one of the primary memory keepers of 'the before' in gentle partnership with the ruins she explores. Part of her wandering-toward works backward, a toward-the-past, which functions as a form of spatio-temporal parataxis. She has questions about 'the before' that she would like answered, and she has fragments of memory anchored to the mate(real)ities that she encounters that resist forming a complete picture. Thus, this kind of wandering sets out to find not just a place, but a way through memory, and it must allow the temporal fragmentation of that way to become a part of the ontology of survival. For Kristin, as well as other wanderers, the architecture in its ruin defies recognition or certainty of movement and challenges the directed, desired result imposed upon the body in the built environment. This is how wayfinding works as an ontological situatedness and leads to material intimacy.

The third wanderer I follow is Jimmy/Snowman, who appears in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy. Jimmy/Snowman is also a last man, the remaining human survivor following a devastating human-constructed plague. Jimmy's memory shapes the narrative of 'the before' in the first book in the series, while Snowman is the name Jimmy gives himself in 'the

[47] The figure of the nomad could potentially make more sense in the context of wandering. There certainly is merit to the nomad as a wanderer as read through Rosi Braidotti's nomadic subject. For Braidotti, "nomadic becoming is neither reproduction or just imitation but rather emphatic proximity, intensive interconnectedness" (5). The figure of the nomad, however, also embodies the traveler that moves among established systems but "never fully takes on the limits of one national fixed identity" (33). The wanderer, in my formulation, cannot move among any systems because in the post-apocalyptic landscape the fragmentation of systems resists efforts to settle into community. Thus, while nomadic subjectivity adds much to the conversation surround feminist materialisms, the wanderer is more conducive to the analysis I am attempting in this chapter.

after.' Jimmy/Snowman's experience of 'the after' includes a difficult mental and physical wandering-toward that penetrates barriers, steps over and under plant growth and entangled objects, and crawls through windows to dig through debris. Jimmy/Snowman's movements occupy a uniquely ontological spatio-temporal atmosphere that is both coherent and fragmented. His memories of 'the before' constitute the primary coherence of the novel, whereas, when the reader encounters Snowman's present, the language grows increasingly paratactic as he wanders-toward survival. The ruins that he comes into contact with throughout the post-apocalyptic landscape of his former home break the narrative into disjointed chunks. I describe these movements as ontographic wandering by Snowman and other characters in the trilogy.

Jimmy's memory of 'the before,' unlike Kristin's, captures a complete picture of his childhood, and these sections in *Oryx and Crake*, the first novel in the trilogy, are the most coherent sections of the novel. The ontography occurs as Snowman's ability to form sentences in the aftermath of the trauma he has experienced becomes more and more fragmented. Ontographic wandering appears in many contemporary post-apocalyptic novels in the form of lists. As I describe in later sections, this kind of wandering-toward functions as a result of the human's inability to process, understand, or fully describe the situation following the global catastrophe. Jimmy/Snowman's breaks in the narrative are the most extreme as his mind finds it increasingly difficult over the course of the novel to accurately capture in language the experience of wandering-toward ruin.

These wanderers are pressed forward by the ruins in the post-apocalyptic landscape into unfamiliar territory with trepidation about the possibilities in the unknown. Paratactic wandering through a post-apocalyptic landscape must contain uncertainty as part of the exposure to ruins. It might seem antithetical to present wandering, in this context, as a means toward material

intimacy, particularly when the wanderer is compelled by nonhuman agencies to wander through the landscape. And yet, the nature of paratactic wandering is, in fact, intimate. As a state of being and as an action, wandering is not anchored to a destination and thus can be everywhere and nowhere. The ontological importance of wandering as a vehicle for understanding takes the wanderer on a journey through space that is related to the interior journey toward enlightenment. However, as my story preceding this chapter makes clear, wandering also comes with uncertainty, frustration, and loss (for words, for direction, and for comfort). While sometimes wanderers choose to set out aimlessly looking for an epiphany or for a sublime experience that culminates in the transport of the wanderer to an elevated spiritual plane, the characters in these novels have the wandering thrust upon them by the global catastrophe. The apocalyptic event in the fiction functions as a catalyst for the elements of material intimacy. Bearing witness, listening-with, and wandering-toward attempt to describe the phenomenological dimensions of survival in these texts that can be mapped in the textual markers of paratactic praxis. Wandering-toward is a move that is more than, a move that encounters the Other with the forward motion of hope. Viewing ruins as an end, particularly through the apocalypse, misses the potential outcomes of survival to become more than survival as an ontological situatedness that is more than just existing in the future.

The Anatomy of the Apocalypse

The anatomies I have addressed in this project thus far—the ruin, the storm, and the home—both anchor and disrupt the ecologies they inhabit. These mate(real)ities also function as concepts that inform relations between humans and as material entities. The apocalypse similarly operates as a concept and as an atmospheric mate(real)ity that pervades the globe and its inhabitants. However, the apocalypse also exists as a mate(real)ity in the imagination and as a

temporal fissure. I realize that the connection between mate(real)ity, imagination, and time is fraught, but so is the apocalypse. Cracks in the clock of modernity and the linear progression of past to present to future occur ever wider as we approach the event horizon of the apocalypse. The relationship here is paratactic, blazing a trail, wandering, and falling uneasily into disorder.

My attention to apocalypse is grounded in its present conception in contemporary discourse but also attends to the mate(real)ity of the atmosphere in the place and time of the culmination of entropy. As a concept, apocalyptic atmospheres circulate ambiently to produce many of the contemporary anxieties I have already discussed; as a mate(real)ity, apocalyptic atmospheres contain ephemeral and literal ruin that fill the landscape of the imagined future. In this section, I wander-toward and through the atmosphere of the apocalypse as both an eschatological discursive construction and as a spatio-temporal paratactic mate(real)ity. These two forms appear in the novels that I discuss in this chapter and participate in contemporary forms of discourse that contributes to our present apocalyptic atmospheres. The ephemeral nature of the atmosphere contributes to the mate(real)ity of ruin and to the temporal parataxis present in these novels. Therefore, I lay out of the territory for the nature and function this post-apocalyptic chronotope before moving on to the textual analysis.

Eschatological discourse explains the material conditions of the end of human civilization from the perspective of a divine force that has achieved the culmination of the earth's purpose—the full scope of entropy come to fruition—in the dramatic conclusion of the human story. St. John the Apostle, who recorded his discourse of last things on the island of Patmos, *The Book of Revelations*, or *Apocalypse,* chronicles the beginning and the end of the world—a discourse of apocalypse that remains in play in the 21st century. Many believers draw on this text to project this end of things as part of the near future. The Greek root of the word "apocalypse" is

Apokalyptein, which means to uncover, and John's apocalyptic narrative claims to do this uncovering by revealing the events leading to the earth's demise as well as the eschatos of those circumstances. This text functions as a primary source of prophecy (or revelation) for the Christian world, although there are many other theological sources across world religions, including Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, that contain discourses of last things.

The narrative of 'the end' in these traditions figures as both spatial and temporal because the future orientation of the event(s) carry specific characteristics. In her 2011 survey of the state of the field of apocalyptic studies, Adela Yabro Collins traces the debate over the definition of what constitutes apocalyptic literature by drawing on John Collins's 1979 definition: "[The term "apocalypse" refers to] a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world" (448). She also includes literature "intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine author" (450). *The Book of Revelations* certainly fits into this category specifically in terms of the delineation between the supernatural world, the natural world, and the separation of the righteous from the wicked into these two different worlds. Other texts also interact with the genre of apocalyptic literature and more recent scholarship includes post-apocalyptic fiction in this category. These texts contribute to an atmosphere of last things, an attention to the future of the planet, as well as to contemporary conversations surrounding climate change, biological threat in the form of disease, interpretations of political unrest, and even the strange development of "flat earth" theories.

More recent usage of the word 'apocalypse,' updated in the OED in 2008, includes "a disaster resulting in dramatic, irreversible damage to human society or the environment, esp. on a global scale; a cataclysm." While these two definitions—the revelatory and the disaster—seem to be at odds, they are not. Disasters, cataclysms, and catastrophes work as revelatory events, exposing all sorts of fissures, dependencies, and disfunctions. Timothy Gilmore views contemporary understandings of the apocalypse as an indication of "a growing desire on the part of users of the word for the destructive release from anxiety each use of the word reveals as something that is feared" (392). The consequence of this usage is that "the positive potential [the uncovering] of the apocalypse is lost in a complex fascination/aversion" (Gilmore 393). Gilmore likens contemporary views of cataclysmic events, such as massive hurricanes or nuclear explosion, to something akin to rubbernecking. Unable to look away, cultural anxiety finds a release in imagining potential futures and in the potential of cataclysmic climate change that includes narratives of suffering and survival as catalysts for redemption.

Contemporary apocalyptic rhetoric reinforces anxiety about cataclysmic change, and, as an ambient atmosphere, circulates as an underlying ideology that propels fear-based policy decisions. The spatial nature of the apocalypse within this atmosphere bears consideration here as the dividing space between the moral and unmoral, the good and the bad, plays out in the novels under consideration here and in relation to the ruins in that space. As yet, I have not found a text that describes the future of the earth without some form of ruin, whether political, social, or material. Imagining the future on a global scale, particularly in our 21st-century moment, incorporates architectural ruin as a fundamental characteristic of the space of the post-apocalyptic chronotope. Bakhtin's vocabulary for parsing the spatial and temporal concerns in post-apocalyptic literature elucidates the patterns that shape the discursive elements of this

future. In drawing out the characteristics of apocalyptic atmospheres, I turn to Bakhtin for elements of the post-apocalyptic chronotope that lead toward a more effective understanding of the spatio-temporal nature of the anatomy of the apocalypse and of wandering-toward ruin.

The chronotope offers a system of unity that draws the spatial, temporal, and human image together. Bakhtin details a historical poetics that begins with the Greek romance and ends with the Rabelaisian novel but leaves room for the development of the chronotope with other genres. He offers a wide range of chronotopic analyses and argues that the "typological stability of the novelistic chronotopes . . . permit us to glance ahead as well, at various novel types in succeeding periods" (85). The function and pattern of the chronotope provides a vocabulary and system of analysis that can help elucidate the paratactic praxis I uncover in post-apocalyptic fiction. I expand on Ayşe Çīftcībaşi's definition of the post-apocalyptic chronotope to place those fragments in paratactic conversation and include the ruins of the catastrophe as representations of the entropy present in mate(real)ity. The post-apocalyptic chronotope operates as a collection of fragments rather than a unified whole.

Bakhtin's formulation of ancient novels emphasizes three major kinds of time: adventure-time, everyday-time, and biographical time. The collision of this temporal distinction with spatial awareness operates in distinct ways as the human image moves through them. Each is instructive as a way to understand the post-apocalyptic chronotope, what it is and what it is not. Adventure-time positions the hero as a passive and unchanging subject that almost floats through the moment of what amounts to a 'meet-cute' toward a reunion and consummate love. Significantly, adventure-time requires expansive and undefinable spaces, vast oceans and continents, for the hero to traverse like an obstacle course constructed by the gods for their entertainment. In the end, the hero remains unchanged as his identity is affirmed by a lawful decree and union with his

beloved. While chance can play a role in the post-apocalyptic chrontope, adventure-time's lack of historicity and grounding does not address the familiarity of space and time present in post-apocalyptic futures. Everyday-time retains some characteristics of adventure-time and could possibly lead to a better understanding of the post-apocalyptic chronotope because everyday-time depends on transformation as the main vehicle that drives the story. Significant events of metamorphosis serve "as the basis for a method of portraying the whole of an individual's life in its more important moments of *crisis*: for showing *how an individual becomes other than what he was*" (115). The hero takes on a more active role in this chronotope as the events of chance call on the hero to take action that results "in the construction of a new image of the hero, a man who is now purified and reborn" (117). Space, in everyday-time, also operates differently as it "becomes more concrete and saturated with a time that is more substantial" (120). Rather than the vast alien lands of the adventure novel, everyday-time contains the texture of reality and a specificity of location that grounds the hero in a humble and often humiliating role. The road figures in this chronotope as the spatial grounding for the everyday. For Bakhtin, "the concreteness of this chronotope of the road permits *everyday life* to be realized within it" (120). The post-apocalyptic chronotope takes some of these features, specifically the road as spatial grounding for the human image, the wanderer. However, the nature of apocalyptic events is that they are *outside* of the everyday. Thus, everyday-time morphs into a more extraordinary set of circumstances for the post-apocalyptic hero.

The third temporal context for the ancient novel is biographical-time. Bakhtin names two types of biography: Platonic and Rhetorical. These texts encompass the entirety of a human life from birth to death. The Platonic chronotope charts "the life course of one seeking true knowledge" while the Rhetorical appears in encomium form and gives a public account of a life.

The tension between the personal journey toward epistemological enlightenment and the public accounting also happens spatially. The rhetorical form exposes the subject as a public figure, "he is all surface," whereas the Platonic works introspectively, concentrating on the interior life of the subject. Each form focuses on an idealized image of the subject and constructs a glorified picture of a life well lived. This chronotope evolved from the Greek and Roman conceptions toward a disembodied, (a)spatial form of discourse that collapsed the distinctions between the collective and the self, developing "the self-consciousness of a solitary individual" (145). The stoic and historical resonance of later forms emphasized the intimate and personal characteristics of hero and interprets isolation and feeling. The post-apocalyptic chronotope straddles these two kinds of biographical-time, like St. Augustine's public proclamation of his solitariness that retains its performative role despite the interiority of the text. Even in the public form of an address, the autobiography maintains a temporally bound linear series of events that lead toward a rhetorical and public end. The temporality of this form of the chronotope appears in eschatological narratives that chronicle the lifespan of the earth from beginning to end. As I will demonstrate in my analysis, the heroes of post-apocalyptic fiction engage in a public heroism that also includes a depth of introspection but do so in a nonlinear and disjointed narrative structure that oscillates between the past of 'the before,' the present of 'the after,' and the wandering-toward the uncertain future.

The coalescence of various chrontopic characteristics is useful in addressing the unique form of the post-apocalyptic chronotope and can lead toward a better understanding of the role of ruins and material intimacy in these narratives. Because the post-apocalyptic chronotope combines elements of several modes of representation, it functions as a specific kind of storytelling that produces a dislocation of time, space, and personhood. Ideals in this chronotope

inform the production of historical inversion as "a thing that could and in fact must only be realized exclusively in the *future* is here portrayed as something out of the *past*, a thing that is in no sense part of the past's reality, but a thing that is in its essence a purpose, an obligation" (147). This inversion allows imagined futures to slip into the present and place the ruins of those futures in conversation not only with the protagonist and other characters but also with the contemporary reader.

The post-apocalyptic chronotope exposes a temporal form of parataxis in post-apocalyptic narratives that attempt to see beyond the boundaries of the present by imagining a future placed in contiguity with that present. These discontinuities rearrange space and time in such a way that ruins carry the particularities of material intimacy—witnessing, listening, and wandering—into a speculative narrative space. The protagonists of post-apocalyptic narratives wander a world grounded in the localized mate(real)ity of ruins where embedded social and political systems have come to a halt. Human systems that order movement, time, and behavior disintegrate after the apocalyptic event. Chaos in this entropy can often be violent. However, the existence of chaos does not necessarily indicate failure; it indicates change. Building a world in which everything has changed functions as one prominent feature of post-apocalyptic fiction.

The temporal shifts here are important and move toward ruin time, the time in the post-apocalyptic chronotope. These narratives engage in a spatio-temporal parataxis as the past of the narrative butts up against the present of the reader and the present of the narrative imagines a future for the reader. The characters of post-apocalyptic fiction function as witnesses to a future that can only imagine be imagined. They listen in an embodied (dis)composition and wander the ruins of the past. The ruins in these novels participate in the construction of the changed landscape and invoke the past through their mate(real)ity. Ruins help construct a set of

apocalyptic commonplaces (or atmospheres) in which ruins are present both materially and linguistically. How these atmospheres contribute to the experience of wandering-toward ruins works both spatially and temporally.[48] Wandering-toward the ruins of the apocalyptic aftermath, toward the space and time beyond the event horizon of the event(s), floods, shakes, and burns expectations of our fragile future. Kevin Porter defines event horizon as "the boundary of the eventfulness of the present" in which the present continuously falls forward into the future (260). Much of the work of post-apocalyptic fiction speculates on what lies beyond the event horizon and draws toward this falling through narrative. Examining these narratives for the paratactic practices of material intimacy includes a temporal parataxis that operates in a liminal state—a betweenness that bears consideration for its possibilities in movement and for its stillness. Clustered around the event horizon, on a plane of existence littered with the debris left by such moments, is a continuous falling toward the future that demonstrates the paratactic nature of temporal states in post-apocalyptic narratives. The debris (both material and ephemeral) requires a paratactic wandering through the ruins of the 'before' as the survivors search for some semblance of their former lives. To wander in my formulation is a forward motion of hope for the future that is entangled with the past and the present. The tendrils of hope live in ruins.

I use the designation "the after" as a temporal denotation of the post-apocalyptic ruin and 'the before' as the temporal denotation of the present. The tensions here between past, present, and future are complex, and I attempt to mark the chronos through these designations. However, these are not clear demarcations, and, at times, the paratactic nature of wandering interferes with a clear delineation of before and after. The layers of time in post-apocalyptic fiction depend on

[48] Speculative fiction works as a larger umbrella term for multiple genres that apply contemporary events, technology, and issues to a potential future. I stick with the term "post-apocalyptic" primarily because my interest is in the "post" rather than the event itself.

the present of the reader, the present of the writer, and the present of the characters. These different presents often coalesce as the characters' memory of "the before" largely resembles the present of the writer and often the reader.

In the case of Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, this is even more complex. Shelley opens the novel with a frame in which two unnamed characters are walking among the ruins at Elysian Fields outside of Naples. The narrator describes wandering "through various ruined temples, baths, and classic spots" until they reach the cavern of the Cumæan Sibyl (1). The cavern contains the narrative of Lionel Verney, strewn about on fragments on the floor. The narrator is wandering Naples in 1818 (or the writer's present) while Lionel Verney's story takes place at the end of the twenty-first century (or very close to our contemporary reader's present). The future of humanity, in this novel, is foretold through the protagonist whose story reaches back into the past to warn the readers of the 19th century of what is to come. The ruins in the opening of the novel traverse and collapse time so that the form of the chronotope in this novel oscillates between times and brings them together in a paratactic fashion.

Apocalyptic atmospheres often arise out of this kind of temporal parataxis or ruin time. The reader, writer, and story enter into a liminal space where the present experience of reading the novel comes into uneasy juxtaposition with the events taking place there. In *Station Eleven,* this is all the more pronounced because the setting of "the before" of the novel strongly resembles our own present. This novel works mnemonically on several levels as the ruins of the reader's present of the novel, "the after," call to the reader's memory of familiar places such as Toronto, New York City, and Hollywood. The objects in this novel also attend to familiarity as "the before" contains all the hallmarks of contemporary modern life—smart phones, airplanes, dinner parties, and even electricity. Finally, in Margaret Atwood's series, the characters'

"before" occurs in our future—distanced from contemporary twenty-first century life. Markers of environmental degradation and other modern issues permeate this setting; however, they occur in a temporal space and time that is just beyond our event horizon. Atwood claims that she deliberately did not invent any technology for this story but included only what is currently possible.[49] This has the effect of anchoring the novel to the reader's present while also placing that reader in the near future.

By virtue of their position, post-apocalyptic survivors move beyond the event horizon of the apocalypse and view the ruins of the reader's present from the future. Architectural ruin becomes an active participant in these narratives because human survival depends in large part on what physical structures remain in the aftermath of a great global cataclysm. What places of safety enable survival? How do groups form communities and engage with ruins as places or knots on the threads of wandering that occur when all structural markers of navigation have been destroyed? The management of answers to these questions determine the available means for survival in 'the after.' And yet, survival is insufficient. A post-apocalyptic survivor occupies a continuing future among the ruins, one in which human beings gather, dwell, and renew their spaces and communities.

Like survivors of contemporary natural disasters, post-apocalyptic survivors focus intently on what is most important by using the available means—food, water, shelter, and companionship—without the aid of techno-global resources. Need drives wandering in this context, but the available materials also provide opportunities for intimate encounters with the material remains of civilization. The survivor must negotiate unmitigated risk (there are no

[49] Atwood's essay on what she calls "ustopias" discusses the strategies she uses to build the world of *MaddAddam*.

insurance companies or hospitals after the apocalypse) with more dexterity than many of the survivors of contemporary natural disasters. The survivors face a variety of hazards as they wander about in search of other survivors, resources, and security. Post-apocalyptic survivors project outward—wandering, searching, and scavenging from the environment for their basic needs. While, of course, there are negative consequences to the competition for severely limited resources, there are also potential positives as well. Post-apocalyptic fiction explores the myriad of possibilities and, as I argue, locates them in the post-apocalyptic chronotope through wandering.

These stories of survival currently inform much of our 21st century notions of the post-apocalyptic landscape take place in ruins that are at once alien and familiar. Petter Skult's examination of place in *World War Z* and *The Road* illustrates that place "is a necessary component for the creation of hope, meaning and a sense of the future, without which it becomes impossible or very difficult to reconstruct a lost world or construct an entirely new one" (104). The apocalypse must be situated, grounded in space and time, for the potentiality present there to be productive.

Ruins randomize the potentials and move from concentrated order to dilution. The tendency to flatten that energy distributes pockets of concentration more evenly. Paradoxically, this flattening creates a scale-free paratactic movement. Architectural structures order and arrange that energy into usable form, investing the structures with the potential for habitation, work, and relation. As a structure decays, that energy is released and disordered as it rejoins the environment from which it came. As entropy shows its face in the ruins of civilization, energy is dispersed into the environment. In every expenditure or dispersal of energy, a penalty is exacted from the system. The apocalypse accelerates this movement toward disorder, entropy, and

randomization. Post-apocalyptic narratives imagine the potential futures of that acceleration and in the 'after' ruins take center stage.

The environmental concerns here span all techno-global systems. From questions of communication, food production, and migration, the imagination must negotiate answers to these problems in the face of entropic movement. How does a global society provide for its human constituents when the systems break down? How does loss of energy produce the conditions of wandering? The examples of wandering apocalyptic ruin I describe here demonstrate a temporal paratactic praxis that facilitates material intimacy with those ruins. The three modes of wandering in these texts demonstrates a paratactic motion, a wandering-toward, that reveals the human responses to post-apocalyptic ruin. The textual markers of poetic, mnemonic, and ontographic wandering-toward operate as material-discursive practices the both perform and move toward material intimacy.

Interlude: December 28, 1999

My husband and I flew into Raleigh, North Carolina late in the evening. Our six-week-old son, our first, cried for the two-hour drive to our new home in Jacksonville, NC. As a new mother, I worried over the care of a newborn, and, as we navigated the unfamiliar landscape in search of our new home, I felt a sense of impending doom. The two months leading up to our move were a period of dramatic adjustment. An out-of-state career change, a new baby, and an exodus away from my family in Houston combined to make me more susceptible to the anxiety of the news of the potential for global infrastructure collapse forecasted by every major media outlet leading up to the dreaded Y2K. Confined to rest and the care of the baby, I watched television on a twenty-four-hour loop and awaited my little family's fate.

Upon arriving at our townhome, after hours of searching, my husband set up our air mattress, and we put our few belongings in order. Our moving truck was not scheduled to arrive until after the new year, and I wondered if the global collapse would strand my worldly goods on the side of a highway somewhere along Interstate 30. I lay on an air mattress in the darkened, empty townhouse on the night of December 31 and contemplated our lack of supplies and the potential future should Y2K come to pass. I snuggled up to my new baby and wondered what kind of world he was going to grow up in.

And then nothing happened.

We woke the next morning to a blanket of snow and a cozy, secure home (and bank account). The world had not changed despite the warnings.

An Atmosphere of Last Things

The circulation of apocalyptic forecasting during the 1990s ramped up anxiety surrounding global technological failure and economic collapse. Stephen O'Leary's extensive examination of Christian eschatology as a rhetoric of the apocalypse provides insight into the Y2K build-up in the 1990s and works to classify this apocalyptic discourse and its rhetorical potency in the 20th-century fin de siècle. O'Leary situates the anxiety of global collapse in terms of effective rhetorical strategies used by public figures such as Hal Lindsey and Jerry Falwell. While other factors contributed to the apocalyptic atmosphere of the approach to the end of the millennium, prophecy and its imminent fulfillment contributed largely to the widespread near-panic that occurred as the 1990s drew to a close. As my own experience of Y2K suggests, the layers of anxiety that filtered through the forecasting of Y2K came from a variety of sources. My situation merged with and shifted my perception of the media accounts of financial collapse as part of the ecology of the apocalyptic atmosphere. Of course, the stories of Christian apocalypse

influenced and, perhaps even magnified, the confusion about what would happen when the computer systems of the world switched to a double-zero year.

For O'Leary, the spatial element of apocalyptic atmospheres comes from the conspiracy to define a special community "as set apart from the evils that surround us" (5). This element of eschatology can be seen in those who spent years preparing their homes and businesses for the coming collapse of Y2K. The act of defining the boundaries of space that contain only 'the good' figures prominently in the discourse of last things. Post-apocalyptic narrative often addresses this space in terms of defining the boundaries between "the good" and "he bad," but the wanderer as the human survivor of the event(s) moves through ruined space in a different way. The ruins function as a neutralizer of space. The imposition of boundaries to define the space of the elect becomes dismantled after the catastrophe. Apocalyptic atmospheres must be concerned with space and place and the eventual settling of the survivors there.

The first decade of the 21st century saw a shift in the kinds of apocalyptic narratives in circulation. In contrast to the technological demise predicted by the Y2K scare, current apocalyptic narratives focus on the large-scale destruction of human settlement by natural forces or the destruction of the environment by irresponsible human behavior. These narratives most often figure the apocalypse in the form of plague, natural disaster, or other environmental devastation, such as drought. While apocalyptic narratives place blame on the destruction in the realm of human intervention and hubris, such as the plague unleashed by Crake in Atwood's *MaddAddam* series or the human created vampires in Justin Cronin's *The Passage*, fear surrounding the potential for the earth to rebel against humanity's hubris appears as an

underlying commonplace in these narratives.[50] While apocalyptic narratives take place exclusively in the future, they also depend on the present. Contrary to O'Leary's contention that the rhetoric of the apocalypse arises from internal logics of speculation and external logics of advocacy, I argue in this chapter that apocalyptic atmospheres work prospectively out of present material problems that the fiction attempts to explore and ultimately solve. The narrative then works in a kind of self-fulfilling hermeneutic loop that cycles chronotopically.

From a rhetorical standpoint, material intimacy arises from a specific set of motives that are shaped and directed by the human image, the space of the novel, and the temporal dimensions of that space. The association an individual or community makes with eschatological imagery reveals something of their character and motive. Kenneth Burke's search for rhetorical motives is informed by eschatological concerns. Burke uses the term Thanatopsis, or a narrative equivalent to identification, to define the finitude of things in terms of character. He defines "the end of things" in terms of a moment of dissolution, a moment when existence ceases. Yet one of the key aspects of the post-apocalyptic ruin is its occupation of space across time or its endurance beyond the event horizon. The past echoes in the structure as a marker of endurance while the present encourages sensory identification with the matter of that past. The future of the place and the constitution of the matter in that place also invites the imagination to inhabit time in terms of longevity. Burke argues that the primal motive is the end of things, the terminus of existence that motivates rhetorical identification.

[50] Cronin's series is more than I can cover in this chapter. However, his series incorporates Christian eschatological imagery throughout the three novels, and the ruins in these novels participate in the construction of the post-apocalyptic chronotope. I reserve his trilogy for a future project rather than attempting to conduct an analysis in this one.

I disagree with Burke. Post-apocalyptic fiction displays primal motives as endurance, survival, and evolution rather than dissolution. The ruin reminds us that we are constantly in a state of change and that that requires a future. Burke's emphasis on Aristotelian entelechy speaks to the embedded idea that perfection or completion exists outside the human experience. Perhaps, that is true. However, that assertion only carries so much value when thinking of the inevitable natural processes of entropy. A building, like all other matter, decays—moves toward entropy. Yet, entropy and finitude do not necessarily mean the same thing. Change, yes. The cyclical nature of chaos, order, and then chaos present in entropy operates as a continual regeneration. In fact, it is only through entropy that endurance can occur. The tension between the human efforts to halt change and intervene in the processes of decay must necessarily be futile, but the patterns of cyclical time also invite us to rethink our resistance to such processes. Embracing the unpredictability of the future and the law of entropy provide a view of the apocalypse that does not rest on the end of things, but rather describes the redistribution of energy in such a way that transformation is possible. Burke's Thanatopsis forecloses the possibilities for growth and change in such a way that rhetorical transformation rests solely on finality's motivating power. However, the disorder and chaos of the ruined post-apocalyptic landscape provide opportunities rather than foreclosures.

Apocalyptic atmospheres can be resituated to challenge the contemporary notion of disorder as finality and tragedy. A key component of rethinking the apocalypse lies in ruin. The ruin's resilience, in the face of climate change and other forms of destruction, comes from a submission to the energy transfer and dispersal into the environment. The human figures in the post-apocalyptic chronotope—the wanderers—teach us this lesson and echo Marder's view that there is no growth without decay. Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* and Margaret Atwood's

MaddAddam trilogy contain examples of both human images and an interesting contrast between 19th-century conceptions of material intimacy and those of the 21st century. Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* contributes a collective of wanderers following a plague like the others but offers examples of a group of wanderers surviving together. A comparative reading of these texts anatomizes the ruin(ed) bodies in the post-apocalyptic chronotope that reveal shifts in the material intimacy associated with the temporal parataxis in these novels.

The novels I examine here build similar explorations of liminal space and indeterminacy. The role of the wanderer functions as a human interloper in what Lee Rozelle calls a "liminal ecology" that is active in creation and in material cahoots with the human wanderer of ruin after the apocalypse.[51] The essence of the post-apocalyptic chronotope is this liminal ecology. The material connection between the human figure and the architectural ruin in the post-apocalyptic chronotope bridges the gap between what was, what is, and what is to come.

Writing Wandering Toward

The liminal nature of ruins facilitates both an aesthetic response and a response that exerts rhetorical or transformative power. The desire to write, arising from the post-apocalyptic landscape, responds sublime encounter with ruin. The sublime in post-apocalyptic narratives can be viewed in both aesthetic and rhetorical ways via Edmund Burke's 19th-century definition and the earlier definition of the sublime found in the text "On the Sublime" attributed to Longinus.

[51] Ranita Chatterjee uses Agamben's term, "zone of irreducible indistinction," to describe the liminal ontological condition of the characters. She argues that Verney's language acts as an exclusionary force, in an "inclusive exclusion" (here she is quoting Agamben) but, in fact, the language Verney leaves behind draws him closer to that which endures. I disagree with Chatterjee that Verney returns to the idea of exile and separation. My argument focuses on the ways that Verney must become intimately associated with the ruins in his environment and through that intimacy wander poetically toward something more than surviving.

Burke's sublime resides in nature but rests on a visceral reaction to a confrontation with terror that transcends the rational response of the rhetorical sublime.[52] Longinus's sublime arises solely from the inspiration of words and is superior in effect to persuasion. The aim of the Longinus text is to frame out a method for achieving the rhetorical sublime. He argues that "amazement and wonder exert invincible power and force and get the better of every hearer" in contrast to persuasion as an element of human control (1.4). Melissa Ianetta emphasizes the distinctions between Burke's aesthetic sublime and Longinus's rhetorical sublime, even though she does claim that the sublime as a concept and as an affect is distinctly rhetorical in that the emotional outcomes of sublimity contain an ethical dimension that is intertwined with aesthetic production. Longinus places discourse in a hierarchical scheme with grandeur and the sublime at the pinnacle of the hierarchy. Several characteristics of the sublime factor into the effects of this kind of language use. The sublime provides "food for reflection" and can be nearly impossible to resist (7.4). Longinus, at least, is drawn to the power of the sublime to make an "ineffacable impression" and to elevate the thoughts toward the immensity of the cosmos (7.4). My contention that wandering ruin produces a sublime experience in its parataxis works from a blended definition of aesthetic and rhetorical sublimity. This initial comparison reveals the privilege of mystery and of the possibility of wandering and wonder over the more mechanistic and "turgid" discourse of persuasion.

A key characteristic of sublime wandering arises from the fragmentary nature of ruins that represent a fundamental characteristic of the universe. The movement toward chaos, or entropy, can be seen in the way that ruins begin to break down and the order of human intention

[52] Joseph Addison's sublime emphasizes sight as the primary vehicle for the sublime experience. The seeing, in vast natural surroundings, creates an elevating and deeply emotional connection to the divine. See his essays published in *The Spectator* in 1712.

is reclaimed by the chaos of nature. Apocalyptic atmospheres contribute to wandering-toward as ruins enter the field of view in the sublime encounter. The drift toward destruction and the contemplation of the potential futures in that destruction combine to produce a sublime experience in the wandering. Paratactically, wandering moves bodies toward each other, without design or imposition. This toward, or thrownness as Heidegger calls it, manifests itself in the three textual markers of paratactic praxis in these novels.

Mary Shelley's late novel, *The Last Man*, utilizes the wandering I am describing here to place the sublime as her characters move within the lithic temporal space of a liminal ecology. As I described before, the novel opens with a frame narrative in which an unnamed narrator visits a "gloomy cavern of the Cumaen Sibyl" on a wander "through various ruined temples, baths, and classic spots" (1). This wandering leads to a dark room in the Sibyl's Cave, where the narrator finds Sibylline leaves with fragments of writing in multiple languages. The leaves, "scattered and unconnected as they were," are collected by the narrator who discovers in the disconnected pages truths "and the divine intuition which the Cumaean damsel obtained from heaven" (4). The narrator pieces them together, deciphering the languages, and adding links and connections between the fragments. The story that emerges is one from the narrator's future, rather than in the past as the Sibylline leaves might suggest, and it describes the end of the world (or at least the English world) by plague. In placing the plague at the end of the 21st century, Shelley's imagination comes to our century or to the limits of her ability to imagine a future. This temporal parataxis is indicative of the sublimity of post-apocalyptic wandering as the contemporary wanderer encounters the past and the future.

The "poetic rhapsodies" on the fragments provide the wandering narrator an opportunity to perform a paratactic exercise in making meaning out of pieces of a story in a manner she

describes as “if we should give to another artist, the painted fragments which form the mosaic copy of Raphael’s Transfiguration in St. Peter’s; he would put them together in a form, whose mode would be fashioned by his own peculiar mind and talent” (*TLM* 4). The frame narrative sets the stage for the story of that past that comprises the bulk of the novel’s pages in which Lionel Verney, the main protagonist, tells his first-person account of the apocalyptic events that lead to his wandering the ruins of civilization. On its surface, Verney’s account works as an example of biographical time in the chronotope. His story is in part a romance because each of the major characters, Verney, Lord Raymond, and Adrian, find love and marry. However, the second half of the novel moves entropically toward the dissolution of these relationships as each character succumbs to the plague, leaving Verney to wander alone. The frame narrator’s revision of the tale is never explained, so Verney’s story follows a narrative continuity that does not often utilize paratactic style. However, in piecing the fragments together, the frame narrator engages in the temporal form of parataxis as the events of past, present, and future become interwoven in an uneasy juxtaposition among the ruins.

Verney’s encounters with the grand temporal scale of classical ruins demonstrate the reach of deep time in this chronotope. While adventure-time describes this element of the post-apocalyptic chronotope, the spatial characteristics—cold marble and other enduring materials—resist intimacy with the space, impenetrable, imposing, dominating. Verney’s wandering-toward expels energy in wandering the ruins of the distant past; rather than functioning as an intimate encounter, this kind of wandering-toward engages in a tense battle between the inhabitations of the past and the inhabitation of the present. The face of the ruins of ancient Greece, Italy, and Turkey shows up in Verney’s wandering the ruined landscape alone after his companions have all died.

Verney's orientation toward the material space, a kind of liminal existence throughout the novel even before the events of the Plague, situates him outside of society. Verney spends his early life exiled from high society because of his father's recklessness. He and his sister Perdita live in poverty just outside the space of aristocracy, and they eke out their existence by stealing from the grounds of the Earl of Windsor's gardens. When the earl, Adrian, welcomes Verney and invests in his education and friendship, Verney draws closer to a higher register, but throughout the novel Verney remains a step back from the social and political foray that drives his companions Adrian and Lord Raymond experience. During a few harmonious years, the ecosystem of Verney's life fully integrates. He marries Idris (Adrian's sister), has a child, and lives within the walls of a protected estate that fosters an idyllic environment for the band of friends to enjoy. The "before" of the apocalyptic event does not require wandering because the characters settle into a protected and static space of the estate. Movement comes to a halt here as the characters rest in a kind of blissful suspension of degradation and conflict. However, Verney's loyalties to his friends forces him out of this Edenic space and into war with Lord Raymond as leader.

The events of the plague come to a head in this war as Lord Raymond rides his troops to Constantinople to take the city. Not only does Verney fight alongside Lord Raymond, he witnesses the events at Constantinople—his first encounter with material intimacy. Verney does not enter the city with Lord Raymond. He watches from the top of a hill as Raymond rears his horse to ride into the city. "Until this moment," he remarks, "my soul had been in my eyes only. I had gazed with wonder, mixed with fear and enthusiasm" (156). The scene below him, as Lord Raymond calls the charge, spurs Verney to act and he plunges down the hill toward the city. Yet, as he urges his horse to navigate the obstacles, desperate to join Raymond, trees and buildings

intervene and obstruct his view. Even in his description of the fragments of buildings surrounding him, Verney's language reflects an ecstatic sense of urgency and the "fragments of buildings whirled above, half seen in smoke, while fames burst out beneath, and continued explosions filled the air with terrific thunders" (156). Verrney tries to make his way forward, in the midst of fire, rain, smoke, and rubble, and despite his fear, yields to his "irresistible impulse" to "penetrate the town" (157). This impulse to climb over, explore, search for Raymond also terrifies him as he faces the reality that the city has claimed Raymond's life. He draws close to the ruins as searches the ruins for Raymond's body. In the epicenter of the commotion and destruction, he reflects that "For a moment I could yield to the creative power of the imagination, and for a moment was soothed by the sublime fictions it presented to me" (157). This centering moment, as the sublime overtakes him, occurs because of the paratactic links between wandering the ruin, the ruined body of Lord Raymond, and Verney's own exhausted body. He begins to succumb to his surroundings and feels "as a building whose props are loosened, and whose foundations rock, totters and falls" (158). While explicit connections are made as this scene unfolds, nevertheless the sublime wandering of Verney's identification with the ruins of Constantinople, effectively produce a material intimacy.

At the end of the novel, Verney finds himself stranded on the Italian seashore. His companions are lost, his situation dire, he resists a confrontation with the reality of his plight. He exclaims, "I did not yet feel in every pulsation, in every nerve, in every thought, that I remained alone of my race,--that I was the LAST MAN" (348). This final episode leads him to wander in search of others and to find shelter. The ruins of the city of Ravenna take him in as he moves through a grief induced stupor. Here his wandering takes on a paratactic rhythm:

> I entered Ravenna, (the town nearest to the spot whereon I had been cast), before the second sun had set on the empty world; I saw many living creatures; oxen, and horses, and dogs, but there was no man among them; I entered a cottage, it was vacant; I ascended the marble stairs of a palace, the bats and the owls were nestled in the tapestry; I stepped softly, not to awaken the sleeping town: I rebuked a dog, that by yelping disturbed the sacred stillness; I would not believe that all was as it seemed—The world was not dead, but I was mad; I was deprived of sigh, hearing, and sense of touch; I was labouring under the force of a spell, which permitted me to behold all sights of earth, except its human inhabitants; they were pursuing their ordinary labours. (351)

This long sentence moves from movement to movement in a series of wanderings connected only by semi-colons. The rhythm of the wander leads Verney to conclude that while he feels that he is under a spell, he cannot escape his reason and imagine that people continue to inhabit the ruins. The ruins in this apocalyptic landscape present a temporal conundrum. They mark human habitation in the past, provide shelter and necessities for Verney's present situation, and spur his imagination for the future of his existence as the last man.

Verney continues wandering for the remainder of the story. He travels from city to city, searching homes and palaces and experiencing a sublime terror that draws his loneliness and exhilaration at surviving together in a state of suspended rationality. His movement takes him through the remains of the past as he contemplates what will become of him. The paratactic style crescendos in the closing pages as Verney wanders from ruin to ruin. Verney's sense of entropy also increases as he draws closer and closer to the ruins, exploring the empty spaces and exerting himself physically. He decides to head toward Rome to wander "among its storied streets, hallowed ruins, and stupendous remains of human exertion" so that he can "find every thing

forgetful of man; trampling on his memory, defacing his works, proclaiming from hill to hill, and vale to vale" (358). The ruins of ancient Rome haunt him with echoes of their former glory and bring him to tears, and then Verney finds "a medicine for my many and vital wounds" (360). Wandering the ruins provide an intimate and comforting solace to his immense isolation, and the sublime centers him and inspires him to record his memories and history.

Inspired by the architectural remains of human civilization, post-apocalyptic wanderers often wander into spaces of memory that call them to record their experiences and the time before. Temporal parataxis appears in these records as well as the writer attempts to draw their past into their present. Often this is grounded in the ruins of the "before" and the survivors must fight to preserve their memories. The novel *Station Eleven* chronicles a band of characters called the Traveling Symphony who wander a post-apocalyptic landscape twenty years after a plague wipes out much of the world population. I turn to this novel to describe mnemonic wandering as a paratactic praxis of material intimacy. As with poetic wandering, characters who engage in mnemonic wandering often experience the sublime; however, in contrast to the style of 19th-century last man narratives, contemporary fiction uses a different set of strategies to wander mnemonically through the ruins.

In *Station Eleven,* the Traveling Symphony caravans through territories familiar to the 21st-century reader: Lake Huron in Michigan, Chicago, Illinois, airports, schools, and homes. Their motto, "because survival is insufficient," functions as a refrain as the Symphony attempts to bring art and music to the remaining towns in the northern mid-west of the United States. Kirsten, one of the primary voices in the novel, attaches herself to the Symphony in part as a means of survival, but also because survival on its own is not enough. She plays several Shakespearean characters in the company, including Titania from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The desire to keep the past alive in their performances, along with Kirsten's collection of one-of-a-kind comics (whose principle character is also a "last man"), leads the Symphony on a wandering path that includes ruins as functions of memory and as anchors to the 'before.'

Kirsten and her friend August take to exploring abandoned houses for supplies and instruments for the company. They use the exploration primarily as a hobby, searching for rare items such as the *TV Guide*, books of poetry, and celebrity gossip magazines. Of course, they also search for things like soap, costumes for the company, and other ubiquitous items. The wandering in this context works paratactically as a mnemonic device that brings memory forward, through sensation in touch, smell, and sight. As the intrepid explorers move through rooms of crumbling homes, they find pieces of memory in objects and roomscapes that rescue the relics of the past from disintegration.

On one excursion, Kirsten and August are joined by Jackson and Viola. They find a school at the edge of a field and approach cautiously in search of instruments for the orchestra. The abandoned structures provide many necessities unavailable after the collapse of capitalist production. The group crouches at the edge of the woods, listening and watching for danger, but the school appears to be still. Inside, every surface has layers of occupation, such as graffiti on desks, that mark the passage of time from the "before." However, the most telling tethers to the past are the "broad outlines of the room's history," such as "a fire under a hole in the ceiling, old ashes mixed with animal bones" and "a jumble of cots . . . puled in the corner of the room" (128-129). The graffiti with names, "Jasime L., if you see this, go to my dad's lake house—Ben," are more meaningless within the physical strokes of human and animal activity (129). Kirsten surveys the first room and wonders "How many people stayed here? Who were they? Where had they gone?" (129). Despite the marks of human habitation, the ruin holds little in the way of

memorial to those who occupied the space. However, the space itself, the ruin, conjures memories for all of the explorers as they to try, and fail, to connect various things to their own previous experience. Kirsten's thoughts try to make sense of the history, "but as always all of the details were missing" (129). The ruin contains the material remains of the human inhabitants but cannot tell their story.

Jackson, inexperienced in ruin exploration, goes into a bathroom and finds a corpse with a bullet through the forehead. To Kirsten and August, he says, "I don't know how you two can stand going into these places" (130). Kirsten does not respond aloud but thinks through her reasons for entering the ruins. The first reason is that Kirsten remembers the time before. She knows they wander because in just a short time the ruins will collapse and the buildings will no longer be safe to enter, but also "because [they] are always looking for the former world, before all the traces of the former world are gone" (130). Kristen's wandering takes in the ruins as a paratactical means of accessing her memories and as a means of discovery.

The entanglement of material ruin and memory is important for material intimacy. Wandering produces a kinaesthetic movement that draws these things together in ways that often spur the wanderer toward more and more ruin in a searching that, in novels, resolves in a second home and a stability of place for the wanderer. For Kristen, that occurs in an airport. The members of the Traveling Symphony get separated after Kristen and August's exploration of the school, and the two friends set off on their own. After a series of events (including an altercation with a deranged man called The Prophet), they arrive at the airport. The settlement at Severn City Airport houses 320 people, and some stability has made the airport a haven in an unsettled world. A man named Clark Thompson hosts what he calls "A Museum of Civilization" with relics from the time, twenty-five years before, that no longer function in the post-apocalyptic

world. These ruins of civilization become prized and cared for objects as travelers bring them in for Thompson to care for them. The anchor of the past also anchors the community at the airport, with Thompson as the stable elderly man who cares for the time 'before.' In this space, Kristen finds healing from her years of wandering and in the final pages of the novel, as she stares through a telescope Thompson shares with her the hope for the future. Lights, electric lights, shine pinpricks of light into the distance. The mnemonic wandering, in *Station Eleven*, circles from the 'before' to the 'after' and comes back to the 'before.' The elements of hope present at the novel's end arise from the ruins of the previous civilization and propel the novel forward into unknown territory.

The Traveling Symphony lingers at the airport for five weeks, healing and repairing from the long days on the road before they head south toward the lights. The wandering continues past the pages of the book, which allow the series to continue unresolved but with an optimistic move toward the future. The tragedies that befall the Symphony as they wander through space and time are not discarded in favor of an optimistic future but rather are placed in contiguity with the successes. Wandering the ruins of the apocalypse moves toward entropy, but in the end a new source of energy can be found; there can always be an addition to the series.

In this final section, wandering takes on an even more fragmented and paratactic movement. Ontography, a term drawn out by Ian Bogost in his 1991 monograph *Alien Phenomenology: Or What its Like to be a Thing*, has roots in physics and information science. The term describes, in Bogost's formulation, "a name for a general inscriptive strategy, one that uncovers the repleteness of units and their objectivity" (38). I pick up ontography as a kind of paratactic wandering that appears in post-apocalyptic fiction as lists and series that "function primarily as provocations, as litanies of surprisingly contrasted curiosities" (38). As the

characters move through the ruined landscapes of their post-apocalyptic world, lists often come to the mind of the wanderer. Lists of things, people, activities, and more appear in a variety of works that deal with a major catastrophic event. In post-apocalyptic fiction, they gather things together and name what is seen, heard, and encountered on the path.

The first five chapter of *Station Eleven* follow a chronological order, beginning on the night the plague starts to spread. Each chapter introduces a character (who later appear as part of their own chapters) and their behavior responding to the events of the plague. Chapter six departs from the chronology, however, and opens with "An Incomplete List" (31). This chapter is a series of sentences which begin "no more" and lists things that do not exist in the present of the novel, twenty-five years after the plague. "No more diving into pools of chlorinated water lit green from below" is the first sentence (31). The anaphora "no more" emphasizes the things and experience that live only in the memory of the remaining survivors. This chapter functions as the intermediary between the 'before' and the 'after,' the whole and the ruined. Each sentence highlights the alien nature of the things as they "rebuff the connecting power of *being itself*" (Bogost 40). In the context of the novel, the ruins of civilization continuously call to mind the unknowability of that has been lost. The protagonists that survive the plague must continuously name what was 'before' for those children born after the events. The list also "draws our attention to the curious world outside [the] person" that reveals the expansive and mysterious nature of things (Bogost 41). Coming back to being-in-the-world requires naming what is not ready-to-hand, what does not function, what is ruined.

In the context of material intimacy, this kind of paratactic wandering does the real "philosophical work" that Bogost says is ontography's job. Curiously, the style of lists also reveals a great deal about the affect of ruins as reflected in the human's response. Margaret

Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy invokes many such lists, through various characters, that survive what she calls "the waterless flood."[53] Each of the three novels follows a principle character and those in their immediate circle. In the first novel, *Oryx and Crake*, the sole voice is Jimmy. Jimmy believes he is the last remaining survivor, a last man, of a plague orchestrated by Crake to wipe out the worst of humanity. Jimmy survives to care for Crake's genetically modified humans, the Crakers, and to ensure their survival. After escaping the compound where the genetic plague was unleashed, Jimmy sets up residence in a tree and calls himself Snowman. The demarcating line between Jimmy and Snowman is sharp. Snowman's identity arises from the ruins of known civilization, and it is his voice that drives the novel, even as he flashes back to Jimmy's experience and tries to figure out how he arrived to his current situation.

Snowman does not take up wandering initially because he is anchored to his tree by his charges the Crakers. However, after a threatening storm (and a drunken stupor), he realizes he must venture out to find food across the dangerous ruin littered landscape and back to the compound. The compound, ReJoovenEsense, contains many hazards: sidestreets covered with vines, trucks, vans, motorcycles, bullet holes, "The Taj Mahal, the Louvre, the Empire State Building . . . old books, on postcards, on Blood and Roses" (222). Snowman encounters and names things as he wanders through the entangled landscape of vines and broken windows. He also lists off words in his mind, words that have no referent, but that he cannot forget. Material intimacy prods him to remember despite his resistance to his own memories.

[53] The plagues in both *The Last Man* and *Station Eleven* are also referred to as waterless floods. The corollary here to the devastating natural disasters I have already discussed is more philosophical than direct; however, despite the disasters differing on an 'agent' level, the paratactic responses are eerily similar.

Conclusion

Toward Entropy

> Chiaroscuro: *figurative*. Used of poetic or literary treatment, criticism, mental complexion, etc., in various obvious senses, as mingled 'clearness and obscurity', 'cheerfulness and gloom', 'praise and blame,' etc.
>
> --Oxford English Dictionary

As I must somehow conclude my analytical work on material intimacy I am faced, like Jenny Rice, with the question that "if rhetoric is a process of knowing, doing and making, then . . . what can be made and done with the knowledge generated from such analyses" (198)? What can be gained from understanding material intimacy? What does this understanding contribute to rhetorical studies? My goal in this project has been to locate, describe, and understand one form of human and nonhuman intra-action that penetrates deeply into the ways of Being-in-the-world. My entry into that understanding has been the role ruins of disaster contribute to that Being. The characteristics of loss, displacement, and disorientation that are at the heart of a relation with ruins of disaster have also been intertwined, for my part, with confrontation, attunement, and exploration. This is the chiaroscuro of the mosaic of ruins. The contrast of light and dark, of joy and trauma, coalesce in the material intimacy I have worked to uncover in this project. There can be no completion in that endeavor, only becoming.

The implications for rhetoric in this becoming can be found by locating the moments of care that appear in the space of material intimacy. The witness through Being-there provides opportunities for care and concern as we saw in the calls for help following both the Galveston Storm and Hurricane Harvey. Coming face-to-face with ruin through witnessing the devastation of those storms created an intimate encounter that opened space for contact with the ruins via first-hand accounts shared with the media. That witnessing makes connections possible that serve the people and places affected by the storms. As a form of Being-with, listening-with as I described in the third chapter opens spaces of contact with the parts of the self and the ruin that resist description even as the listener tried to express the experience. The role of material intimacy in these encounters can be found in the failures of language to capture the trauma. These encounters produce an affective movement demonstrates by the moments of silence, description, and gathering displayed by the paratactic markers in the texts. Listening-with these markers reveal responses to the mate(real)ity of ruin that have the potential for shifting the conversation surrounding the aftermath of disasters. And wandering, Being-toward, as a peripatetic movement leads us here, to entropy—to the potential regeneration imagined in post-apocalyptic narratives—toward hope. These encounters can be applied in a variety of contexts.

Pedagogically, the paratactic practices I have described in this project can be instructive for both the instructor and the student. Open-ended assignments that embrace uncertainty and engage in witnessing, listening, or wandering lend themselves to a study of the ways in which the worldhood-of-the-world presses in on the writer. For example, a paratactic assignment that involves seeking out of a confrontation with the Other, such as a building, animal, plant, or object challenges the writer to consider that confrontation through description that suspends meaning making. By allowing for a paratactic style, the instructor leaves open possibilities and

engages in a kind of thinking that resists interpretation. Each of the practices I discuss in this project could be channeled through assignments that function as non-interpretive inventions. Framing discussions and assignments in a first-year writing course within the context of material intimacy and with guidance that leaves open the possibility for non-interpretive invention can encourage students to see, listen, and discover new sources of energy for their writing.

Another way that material intimacy informs pedagogy is through the acknowledgement of mate(real)ity in the environments in which we teach. Sarah Shelton has recently argued for a posthuman pedagogy that accounts for the mate(real)ities that intra-act in the teaching environment. A fuller accounting of these mate(real)ities in the form of desks, flooring, white boards, computers, bodies, backpacks, pens, concrete, windows, wheels, trash cans, and many other objects engage in an ecological way of teaching by considering the influence that these things have on the minds and bodies that are learning. Sometimes that learning occurs in slowing down and attending to the stuff of the world. In our age of constant information overload, material intimacy can sharpen the focus on mate(real)ity in ways that consider the Other with care and concern.

All expenditures of energy come at a price. As systems lose energy, they become more diluted and disordered. Sites of ruin are spaces where the energy is ephemeral, transferred out, distributed, and unavailable. This space of entropy constitutes a powerful place of Being where the potential for the infusion of new energy exists. Transformation, real transformation, is not possible without this space. The cyclical nature of ecological systems, as energy is distributed and redistributed, works as a principle and a process that can generate a deeper understanding of material intimacy. If we are all moving toward entropy, humans and nonhumans alike, then this is the only certainty we can be sure of. Where will new forms of energy come from? What will

they look like? How will they reenergize the system? These questions, in the entropy present at the end of this project, function in part as a search for a new source of energy.

I look forward to new sources of energy in my future work. The principles of material intimacy I outline in this project can be applied to cultural contexts outside of natural disaster. In my next project, I move into the connection between the mate(real)ity of the ruins of indigenous people. The layered temporal contexts present in ruins such as those at Machu Piccu or in Mesa Verde National Park have their own affective properties, particularly in engaging with tourists who are outside of the culture who built them. The treatment of these ruins and the response by contemporary tourists can be examined using the principles of witnessing, listening, and wandering. As part of the ecology of those environments, the ruins need to be accounted for alongside the stakeholders, such as government agencies and the indigenous peoples the ruins represent. I believe that the intimacies associated with these kinds of ruins present new ways of learning from mate(real)ity and have a great deal to teach Western thinkers about our relationship with the world.

I am also interested in further developing and refining my lexicon for analyzing narratives of disaster. The 1906 earthquake in San Francisco offers a comparable study to the one I have done here. Other ruins of disaster such as the more ephemeral ruin of bodies following the nuclear disaster at Fukushima present more opportunities to examine the ways that ruins influence, shape, and provoke the humans who encounter them. In this age of climate change, the threat of disaster is ever present. My hope is that my attempts to develop a stronger and more robust lexicon for discussion can illuminate the ways in which humans might respond differently to these ruins and perhaps build a more ethical relation with the built and unbuilt environment.

One of my final contentions in this project is that new sources of energy come in fact from material intimacy—or intimacies. The available means, the potential untapped energy of ruins, have not been exhausted. Drawing close to ruins and other mate(real)ities brings uncertainty, openness, and discomfort that challenge us to rethink the potential intra-actions we have with decay and growth, with light and dark, with chiaroscuro. I leave this project with glistening shards—a mosaic of fragments left in paratactic closeness and intimately joined toward entropy.

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