Dark Ecology and Nineteenth Century Fiction

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Thesis Abstract

This study unites critical animal studies and OOO-based ecocriticism to create a dark ecological theory that enriches our understanding of the universe and the position of humanity. In the first chapter, I interrogate this theory through an examination of Kipling's feral child in *The Jungle Books*. In the second chapter, I examine *Jude the Obscure* and *Wuthering Heights* in the context of their current ecocritical and animal studies readings to expand our critical understanding of these works in the light of the theory I've constructed.

Introduction

Relatively recently, the theoretical movements of ecocriticism and posthumanism have gained more traction within the humanities, each attempting to push our conception of humanity and our perceived relationship with our surroundings toward more inclusive and complicated ways of being. Posthumanism entered literary studies around the mid-1990s and ecocriticism started, in a kind of scattered fashion, in the 1980s. Posthumanism and ecocriticism are usually studied apart, and different scholars use these schools to approach a variety of issues. Animal studies, another movement of the mid-1990s, has begun to blend together with posthumanism in some strands of the discipline in a way that asks critics to consider a wider range of being when we talk about 'the animal.' When I refer to posthumanism throughout this study, I will be thinking about this section of the discipline.

The current movement towards dark ecology or posthumanist ecology is just beginning to bridge the gap between ecocriticism and posthumanism, but the fundamental divisions still remain, especially in terms of conversations about the living and nonliving environment. Dark ecology, a term coined by Timothy Morton in *Ecology Without Nature* (2007), "acknowledges that there is no way out of the paradoxes…Far from remaining natural, ecocriticism must admit that this is contingent and queer" (143). Dark ecology "dances with the subject-object duality" and "preserves the dark, depressive quality of life in the shadow of ecological catastrophe" (185, 187). What I hope to create here is a dark ecology that delves to the very bottom of dark ecology, a study that not only attempts to close the distance between all forms of living matter but illustrates how living and nonliving matter are governed by similar principles. Ultimately, I will

construct an ecology that brings life and environment together under fundamental questions of *existence*.

In creating this dark ecological vision, I intend to show that a reliance on literature, especially the literature of the British nineteenth century, is remarkably helpful. The nineteenth century was a period of immense and rapid change – the Industrial Revolution and developments in the sciences led to massive changes in the way that people were thinking about themselves and other beings. Literature was particularly responsive to these intellectual shifts and authors like George Eliot and Thomas Hardy receive a fair amount of Darwinian and scientific criticism. As Heidi C.M. Scott recently argued in *Chaos and Cosmos* (2014), nineteenth century literature engaged intensely with the environment and developed concepts that pre-dated both the study of ecology and the development of these ecological concepts in the natural sciences. Even when literature is reacting to cultural or scientific movements, the literary manifestations of these concepts are often more culturally impactful because, as Scott points out, the public often receives much of their scientific information from the narrative form (84).[1] We can use literature to understand the ways in which the application of scientific ideas changed throughout the century, either in response to or unaffiliated with changes in the scientific community. To do so would allow us to understand the evolution of dark ecological ideas in the nineteenth century and reveal those connections to twenty-first century thought that are currently obscured.

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[1] Scott argues that scientific information was largely transmitted through the narrative form in the nineteenth century and scientists relied on stories to communicate their findings. Today, hard science has shifted away from this practice, but Scott shows that the public still receives much of its scientific information in this narrative way; she cites Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* as a primary example of this continued trend.

As Cary Wolfe points out in *What is Posthumanism?,* we can trace the origins of posthumanism to two key moments: 1) Foucault's *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966) where, in the closing paragraph, Foucault writes that "the historical appearance of this thing called 'man' was not 'the transition into luminous consciousness of an age-old concern, the entry into objectivity of something that had long remained trapped within beliefs and philosophies: it was the effect of a change in the fundamental arrangements of knowledge…. man is an invention of recent date'"; or 2) the 1946-1953 Macy conferences on cybernetics and the invention of systems theory (xii). The cyborg strand of posthumanism began with Donna Haraway and "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1991), and is perhaps the most famous aspect of this particular theoretical field. In recent years, the cyborg lineage has led to a movement called "transhumanism," a movement focused on "the enhancement of human intellectual, physical, and emotional capabilities, the elimination of disease and unnecessary suffering, and the dramatic extension of life span… [it] is a belief in the engineered evolution of 'post-humans'…'whose basic capacities so radically exceed those of present humans as to no longer be unambiguously human by our current standards'" (Garreau qtd. in *What is Posthumanism?,* xiii).

There are, of course, other strands of posthumanist methodology that stand in stark opposition to the work and claims of the transhumanism movement. Wolfe's style of posthumanism, for example, completely rejects the notion that we can somehow transcend our biological humanity, that we can move beyond embodiment in this techno-fashion. Wolfe theorizes posthumanism in a way that is

> analogous to Jean-François Lyotard's paradoxical rendering of the postmodern: it comes both before and after humanism: before in the sense that it names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world, the prosthetic coevolution of the human animal with the technicity of tools and external archival mechanisms (such as language and culture)…and all of which comes before that historically specific thing called 'the human'… But it comes after in the sense that posthumanism names a historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatic, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore. (*What is Posthumanism?* xv)

By theorizing posthumanism in this way, we are forced to confront not only our humanity, but the systems of thinking that structure our lives and our values. We must question not only our position in the universe, but the structures we've used to justify that position.

Ecocriticism, the longest standing of these fields in the literary humanities, has also undergone quite an evolution of thought since its inception. We are now, as first declared in Lawrence Buell's book, *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005), in the second wave of ecocriticism (Hiltner 131). First wave ecocriticism originated in the twentieth century, was largely focused on the human relationship with the environment, and brought critical attention to the landscape of a particular literary text. This form of criticism was drawn to the wilderness and was interested in texts and authors that romanticized the relationship between humans and the environment. Second wave ecocriticism began in the twenty-first century and is much more skeptical of texts that

romanticize their environments. Second wave ecocriticism has addressed issues of environmental justice (echoing the initial move in animal studies concerning animal rights), scalar issues (the idea that environmental degradation is not simply confined to one area, but spread all over the globe), and through a more theoretical lens (Hiltner 132). This theoretical perspective is where critics like Timothy Morton come in. Morton views ecocriticism through Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) and proclaims that we must achieve an 'ecology without nature.'

Though I must admit that I find the cyborg strand of posthumanism particularly enticing, I will take this moment to declare my theoretical allegiance. I find myself within the posthumanism of Cary Wolfe and the ecocriticism of Timothy Morton, a combination of work that destabilizes the human to the very core and pushes our conception of self and species in the realms of both living and nonliving things. Traditionally, the fields of ecocriticism and posthumanism have been considered separately, taken as different critical approaches to literature that, while possibly compatible, have yet to be effectively combined. I am suggesting here that we combine these two schools of thought to achieve a *fundamental destabilization,* a complete shift in the way we view humans and humanity in the world. By paying attention to the physical environment (as ecocriticism asks us to do) and the planet's living creatures (as posthumanism asks us to do), we are able to consider a wider scale of existence, to examine different kinds of questions in a more universal fashion.

By combining these theoretical approaches we create a more complete, more complex, understanding of the universe. We are now deeply aware that we live in a universe populated with nonhuman subjects, laws of physics, nonliving things (like rocks,

air, and water), and strange objects that Morton terms "hyperobjects." Hyperobjects become increasingly important in the dark ecology I am proposing, as they allow us to reframe some of the systems that humans claim when we are arguing for human superiority. Ecocriticism doesn't typically address questions of language or society, but we are able to bring these concepts to OOO-ecocriticism if we combine the fields in this way. These systems, or objects, become the hyperobjects of our posthuman world, the systems that infiltrate every aspect of what it means to *exist* instead of what it means to be *human.*

In this thesis, I will demonstrate how this dark ecology can both demonstrate the pervasiveness of these hyperobjects (language and social organization) and illuminate the underlying relationships in a given literary text. In chapter one, "Hyperobjects and Kipling's *The Jungle Books,"* I show that we can think of both language and social organizations as hyperobjects. Thinking dark ecologically allows us to both reconsider these objects and reexamine *The Jungle Books* to reveal a more ecological project. Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Books* serve as a fantastic lens through which to see dark ecology –about a feral child who ultimately has to straddle the line between the human and animal worlds, *The Jungle Books* literalizes many of the queries and relationships we find when pursuing this critical methodology. *The Jungle Books* were published in 1894 and 1895, almost forty years after *On the Origin of Species* and two decades after *Descent of Man.* A number of scholars have looked at the *Jungle Books* in a post-Darwinian way, and some examine the presentation of the animals and their relationship with Mowgli, the feral child. Indeed, my own examination will refer back to Darwin's theory, and I intend to demonstrate that he and other nineteenth century scientists created

a crucial foundation for the theoretical work we are doing today. The theory that emerges from this examination will enable us to both better understand what the implications are of what I'm proposing and will also create a map for the examination of other literary texts.

In chapter two, "Dark Ecology, *Wuthering Heights,* and *Jude the Obscure,*" I apply my hyperobjective theory to two prominent narratives in the nineteenth century, and show the way that our critical perspective of these texts changes when we think about language and social organization as hyperobjects. *Wuthering Heights,* published 12 years before *On the Origin of Species*, allows an exploration into what this hyperobjective reading looks like in narratives before Darwin. Though Brontë doesn't align her narrative with the dark ecological principles I will explore, her text allows us to read against some aspects of her novel. *Jude the Obscure,* contemporaneous with *The Jungle Books* (it began serialization in 1894 and was published in book form in 1895) offers a counterpoint to my examination of *The Jungle Books* and the cultural conception of dark ecology during the fin de siècle. Hardy, an immensely ecologically aware writer, embodies much of what a hyperobjective reading is intended to do – break down the walls between the human and the nonhuman.

When we think dark ecologically, we are able to examine the stakes of a more companionate human/animal relationship, to better understand how humans relate to the physical matter around them, and dissect the notions of humanity that contemporary humans have come to rely on. When we view texts through an ecocriticism and posthumanism combination lens we open a new, deeper level of inquiry. Dark ecology

reshapes the way we think about humans, nonhumans, systems, plants, rocks, and, surrounding us all, the universe.

Chapter One: Hyperobjects and Kipling's *The Jungle Books*

Examining Kipling's animals through a dark ecological lens will require close attention to a number of aspects of Kipling's presentation, including language and social organization. When we see linguistic and social systems given to animals in literature, we tend to write them off – we argue that there is nothing more to these animals than a simple, allegorical relationship with the human beings the author intends to reach and describe. But my project is to examine the ways in which we can interrogate this conception of the literary animal, to find ways that we can see beyond the surface of the animals' depiction in literature, and to locate hidden paths to inclusivity. In order to try to understand the foundational relationships between humans and other objects in the universe, we must reexamine some of the main systems that humans hold onto most dearly. When we redefine language and social organization, we see that all objects have access to these systems and, thus, fundamentally change the way we think about humans, animals, plants, and all other things on the planet and in the universe.

When we describe these processes in a dark ecological way, the combination of posthumanism and ecocriticism is extremely generative. Posthumanism requires us to think about the condition of living organisms, specifically animal organisms, to consider the status of the human and all the nonhumans we exist alongside. Ecocriticism complicates this vision and pushes us into increasingly weirder spaces – we move from an ecology without nature to an ecology without *world* and, eventually, without *matter*. This brand of criticism allows us to consider living and nonliving objects simultaneously

and asserts that, despite any differences in the ways we might exist in the universe, we cannot deny that these other objects are not less *real* than we are.

To begin combining these theoretical approaches, I will rely heavily on Morton's conception of hyperobjects. Hyperobjects "are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans," and ask us to reframe our conception of being, space, time, and the interactions between them (*Hyperobjects* 1). When we think about posthumanism through hyperobjects, we complicate what it means to be human and nonhuman in ways that reveal the connections and differences between all modes of existence. If we are to think of linguistic and organizational systems as hyperobjects, it makes sense to begin by mapping out Morton's characteristics for a hyperobject. For Morton, hyperobjects are

> *viscous*, which means that they 'stick' to beings that are involved with them. They are *nonlocal*; in other words, any 'local manifestation' of hyperobjects is not directly a hyperobject. They involve profoundly different temporalities than the human-scale ones we are used to…. Hyperobjects occupy a high-dimensional phase space that results in their being invisible to humans for stretches of time. And they exhibit their effects *interobjectively*; that is, they can be detected in a space that consists of interrelationships between aesthetic properties of objects. (*Hyperobjects* 1)

To think about language and social organization as hyperobjects requires that we change our conception of an 'object,' that we reconsider what constitutes *being*. Morton proposes evolution as a hyperobject, a proposition that I support heartily, especially as it helps clear the way for less 'physical' objects to take on the definition of object-hood. Objects, in this study, are defined as they are in object-oriented ontology (OOO) – all things

(humans, birds, laptops, lichen, Harry Potter) are objects and no single mode of existence is greater than another. The question of being is tied to this existence – because these objects exist, they can be said to *be.*

Morton also argues that "Hyperobjects are not just collections, systems, or assemblages of other objects. They are objects in their own right," (*Hyperobjects* 2). Language and social organizations, though, might not seem to fit into this frame. They are abstract concepts, things that seem to exist entirely within the human mind and are creations of the human consciousness. It makes sense that we might think this, though, because as Levi Bryant explains, "we can never know what the object is in-itself, but only what it is for-us. In short, any truth one might articulate is not a truth of the world as it would be regardless of whether or not we exist, but only a truth for-us" ("Correlationism"). In creating my hyperobjective reading, I hope to demonstrate that there is something more physical, more *object*, about our linguistic and organizational systems than we might initially be willing to grant.

When we think about these systems as hyperobjects, we fundamentally change the way that we see our world and our position within it. If we are no longer able to exclusively claim some of the central tenets of humanity, how does this shift our sense of self? Of species? We must acknowledge that everything we know, every aspect of ourselves is somehow embedded in this wider framework, that we share these hyperobjective features with ants, plants, viruses, rocks, and dark matter. If we are able to think about language and social organizations in this way, what else can we begin to think about hyperobjectively? What happens to these new concepts when we consider *them* though this lens? Though I won't explore these particular questions here, as we

move towards a more posthumanist dark ecology we will have to determine the limits of the theoretical framework I am building.

In this chapter, I will examine language and social organization (like government) in the context of this new dark ecology and Kipling's *The Jungle Books*. We will find that, when we think about these abstract systems in a dark ecological way, we are firmly enmeshed in the universe that we exist in. These systems will stop seeming like the special, human creations that we often think them to be. Instead, we will recognize them as aspects of existing within the universe that are open to all objects present in the same space. What emerges, then, is a more intense version of Wolfe's expansive worldview, more creaturely applicable than Morton's ecocriticism and friendlier to non-living objects than Wolfe's conception of the world.

As language is perhaps the single characteristic that draws the most critical attention, we will begin our exploration here. Kipling's animals all speak their own language, languages that must be learned in order to do business across species lines. The Snake-People, birds, and those that "hunt on four feet" all have their own Master Words and language, creating groups that transcend the immediate species groups; these units align more closely with orders or families of creatures than species. Why would Kipling create languages that are able to extend to a large group of species, including a disparate group that includes bears, panthers, wolves, and other four-legged creatures? First, limiting the number of languages within the jungles provides a level of ease when narrating interactions between different species of animals. We don't, for instance, need an explanation as to why Shere Khan, Tabaqui, the wolf pack, Baloo, and Bagheera all speak the same language. Their shared language also allows the reader to assume a

degree of affiliation, making it seem less strange that a bear would be charged with educating the young wolves of the wolf pack. These common languages could be a way of expressing some fundamental similarities across a variety of species, a kind of vestige of a common ancestor.

In 1877, *Mind*, a journal of psychology and the natural sciences, published two important articles about the evolution of language: a translated version of Hypolite Taine's "The Acquisition of Language by Children," and Charles Darwin's "Biographical Sketch of an Infant." Both pieces establish a connection between the language use of a young child and that of the 'lower animals' and 'primitive peoples.' Taine draws a clear line between the bodies of human beings and the bodies of animals:

> Speaking generally, the child presents in a passing state the mental characteristics that are found in a fixed state in primitive civilisations, very much as the human embryo presents in a passing state the physical characteristics that are found in a fixed state in the classes of inferior animals. (259)

The bodies of these animals very much reflect the intellectual capacities of the mind – human beings eventually develop a mind capable of great things while animal remain in a fixed, embryonic state. Animals, here and throughout Taine's piece, are denied a capacity for language (and even an advanced form of existence) in any sense. Animals are strictly relegated to the physical realm and are not given any purchase in the intellectual or mental realm. Though Taine is willing to assert that the child's vocal mechanics are "natural vocal gestures, not learned" he is quick to point out at any opportunity how the child's vocal abilities exceed that of other animals (255).

Darwin, in a similar fashion, connects the linguistic development of children to those abilities in animals. In "Biographical Sketch of an Infant," Darwin quotes an example from Professor Mőbius about a pike in an attempt to demonstrate that animals are unable to distinguish between a mirror or photographic image and a living creature. The pike, though, was simply placed behind a glass partition that allowed him to see living beings on the other side. After many failed attempts at attacking the minnows on the other side of the division, the pike eventually gave up and refused to attack the minnows even when the partition was removed (291). Though this specific example isn't so much about the ability to create language as it is about the mental capacities of a given species, the pike, for Darwin, is not likely to produce any kind of linguistic sign if we cannot say that it has the ability to retain any knowledge about the environment. While this example is presented to demonstrate that a child has higher abilities than a fish, the fact that the pike was able to *learn* is significant. The pike, like the child learning to speak, was observing and repeating simple actions that, over time, lead to the acquisition of knowledge (or, in the case of the child, the ability to create coordinated vocal sounds).

Tess Cosslett argues that there is a consistent confusion about whether the acquisition of animal languages is a route to gain community or mastery in the *The Jungle Books* (*Talking Animals* 134). I would argue, though, that while Mowgli does *seem* to have the upper hand when it comes to language acquisition, this could be explained without having to resort to the trope of the human mastering all that the nonhuman have to offer. Mowgli's ability to grasp a variety of animal languages is simple: raised within the wolf pack, Mowgli would have to attain at least a simple grasp of wolf language in order to survive. The other animals also made a conscious effort to

teach Mowgli the other languages of the jungle, an education that is often pointed to as evidence of the animals' acceptance of Mowgli's human dominance. Baloo's intentions, though, are entirely related to survival, noting that the "Master Words of the Jungle… shall protect him with the birds and the Snake-People, and all that hunt on four feet" (26). This protection is critical for Mowgli, because he is coming into the jungle as an outsider, as a human that could draw negative human attention should he be seen outside the boundaries of the jungle. Hathi the Elephant, a leader of all the creatures in the jungle, guards these words, indicating that the knowledge Mowgli possesses is not unique. It is clear, though, that these languages are being taught throughout the jungle to ensure a degree of cooperation among a variety of species. Kaa, a snake, is able to talk to Mowgli, Baloo, and Bagheera though it isn't specified whether Kaa is speaking snake-language or four-legged hunter language. Either way, we can be sure that all these characters have some understanding of the other languages of the jungle.

Cosslett points out that "language is not an important distinguishing mark between animal and man, or between 'wild' and civilized man," a fact that she attributes to Kipling's Darwinism (132). I think this is correct, especially when we consider that Darwin placed animal sounds on a continuum that led to the evolution of human language. "Some of the most distinctive characters of man," Darwin notes, "have in all probability been acquired, either directly or more commonly indirectly, through Natural Selection" (*Descent* 64). These characteristics include language and the mental faculties, and, as Darwin asserts, we can no longer pretend that our intellectual capabilities have been divinely or otherwise derived:

> If no organic being excepting man had possessed any mental power, or if his powers had been of a wholly different nature from those of the lower animals, then we should never have been able to convince ourselves that our high faculties had been gradually developed. But it can be shown that there is no fundamental difference of this kind (ibid. 69-70).

Darwin is even willing to assert that “there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties” (ibid. 70). Though this is certainly a huge step in the right direction, we must push Darwin further. Enter language as hyperobject.

To begin thinking about language hyperobjectively, we must first recognize that it indeed fits our definition of object, a feat we can most rapidly achieve through example. Evolution is, notably, one of the hyperobjects that Morton mentions most frequently (alongside global warming). Evolution, a process that unfolds through a combination of environmental changes, genetic response, and sexual selection, mirrors language in a way that helps establish object-status for language. Like evolution, language is produced over a certain amount of time in response to environmental conditions through tiny changes in our brain’s functioning. The speech we produce is a collection of synaptic charges that work in different parts of the brain to form linguistic terms and coordinate physical actions, like mouth movements and breathing. We could say (as many have) that our human brains are specifically designed to create these kinds of neural pathways, that our ability to create language separates us from ‘the beasts.’ If we think back to Darwin, though, we see that the capacity for language has been present in animals all along, that

we evolved a *different* form of vocalization, one that happened to work very well for us, but not a form that is necessarily *universally better.*

Animal studies frequently voices such opinions and is definitely onto something, but we need to push this theorization beyond the boundaries of the animal. If we think about language as the coordinated firing of synapses and the subsequent movements and vibrations intended to produce some kind of vocalization *or* a physical marker of communication (like body language), we are suddenly left with an extremely broad definition of what constitutes language. 'Language' no longer simply means a verbal message passed between sentient beings – it becomes any act of communication (chemical, verbal, physical, etc.) emitted by an object, *regardless of whether or not we consider it sentient or if we see the object as having an intended audience.* Current research in plant biology, for example, is now finding that plants communicate with one another by sending chemical signals through the soil. Our white blood cells might, this very second, be marking invading bacteria or viruses for elimination within our bloodstream, communicating to the rest of our immune system through these (and other) chemical messages. These invading viruses, non-living objects, are communicating with our hijacked cells and forcing them to produce more copies to further infect our bodies. We are also confronted with the realization that "language itself is composed of things," a composition that brings a more concrete foundation to the abstract idea of language (Bogost *Alien Phenomenology* 56). But language as we conceive of it (spoken human language) is only one manifestation, one particular expression of what language is "in-itself" (Bryant "Correlationism").

Language is viscous in that the words stick in our brains, that we cannot find a way to process the world through any other means. We must take the visual world and change it into human language in order for us to understand it. This requirement has led to the creation of literature, speech, and any number of other wonderful human creations, but it also limits our experience of the world in a way that we cannot know or understand.[2] Each species has their own set of limitations, some way outside of their physical ability to process the world around them, but they also have their own abilities. Some can detect changes in the electromagnetic field, some process light differently, and still others function without vision at all. Each of these abilities changes the way that language is produced - they open some paths of interpretation and close others.

As humans, we are completely caught up in our particular manifestation of language, but once we begin expanding the definition, as we've done, we start to understand just how pervasive language is. Communication permeates every aspect of existence - we find it in quantum physics, biology, chemistry, and the social sciences. Morton's sticky assessment of hyperobjects is especially relevant here: "The more you try to get rid of them, the more you realize you can't get rid of them," but it also leads us into another key aspect of hyperobjectivity - nonlocality (*Hyperobjects* 36). No single manifestation of language (this thesis, a cat's meow, the RNA and DNA floating inside your cells, the plants chatting outside through your garden soil) is language itself; you cannot experience *language*, linguists tell us, only specific instances of it. Removing this

[2] We cannot, for example, sense infrared radiation or electromagnetic fields without technological assistance. There are also abilities that we cannot technologically obtain, like the kind of chemical communication plants and cells practice. Having these abilities naturally would, undoubtedly, change the way that we think about and interact with the world.

conception out of the linguistic and placing it squarely in the hyperobjective pushes this conception of nonlocality outside the realm of the human. When we think about the physical reactions that create language, we are also confronted with this nonlocal reality. The synapses firing in my brain as I type this sentence are creating the movements in my fingers and the words in my mind, but they are not creating language. Language is something completely separate, something removed from the process of thinking, writing, and speaking. Language is something different that I cannot totally access.

The temporality of language, too, exceeds human comprehension: thousands of neurons fire in our minds every second, every fraction of a second and produce movements, thoughts, words, feelings, and anything else you might be doing or thinking about doing, a scale of reaction that is unparalleled by anything in lived experience. On the opposite end of the temporal spectrum, if we think about language as a not-necessarily-human object, we become overwhelmed with the immensity of objects we now must include in our linguistic club, of the length of time that some sort of language has existed on Earth and in the universe.

Perhaps most importantly, thinking about language in this ways reveals all the connections that exist within our universe. These connections create the mesh of existence that "consists of links, but also of gaps between links"; and these gaps become crucial: "it is precisely the gaps between and within things that enable entities to grip them" (*Hyperobjects* 83). It is the gaps in the mesh that allows our hyperobjects to stick to them; language-as-hyperobject touches us all. We, humans, are no longer separate and superior organisms because we can write letters, read Charles Dickens' novels, and deliver moving speeches. When we allow ourselves to become enmeshed in the linguistic

universe around us, we not only recognize, as Darwin did, that we evolved language from our animal counterparts, but we come to understand that communication has existed within the universe all along. The question from here becomes, as Cary Wolfe poses in relation to animals, what are we going to make of all these new voices?

When we carry this theorization of language back into posthumanism, we find that we have addressed the question of animal language most thoroughly. As Wolfe points out,

> it is not simply a question of 'giving language back to the animal,' but rather of showing the difference in *kind* between human and animal…language may instead be thought as difference in *degree* on a continuum of signifying processes disseminated in field of materiality, technicity, and contingency, of which 'human' 'language' is but a specific (albeit highly refined) instance ("Shadow of Wittgenstein's Lion" 35).

In theorizing language as a hyperobject, we have "rigorously theorize[d] the *disarticulation* between the category of language and the category of species," but we have also moved beyond the limitations of the animal ("Shadow of Wittgenstein's Lion" 38). We have considered language in a *universal* way, seen language as an object that is not simply created in the recesses of the human (or animal) mind. Language is a part of us, of *all* of us, in a way we never before realized.

When Mowgli first enters the human village, he finds that he is unable to communicate with any of the villagers because he cannot speak any human languages. "'What is the good of a man,'" Mowgli wonders, "'if he does not understand man's talk? Now I am as silly and dumb as a man would be with us in the jungle. I must speak their

talk'" (52). After Mowgli is taken in by Messua, he begins imitating her speech "and before dark he had learned the name of many things in the hut" (52). This learning-by-repetition model is strikingly similar to the way that Mowgli learns the languages of the jungle – Baloo asked Mowgli to say "the same thing over a hundred times" (26). Language acquisition becomes a way of belonging, in the jungle and outside it, a connection that reflects our shared linguistic hyperobject. We, humans and nonhumans, rely on language in some way to create a sense of belonging.

Theorizing the social organization hyperobject will not be nearly as straightforward as our theorization of language. Government seems to exist entirely outside natural laws, seems to be something that humans have created on their own in order to manage the rights and wills of peoples (among other things). This sense of social organization is certainly true, but as we saw with language, this particular view of government is merely a single manifestation of what a government can be.

Kipling records sixteen of the laws from The Law of the Jungle in the song section after "How Fear Came," noting that he "translated into verse… a few of the laws that apply to the Wolves." "There are," he notes, "of course, hundreds and hundreds more, but these will serve as specimens of the simpler rulings" (159). There are three main themes to the laws that Kipling translates: laws governing individual behavior, laws pertaining to matters of pride, and laws governing behavior within the pack. Individual laws cover things like bathing regularly and appropriate times to hunt. Laws that pertain to matters of pride address how the Pack should behave when confronted with a rival group and affirm that "the Wolf is a Hunter" (159). Laws governing behavior within the pack are much more plentiful and comprise ten out of the sixteen laws Kipling records.

Pack laws cover a number of issues, from ensuring rights for particular groups of wolves (Father wolves, Mother wolves, and cubs) to governing standards of behavior within the Pack to ensure that no single wolf profits by denying benefits to the other Wolves.

One of the most interesting jungle laws dictates how a wolf may and may not kill: "Ye may kill for yourselves, and your mates, and your cubs as they need, and ye can;/But kill not for pleasure of killing, and *seven times never kill Man!*" (160). This law creates a kind of privileged position for humans by making them completely unacceptable to kill under any circumstance. This law, though, is slightly complicated earlier in the *Jungle Books,* when the narrator notes that "The Law of the Jungle, which never orders anything without a reason, forbids every beast to eat Man except when he is killing to show his children how to kill, and then he must hunt outside the hunting-grounds of his pack or tribe" (7). It seems, then, that killing humans is not *totally* forbidden, but that humans must be killed away from where the pack might be identified as that human's killer. This desire to avoid revenge is reinforced when we consider that "The Law of the Jungle" immediately follows "How Fear Came," a story about humans killing jungle animals as revenge for the death of a human at the hands of the First of the Tigers.

The humans in "How Fear Came" are referred to as 'Fear' and are believed to be the source for all the terror and violence in the Jungle. Humans have brought a number of violent consequences to the Jungle since this fabled encounter, "through the noose, and the pitfall, and the hidden trap, and the flying stick, and the stinging fly that comes out of white smoke (Hathi meant the rifle), and the Red Flower that drives us into the open" (157). The desire to avoid killing humans, then, is not tied to some reverence for humans that the Jungle animals have, but to the knowledge that humans will likely respond

violently to any acts against their species and that they are very effective when doing so. Unlike the animals in the jungle, who address violence towards a rival pack or the single offending individual, humans place more general traps and involve animals in their violent response that don't necessarily have anything to do with the initial crime. Humans are also, as Hathi points out, able to rely on various technologies that distance the human beings themselves from the scene of the violence, rarely giving the animals a chance to fight back or overpower the human attempting to kill them.

These laws are clearly local manifestations of what a government is, but we can't say that this particular government is government in *itself*. This is merely a form, just as human language is a form, of the larger, hyperobjective whole. Kipling even pokes a bit of fun at this idea of representation in his assertion that the sixteen laws he has sampled will somehow be representations of the jungle government as a whole. There is no way, Kipling seems to be saying, that sixteen simple laws can reflect what the jungle government is, but we can get a taste of what it might be by looking at these particular manifestations of the legal system. We are, like language, unable to think our way out of what a government might be. We can address a number of different manifestations of government (social expectations, legal laws, unspoken rules, etc.), but we cannot find an existence in which we are totally free from 'rules' as such. 'Government' and 'social organization,' here, refer instead to any organizing structure imposed upon objects and does not have to be designed or intended by anyone. The laws of physics impose experiential limitations on us every moment of our lives and yet, these are a form of government. A government of the universe.

Perhaps the biggest roadblock in building this hyperobjective view of social organization is that we so often think of it as something that humans created, something that is abstract and doesn't exist in the physical world. Our political theorists and philosophers talk about a time before government, a time when humans existed in a 'state of nature' or some other variant of the lawless society. Upon entering into a governmental system, humans were essentially creating something new, something that existed outside the space of nature and was entirely *human.* We should be suspicious of this assertion. Further complicating this construction, social laws are able to be broken while natural laws are not. We cannot break the laws of thermodynamics but we can behave in ways that are illegal or socially unacceptable. This is a moment of linguistic slippage that, while I don't think it fundamentally changes my assertions here, does present interesting questions.

Even if we only look to the level of the animal we begin to understand that structured societies are not limited to humans. Many animal groups exist with intact social hierarchies and rules governing which individuals can interact, how these interactions can take place, and what happens when the order is upset or overturned. When we expand our worldview to include other objects, we find that we are all subjected to the same 'laws of nature,' that we cannot circumvent the natural properties of our universe. These laws are hiding in plain sight, their particular relationships with us, and each other, hidden in the fabric of space and time for physicists to attempt to unearth.

Why is it important to think about government in this way? What does our dark ecology stand to gain by theorizing a universe with a government hyperobject? If we think about social organization as something that impacts all universal objects as opposed

to something that humans created to assert control over human populations, we find that all beings are united under the common government of existence. This reality obviously illuminates the interconnectivity between objects but also reminds us how sticky social organization can be. The more we try to move beyond the idea of government, the more we realize that we are irrevocably tied to some manifestation of it. Theorizing social organization is extremely important to our dark ecological vision because, unlike language, government is almost exclusively thought of as an abstract, human-only concept that can't possibly have its derivatives in the 'natural world.' By revealing that our human organization, while admittedly quite sophisticated, is simply a sliver of organization-at-large, we begin to question other abstract concepts that define humanity.

So where does Mowgli fit into this dark ecological vision? Mowgli's status as a feral child gives him unique access to what is going on inside the jungle and allows him to move among a number of different species (and spaces) for his education. Mowgli is simultaneously many creatures: a "man-cub," a "frog," a "sloth," and a "gray ape," among others. Mowgli's physical embodiment of many creatures is reflective of the post-Darwinian understanding of humanity, but is also reflected in Wolfe's posthumanism and Morton's ecocriticism. In Mowgli, Kipling realizes a world that is filled with the voices of other creatures, a living, breathing mesh. Mowgli is able to transcend human/animal boundaries in a profound way: though he must leave the jungle to find a human partner, Mowgli never entirely leaves the jungle behind. Mowgli successfully lives *between* the human/animal boundary, grounded in the mesh, and rejects the notion that nature is something separate from, and incompatible with, humanity.

Mowgli's development peaks in "In the Rukh," a story that presents an adult Mowgli still living in the jungle and in contact with the animals he grew up with. While some critics argue that this piece is indicative of the fact that the human-animal relationship can only exist in the context of childhood, I argue that this is merely a matter of perspective.[3] "In the Rukh" is written from the point of view of Gisbourne, a British official for the Woods and Forests Service, and the story aligns us with his view of the jungle, limiting us to his beliefs about the human/animal relationship. Kipling's treatment of Gisborne mirrors the treatment of the adult audience: he knows they are disbelieving and Kipling chooses, instead, to hide these stories behind a curtain. For Gisborne, Mowgli is either a "ghost," or "surely mad," and his extraordinary knowledge about the jungle is certainly out of the realm of possibility (321, 325). Mowgli's superior, intimate, knowledge of the jungle is passed off as "child's tales," information that seems to be grounded in a story-like realm with no bearing on the reality of the rukh (321). It, of course, comes to pass that Mowgli is correct, that his deeper connection with the jungle has afforded him access to more information than the out-of-touch, British imperialist sent to rule over it.

Mowgli's journey into employment and, later, marriage and parenthood, would seem to suggest that all children must grow out of their natural beginnings, they must grow out of the jungle and, thus, leave their interactions with the animals behind. Mowgli, though, does none of these things. Mowgli, and later his family, continues to live in the jungle with the wolves that he was raised with. Muller, the Head of the Forest

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[3] For Tess Cosslett, Mowgli's movement from wild child to adult is "part of growing up and leaving the childhood space of play and ambivalence between human and animal natures" ("Child's Place" 487). Katherine Grier argues along similar lines and asserts that "the child can grow 'up' in a way the animal never can" (345).

Serivce, and Gisborne discover Mowgli's child on one trip into the jungle: "under the shade of a thorn thicket sprawled a naked brown baby, and from the brake immediately behind him peered the head of a grey wolf" (336). Muller's immediately violent reaction of "'Are you mad?'", "thundered" as he fires shots into the thicket, is tempered by Gisborne's, now enlightened, assertion that the child's mother is nearby and that these wolves have a different relationship with this particular family. As Mowgli's wife suggests, "we who live with them [the wolves] forget that they are strangers at all [to other humans]" (336).

Our remove from these animals will always prevent us from seeing them clearly and, to make them relatable for the purposes of a narrative, we are forced to paint them in our own vision, to give them traits that we recognize in ourselves. But Kipling also asks us to consider that these animals lead lives that we can never access, that even when stripped of the trappings of humanity, the jungle animals lead rich, complex lives that one must have special knowledge to access. Kipling's narrative insists that, as we approach animals with a sense of division and inherent otherness, we are unable to see the similarities and connections that exist between us, regardless of species. These connections are similar to what Darwin argues for earlier in the century: they highlight our physical, mental, and emotional connections to every creature on earth and imbed our human capacities firmly within the animal kingdom that is often thought of as an entirely separate entity.

It is Mowgli's biological humanity that makes all of this possible for *us*. Because Mowgli is a human, we pay more attention to his narrative arc, more attention to the relationships and stories he allows us to articulate and understand. We might object to

this and ask why we don't pay attention to characters like Bagheera, Kaa, or Baloo. This is a valid criticism of the way that we, as critics, talk about literature with central nonhuman characters. Mowgli's humanity, though, allows us to imagine an alternative, another way that we, as humans, can exist within our environment. Before the end of Mowgli's narrative life, he has married and had a child (a typical human trajectory) but he has also managed to achieve a level of connection and embeddedness with the universe that most other humans try to ignore. Instead of moving out of the jungle and setting up a firmly 'human' life, Mowgli continues to live in the jungle, enjoys the trappings of humanity, and remains connected to the jungle and the animals he grew alongside.

Kipling, of course, didn't have the language of twenty-first century posthumanists and ecocritics at his disposal. In the *Jungle Books,* though, Kipling reorients human and animal, firmly situates humans back within the context of the environment, and removes the divisions between human and animal society. The physical destruction of the village in "Letting in the Jungle" is a literalization of this collapse and forces the natural to reabsorb the human, to deny that there is any sort of disconnect between the way humans live and the world in which they happen to inhabit. By pushing these boundaries, by asserting that life within the jungle can lead to a deeper, more intimate understanding of the animal Other, Kipling creates the possibility that humans and animals are able to exist in an equal environment, in which communication and cooperation between species is truly possible. It is only now that, with twenty-first century theory at our fingertips, we can read more deeply into the world that Kipling has created. When we expand our vision

to encompass even those things that transcend our understanding of space, time, and being, we recognize that we are a tiny cog in the machine of the universe.

Chapter Two: Dark Ecology, *Wuthering Heights,* and *Jude the Obscure*

So how do these cogs manifest in other literature of the nineteenth century? The goal of this chapter is to reveal how literary texts and hyperobjective theory inform each other in diverse ways and bring different issues to the fore depending on the narrative situation. In this chapter, I will examine *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) in order to demonstrate what a hyperobjective literary reading looks like in practice and to assert that this particular relationship between humans and 'the natural world' was emerging throughout the nineteenth century as opposed to simply emerging towards the end. *Wuthering Heights* proves a particularly interesting case as it comes over a decade before *On the Origin of Species* was published, the text commonly marked as one that started changing the tide in the conception of the human/animal relationship in the nineteenth century.

The criticism surrounding these texts draws attention to either the animal *or* the environment, but rarely are both aspects of these narratives brought together in any substantive way. *Wuthering Heights* has drawn a fair bit of animal studies criticism in recent years, especially around Heathcliff's wild, animalized portrayal, and the heavy presence of dogs in these narratives.[4] By and large, the critical consensus seems to be

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[4] Even Heathcliff's animality is frequently overlooked or addressed as a question that is reflective of a racial or class Other in *Wuthering Heights.* Ivan Kreilkamp begins to shift this conversation in "Petted Things: *Wuthering Heights* and the Animal" where he talks extensively about the animalized presentation of Heathcliff, the presence and position of dogs in *Wuthering Heights,* and reveals biographical information about the Brontës that suggest they were aligned with movements against animal cruelty in the early to mid-Victorian period.

that, while Brontë certainly loved the moors and took great pains to present them accurately in *Wuthering Heights,* the focus of the narrative is more about the human actions and characters than the environment in which those actions occur. *Jude the Obscure,* not surprisingly, draws critical attention to the apparent Darwinian aspects of the text or the relationship between nature and culture. The sense of rampant hopelessness and random death driving the narrative points critics to consider this text, rightfully, in this Darwinian vein, but also pushes us away from considering what else is going on in the text.

As with the *Jungle Books*, considering these narratives in a hyberobjective way encourages us to gain a deeper understanding of them. When our environmental attentions are no longer focused on a single item (the human, the environment, or the animal) we are able to examine the ways in which these objects work *together,* to understand the systems that these objects participate in. In creating this reading, I will refer back to the two hyperobjects I addressed in the previous chapter: language and social organization. The question of language acquisition, as with Mowgli, comes back with my consideration of Heathcliff – both are presented as feral children that must acquire human language and learn to exist in a different society. But I will also consider language in a wider context in *Jude the Obscure* and will demonstrate, as I argue in the previous chapter, that language is much more pervasive than we typically recognize. Social organization becomes darkly ecological on a narrative level in *Wuthering Heights* – the driving organization of the novel (the tension between the families of Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights) is deeply embedded, inextricably so, in the environment surrounding these two houses. In *Jude,* Jude's affective relationship with the animals and

environments that he encounters during the course of his development create a community that, I will argue, is central to the way we think about Jude and the novel as a whole.

I will begin with *Wuthering Heights*. We cannot, of course, read Brontë in Darwinian terms as we can with Hardy and Kipling, but, as Joseph Carroll points out, "she did have access to the folk concept of human nature" (112). The work of other scientists, like Lyell and Lamarck, was also well known in this period and this pre-Darwinian work was influential to writers in this period *and* to Darwin himself. Barbara Munson Goff goes even further than Carroll to show that Brontë and Darwin come to startlingly similar conclusions about humanity – both "utterly rejected the anthropocentrism and notions of progress that has served natural theologians… [and] based [their] conclusions on observation and knowledge of the manipulations of 'selection' on the part of animal breeders, as well as on close and relatively objective observation of animal behavior" (479).

Ivan Kreilkamp argues that, instead of thinking about Victorian animality in terms of Darwin, we can approach these same questions through the context of the animal rights movements that began much earlier in the century, starting with the 1824 founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (91). For Kreilkamp, much of the animality in *Wuthering Heights* is fundamentally related to the Brontës' aversion to animal cruelty – they were vegetarians and had close relationships with animals throughout their childhood, relationships that inspired both plot and character in many of the Brontës' writings (95). "*Wuthering Heights,*" Kreilkamp argues, is "underpinned by a framework of such [animal cruelty/rights] issues, which were for Emily Brontë

fundamentally linked to animals, pets, and the ethical problem and narrative resource of the suffering animal" (94).

Critics of *Wuthering Heights* also pay extensive attention to the presentation of the environment in the narrative. The entire action of the novel is "concentrated in one locality. A distance of only four miles separates Thrushcross Grange, in the valley, from Wuthering Heights, and the distance from the park boundary of the Grange to the edge of the moor is considerably less" (Duthie 222-3). The landscape was of the utmost importance for Brontë – "her native hills were far more to her than a spectacle; they were what she lived in, and by, as much as the wild birds, their tenants, or as the heather, their produce" (Charlotte Brontë qtd. in Duthie 234). Despite the personal importance of the moors, Duthie ultimately argues that Brontë's narrative hardly pauses for descriptive passages about the environment, only appearing in brief, Wordsworthian-esque 'spots of time' (236). Overall, Brontë's relationship with the environment of *Wuthering Heights* is an anthropocentric one for Duthie:

> The natural symbolism she uses is not intended to show her characters as one with nature, but to show how their relationship with nature constantly throws light on their own feelings and actions. For her, as for Charlotte, nature means essentially the elements and the weather, but her landscapes, real or imagined, produce a different kind of impression from those of her sister….In the epic drama of *Wuthering Heights* one is overwhelmingly conscious of the presence of earth and sky as forming together one vast stage - vast at least in its potential significance - the same stage on which life began. (237)

Nature is reduced to a set of elements and the 'epic drama of *Wuthering Heights*' is acted out on the 'vast stage' of the moors and the surrounding environment. The environment, for Duthie, becomes something like a theatre upon which the human actors stand. When we consider the environment in this light, we find that we are thinking about Nature as something that humans are inherently separate from, something that we harness for the imaginative project. We merely act *on* Nature as opposed to *with* it.

But we don't have to read *Wuthering Heights* in this kind of divided way, or even consider the animal and the environment separately in our criticism. Instead of the human actors overwhelming the environmental stage, we will come to see how truly embedded Brontë's characters are in the landscape surrounding Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. The animal, too, becomes an inseparable part of this vision, especially in relation to Heathcliff's character. Brontë's novel provides these critical openings, despite remaining preoccupied with the movements and interactions between her human characters. By supporting her human narrative with an intense connection to the physical environment, similar to what we will find later with Hardy, Brontë creates a world in which human and Nature are interwoven and interdependent.

Wuthering Heights provides us with an interesting opportunity in relation to *The Jungle Books*. Heathcliff, though not an actual wolf-child as Mowgli is, is classified as feral when he first arrives at Wuthering Heights. These feral children, in both *Wuthering Heights* and *The Jungle Books,* have of course generated racial readings – Heathcliff is described as a "black-haired…gipsy brat" with a body that is "as dark almost as if it came from the devil" and Mowgli is often read in terms of the Indian/English colonial

relationship (Brontë 34).[5] There are extremely marked differences, though, in the way that these children are presented to us – Heathcliff is fiery, stormy, and aggressive in his interactions with other humans while Mowgli is able to contain his outer aggression because of what he learned in the jungle environment. Heathcliff also becomes *more* animalistic over the course of the narrative, appearing more like an animal deposited unwillingly in the human world, while Mowgli settles into a calm relationship situated between the 'animal' and 'human' worlds. The narrative goal, too, in describing these characters is vastly different. Heathcliff's animalistic behavior is intended to demonstrate that he doesn't belong in the world of Wuthering Heights while Mowgli's behavior positively differentiates him from the human characters in the village. Though Brontë doesn't necessarily see Heathcliff as a negative character, we cannot deny that he is extremely different from many of the other human characters in the novel. Heathcliff's ferality is exclusionary, while Mowgli's puts him in a better position relative to the nonferal humans he encounters.

Heathcliff's arrival at Wuthering Heights is remarkably similar to Mowgli's arrival at the human village at the beginning of "Tiger-Tiger!" Heathcliff is repeatedly referred to as 'it' throughout this scene, distancing him from the human family he is being introduced to. Heathcliff receives a very cold welcome from the Earnshaw family - "Mrs. Earnshaw was ready to fling it out of doors" and Cathy, when learning her father "had lost her whip in attending on the stranger, showed her humour by grinning and spitting at the stupid little thing" (34, 35). The family wouldn't even consent to share a

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[5] Though the question of race with Heathcliff, as with Mowgli, is a legitimate one, it is not one that I will meditate on here. It is important to note, though, that both Kreilkamp and Wolfe point out that species is "as salient as race as a category" by which to consider narrative and character (Kreilkamp 98).

room with Heathcliff in the first days he spent at Wuthering Heights – "They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room…so I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it might be gone on the morrow" (35).

Heathcliff is effectively mute when he arrives at the house: he was "big enough both to walk and talk…yet, when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand" (34). Though none of the Earnshaws are able to understand what Heathcliff is saying in this moment and he has been (and will continue to be) dehumanized throughout his initial interaction with the family, Heathcliff is still given a kind of language here. The fact that "nobody could understand" him doesn't negate the fact that this is a language, that Heathcliff is saying something that, to him, carries meaning. Further, the question of understanding suggests that there is a meaning behind Heathcliff's nonsensical words. Heathcliff's vocalization, like the different forms of verbal and nonverbal communication, is inaccessible to humans… or at least the humans of Wuthering Heights. As such, *Wuthering Heights* establishes an immediate linguistic hierarchy – Heathcliff is speaking what amounts to nonsense and he is, therefore, a lesser being; those beings that we can understand automatically demand more of our attention and interest. We, though, can read Heathcliff in a much different way in light of our dark ecological perspective – Heathcliff is merely participating in a linguistic system to which we have no access as opposed to spewing nonsense. By thinking about Heathcliff's language in a hyperobjective way, we are able to show that Heathcliff is participating in a society that is larger than the one that exists between Wuthering Heights and Thurshcross Grange. Heathcliff is no longer entirely excluded from all society, just the one that is immediately present in the novel.

Heathcliff doesn't actually speak in a recognizable voice until two full chapters after his arrival – prior to this moment, he is presented to us through actions and references to speech that aren't present in the narrative space. The few moments of speech contained within the first two chapters, like that indicated above, are either garbled and unrecognizable to the Earnshaws or they are absent. There are a number of references to Heathcliff's *lack* of speech after his arrival at Wuthering Heights – "He would stand Hindley's blows without winking or shedding a tear, and my pinches moved him only to draw in a breath and open his eyes" and "he was the quietest child that ever nurse watched over" (35, 36). The first words we hear Heathcliff speak further the divide between Heathcliff and the houses at the narrative's center – he relays that Catherine is "At Thrushcross Grange…and I would have been there, too, but they had not the manners to ask me to stay" (43). Heathcliff is now not only excluded from Wuthering Heights but from both houses and families of the narrative.

The divide between Heathcliff and the narrative in these early chapters is largely a linguistic one – it is a divide that hides much of Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship in those early moments, reveals how little social interaction Heathcliff has outside his relationship with Catherine, and reflects how truly separate Heathcliff is from the rest of the family in the house. Even when Heathcliff is granted language he is never allowed the same level of access to language that the other characters are given – he speaks "without waste of words" (87). What might this linguistic divide between our feral Heathcliff and the civilized world of Wuthering Heights signify? Language is constructed, for Brontë, as something that is only accessible to humans, especially civilized humans. But Heathcliff shows that we are able to recognize language in these other characters, even when they

are not given to us directly through the narrative. Heathcliff's garbled speech at the beginning is reflective of a language that only he has access to, his sparse speech later on indicative of a wider range of thought than he is willing (or able?) to verbalize.

The question of language and the environment, though, is a tricky one to address in this narrative. I could point to moments where leaves rustle, the wind blows, or some other audible movement occurs in the environment, but to do so would only call attention to the most anthropomorphic kinds of language. In order to perform a proper hyperobjective reading, we need to be prepared to accept that Nature is speaking in ways that are inaccessible to us and to the author and to find places in the narrative where we can point to the larger Nature-being that exists behind the small window of the novel.

The 'spots of time' views of Nature that Duthie points to can become these linguistic places. When we are greeted with little tidbits of natural observation or reminded that the environment exists around the characters that we are following, we get an impression of what might be going on behind the scenes of the human narrative. Though we can only get to the environment through a human's observation of it or from a human's response (as when "The pure heather-scented air, and the bright sunshine, and the gentle canter of Minny relieved his despondency, after a while."), the human characters also have no way of moving beyond their human outlook (183). We must also remember that Brontë "utterly rejected the anthropocentrism and notions of progress that had served natural theologians," and it follows, then, that she would have understood that there was something within the environment that existed beyond her physical or intellectual reach (Goff 479). She would not have, then, attempted to paint the environment in a human-linguistic way, wouldn't have filled her narrative with animals,

plants, rocks, and weather that all speak in some fundamentally human way. By clearing her narrative of such anthropocentrism, Brontë makes way for a multivocal society in *Wuthering Heights.*

The scattered appearance of environmental description does not have to be a dramatic technique that keeps our attention on the human narrative, as Duthie suggests – we can instead think about it in terms of the temporary resurgence of an environment that drives, influences, and is related to the human characters Brontë pays more frequent attention to. These scenes are present in "almost microscopic detail," and highlight every aspect of the physical environment in which our scene is situated (Duthie 235). While Duthie argues "The focus of interest in *Wuthering Heights* is never on nature in itself," the environment does serve an important function in Nelly Dean's memory – as she moves between moments in her re-telling she often situates the next action or dramatic moment in the context of the environment or a specific moment in time. In chapter 22, for instance, this occurs twice: at the very beginning of the chapter, "Summer drew to an end, and early Autumn – it was past Michaelmas, but the harvest was late that year, and a few of our fields were still uncleared" (203). Two paragraphs later, Nelly provides a more detailed description:

> On an afternoon in October, or the beginning of November, a fresh watery afternoon, when the turf and paths were rustling with moist, withered leaves and the cold, blue sky was half hidden by clouds – dark grey streamers, rapidly mounting from the west, and boding abundant rain – (203)

Nelly and Cathy then continue out onto the moors, despite the fact that Nelly was "certain of showers" (204). These brief, but telling, descriptions of the environment function in a

way that is similar to the way Hardy's environmental attentions function, something I will address when I begin my discussion of *Jude the Obscure*. By forcing our attention through the environment first, these passages prevent us from forgetting that we are situated in a particular place and time. The environment becomes extremely important to the action of the narrative and the way that this action plays out.

In chapter one, social organization largely referred to an actual government or a government-type social structure. Kipling's "The Law of the Jungle" was a perfect representation of the way in which these structures carry over into the 'animal world,' and how they might exist outside the context of our human understanding of them. We don't, though, have a similar example within *Wuthering Heights.* How, then, are we to discuss social organization-as-hyperobject if we have no government to speak of? I suggest thinking about social organization in *Wuthering Heights* on a narrative level, to examine the ways in which the two houses, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, structure our experience of the novel as readers and the experiences of the characters within the text. In chapter one, I defined social organization as "any organizing structure imposed upon objects." In *Wuthering Heights*, this structure manifests, not within the language of the narrative, but from the structure of the plot that Brontë creates. By restricting our access to the two central houses, Brontë sets up a narrative organization that determines the ways we, as readers, can interact with the novel, and the ways that her characters can act within it.

As Cameron Dodworth argues, "the major changes in the novel are owing to a character's initial arrival at Wuthering Heights or Thrushcross Grange, or owing to a character's quitting of one or both of those households" and "it is only during this

relocation from one or both of the houses that any real character change takes place in that relocated character" (125). In *Wuthering Heights,* Brontë constructs a "rather mysterious void that hovers over the greater Gimmerton area, oftentimes creeping into the moors with the fog and mist by night, or blowing in with the breeze by day" (Dodworth 126). This void translates into the way that we relate to the characters and the kind of access that we are given to their intellectual and emotional development – because the transformations happen off-stage, we find that we have to fill in the blanks whenever these characters exit and return in an altered state.

The houses are our only access points to the characters of this narrative. When they exit the domestic space, we find that we are no longer to reach them – the narrative cannot relate their actions, speech, thoughts, or emotions to us through the page. Catherine and Heathcliff go dashing off to the moors together, Mr. Earnshaw goes on a trip (the details of which we are not granted), and Heathcliff mysteriously disappears, only to return a changed man.[6] When we see these houses and narrative centers, beyond which narrative essentially evaporates, we are left to question the relationship between the houses and the space beyond.

Through this narrative structure, Brontë reveals a Nature-Culture binary that drives the very structure of her text. The houses, representative of the domestic and Culture are the centers of action, the spaces in which we have narrative access to her characters. Nature becomes the moors or any space beyond the physical limits of

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[6] These are only a few of the instances in which characters leave either Wuthering Heights or Thrushcross Grange, to the detriment of our narrative access. Dodworth provides a more extensive list that contains eight narrative entrances and exits in, "The Mystery of the Moors: Purgatory and the Absence/Presence of Evil in Wuthering Heights."

Wuthering Heights or Thrushcross Grange. When we are outside the boundary of the houses, we are either moving through an entirely natural space (like the moors) or interacting with beings that are in some way nonhuman (as with Mr. Earnshaw's discovery of Heathcliff or Heathcliff's animalization after his return). But because Nature means something that exists beyond the scope of our two central houses, Nature could also come to mean any city or house that lies beyond the limit of these two spaces. This narrative limitation, then, is not so much about pitting the environment against the domestic as it is about putting the rest of the world up against these two central houses, the two places of narrative action. When characters leave one of these epicenters, they return with an entirely new set of rules or some new introduction to the society at these houses. Mr. Earnshaw returns with Heathcliff, one of the most monumental introductions in the entire narrative; Heathcliff leaves Wuthering Heights and returns as "an unreclaimed creature, without refinement – without cultivation; an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone" (93).

Social organization, in the most basic form that my human mind is able to access, is a set of standards we either must, or are expected to, obey or live by. These standards can limit the way in which we experience the world (as with the laws of physics) or can limit the kinds of actions we can take in a given sphere (again, physics, but here we can also think of social expectations and government regulations). When we think about narrative in this organized form, we have to examine the limits that the narrative sets on our ability to interact with the characters and the narrative environment. For Brontë, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange become narrative limits, places that we can move within and between, but not narratively beyond.

The way that Brontë structured the narrative becomes a kind of government in that the modes of experience and growth are regimented within her narrative universe. While the novel appears to have little relationship to the natural environment and no desire to meditate on natural spaces for extended periods, the narrative regulations require the presence of this environment for her characters. In order for characters to develop or for plot to progress, characters must leave and return to one of the central houses. The domestic spaces of *Wuthering Heights* are unable to create an environment for change and progress so Brontë relies on the natural spaces surrounding the houses for this energy. The outsourcing of energy, here, uncovers a reliance on the natural environment that otherwise seems absent from Brontë's novel. Without the connection to the moors and non-domestic spaces, Brontë's characters would have been rendered ineffective and static.

How does the hyperobject change when we read it on a narrative level? When we read hyperobjects into the construction of a text itself, as opposed to the composition of the world that exists within a narrative, we begin to ask questions about the overall literary project and the way that work functions as a whole that we might otherwise not have asked. Narratives each become their own forms of government, contained and recognizable to those that engage with the piece. By uncovering the methods through which characters develop and interact in their communities we are able to better understand the narrative universe that the author has constructed.

Hardy's novels draw a massive amount of critical attention in regard to his treatment of the environment and nonhuman subjects. Hardy, an ecologically and scientifically aware writer, was writing in a moment of great intellectual change

following Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man,* both of which forced people to question our position in society in relation to one another and to other animals. Hardy's deep understanding of and attention to this debate pushes us to consider that his characters, plots, and themes are inseparable from the physical environment in which these are being created, a kind of relationship that foreshadows Morton's embedded "mesh." For Hardy, these characters are not only interrelated but also reliant on one another.

Jude the Obscure, though, doesn't seem to draw as much of this kind of criticism as Hardy's other novels, perhaps because the novel is such a shocking one and begs attention to its more tragic elements. Some critics have even argued that the natural world is evacuated in Hardy's last newly published novel. For Jane Burnstein, "the disappearance of human meaning from the landscape of the novel" is classified as one of the narrative's key losses (23). The human world has also been impacted in Hardy's narrative landscape - "Like the natural world…from which past associations have disappeared, the world of men in *Jude* has been impoverished by a loss of meaning in conventional language" (Burnstein 26).

This loss of meaning refers to the fact that occurrences in the natural world no longer take on a human significance – storms do not necessarily portend horrible events, likeable characters do not always triumph. But to evacuate Nature of all significance is to miss the fact that Hardy (and other writers at the end of the century) replaces this old model with something much more profound – humans are now a part of the environment in which we live, beings that are subjected to the same laws and relationships as all the other beings on the universe. The profoundly evolutionary principles driving many of

Hardy's narratives does, without a doubt, bring a sense of gloom over the narrative. But there is a spot of hope – while we may be, at least to some extent, unable to control our destiny, we are living within a universe of beings with a similar relationship to the world around them. Misery loves company, after all.

Hardy frequently asserts that we are a part of a single, global community in which humans, animals, plants, the physical environment (and more!) participate. While, again, not a strict governmental structure like what we found in the *Jungle Books*, Hardy's social organization allows us to move beyond these rigid, government based structures to understand what a hyperobjective organization might look like. Hardy spends an immense amount of narrative time paying attention to the physical environment through *Jude* – he gives us long passages throughout the novel that draw our eye towards the earth and nonhuman beings that are living around Jude. Jude considers himself part of a community with many of the animals that he encounters throughout the narrative. In Book One, Chapter Two when Jude is attempting to keep the birds out of Mr. Troutham's field, "his heart grew sympathetic with the birds' thwarted desire" (14). The birds "took upon them more and more the aspect of gentle friends and pensioners – the only friends he could claim as being in the least degree interested in him, for his aunt had often told him that she was not" (14).

This affiliation brings some kind of comfort to Jude and makes him feel as though he isn't alone in the universe, but the community doesn't always foster positive feelings for Jude. In Book One, Chapter Ten Jude and Arabella have to kill a pig because the butcher hasn't shown up in the expected time frame. Even the animals out in the yard know something is afoot: "A robin peered down at the preparations from the nearest tree,

and, not liking the sinister look of the scene, flew away" (53). As Jude and Arabella slaughter the pig, Jude's empathy for the pig causes him to "stick him effectually" instead of allowing him to bleed out slowly as Arabella demands (54). In the pig's final moments, "his glazing eyes [rivet] themselves on Arabella with the eloquently keen reproach of a creature recognizing at last the treachery of those who had seemed his only friends" (54). In this scene it is both Jude's identification with the pig and the *pig's* identification with Jude that drives the emotion of this scene. When Hardy creates a reciprocal relationship between two of the three actors, we see this scene as a violation of trust as opposed to a relationship that exists merely for the consumption of the pig's meat.

In addition to these extended meditations on human/nonhuman community, Jude also has a more general understanding about his position in the universe:

> he was a boy who could not himself bear to hurt anything. He had never brought home a nest of young birds without lying awake in misery half the night after, and often reinstating them and the nest in their original place the next morning. He could scarcely bear to see trees cut down or looped, from a fancy that it hurt them; and late pruning, when the sap was up and the tree bled profusely, had been a positive grief to him in his infancy. (15)

Jude has a deeply intimate relationship with the world around him, more than many of the other characters in Hardy's novels. Jude, significantly, doesn't only consider animal life in his musings. The plants also play a critical role in his understanding of community and the morality of inflicting pain upon other living creatures. While one could argue that Jude is mapping his human understanding of pain onto the trees and plants in question,

we should remember that this is the only way that Jude is able to understand what these plants might be feeling when they are pruned or otherwise manipulated.

Jude seems to have been raised into this understanding of animals, much like Mowgli was, and he has unique access to what goes on in the nonhuman portions of the universe. Jude's access, though, penetrates even further than Mowgli's, moving beyond the animal and into the physical environment and plants. Jude considers a wide variety of life on an equal plane and, though much of his language seeks to transform nonhuman experience into human language, this is a limitation that, as Jude is a human, he cannot avoid. Jude responds to animal sounds in a way that most other characters in the narrative (except Sue) ignore: Jude responds to the cries of the pig in 1.2 and the rabbit trapped in a metal trap in 4.2. But even the sight of animals puts Jude into a different, more compassionate mindset. He dutifully avoided an entire pathway of worms as a child and continually notices birds and their movements throughout the novel.

We are forced, then, to reevaluate Burnstein's assertion that human meaning has disappeared from the landscape, that Jude fails to see the richness of the natural world. Hardy, instead of asserting some kind of human control over the landscape, instead pushes Jude to understand that he is a part of a wider global community, that anthropomorphizing the landscape is not necessary in order to realize that the beings living (and not living) on this planet have their own unique experiences and perspectives that we cannot access. *Jude*'s narrative arc is, in many respects, a dismal one, but in this one we are able to find hope – *Jude* allows us to see the beings that exist beyond our human point of view and acknowledges that we are connected with those other beings in a fundamental way.

Jude constructs many of his encounters with animals in a linguistic way – he hears the animals vocalize and imagines communication occurring between them. We could argue that Jude is anthropomorphizing these creatures by placing linguistic meaning onto their vocalizations and I would point out that, again, Jude is unable to do anything else. But whether or not it resembles human speech, vocalization *is* a form of language. Jude is not able to understand exactly what the pig is attempting to communicate, for example, but he does have an understanding that asks us to question the division between the human and nonhuman.

One of the most fascinating connections between nonhuman speech and the human actors is the way that the characters respond when they are confronted with a nonhuman voice. The cry of the "rabbit caught in a gin" forced Jude "to picture the agonies of the rabbit from its lacerated leg… [and] Jude could rest no longer till he had put it out of its pain" (170). Jude isn't the only human character impacted by this rabbit's cry for help – Sue, too, "heard the rabbit, and couldn't help thinking of what it suffered, till I felt I must come down and kill it!" (170). The pig-slaughtering scene, not surprisingly, contains a number of deeply affective moments of connection to nonhuman sounds. The pig began "with a squeak of surprise, [and] rose to repeated cries of rage" (53-4). When the pig is tied down, however, "The animal's note changes its quality. It was not now rage, but the cry of despair; long-drawn, slow and hopeless" (54). The pig moves into a "third and final tone, the shriek of agony," before he "heaved in a final convulsion, and, despite the rope, kicked out with all his last strength" (54). Jude is deeply affected throughout the course of this scene, the violence of their actions overwhelming him at multiple points in the process. Arabella calls him a "tender-hearted

fool" and the animal's last moments "had come so unexpectedly as to make Jude stagger," (54, 55). The pig, for Jude, is "his fellow-mortal," a qualification that, alone, brings him to question the morality of what he has done. Human/nonhuman holds no weight for Jude in this moment – all things that are living deserve to be treated with a basic level of respect.

The environment also makes its voice heard throughout *Jude,* even if it must do so in anthropomorphized terms. When Hardy says that "A mournful wind blew through the trees, and sounded in the chimney like the pedal notes of an organ," he is using human language to relate the interaction between the wind and the chimney, to describe the wind's sound in the only way the he is able to (102). This kind of language fills the pages of *Jude,* entering Jude's thoughts as he moves through any number of landscapes. The streetlamps of Christminster "winked their yellow eyes dubiously at him" and the environment itself occasionally takes on the qualities of a mouth: wind has "teeth" and fire has "tongues" (63, 310, 199). By giving these Natural sounds the characteristics of the human mouth Hardy is certainly anthropomorphizing, but he is also breaking language down into its component parts. But placing something that resembles the human components of speech production in Nature, we can begin to find their nonhuman equivalents.

The sound of the environment can also drown out the sound of human conversation, overwhelming the scene – "the rain and the wind is so loud that you can hardly hear anything but between whiles'" (314). The environment also covers human speech physically. When Jude approaches the marker to Christminster that he'd written on "in the first week of his apprenticeship" he decides to check if the inscription is still

visible: “He wondered if the inscription was still legible still, and going to the back of the milestone brushed away the nettles” (61). Jude finds that the inscription is “unimpaired, within its screen of grass and nettles,” but the fact that it was initially concealed remains. We might read this as an attempt by the Natural to smother the human, to support one form of language over another. But these moments actually reveal a deep level of connection and compromise between human and nonhuman language – one form may occasionally dominate or overshadow another, but the passing of time (as with the wind) and a different perspective (moving the aside the nettles) can allow the languages to intermingle again.

The most communal linguistic moment in *Jude* comes in Book Five, Chapter Five: “Nobody seemed likely to disturb them; and the pleasant twitter of birds, and the rustle of October leafage, came in through an open window, and mingled with their talk” (238). This claim, that the noise from the surrounding environment can enter a room and linger with human conversation is indicative of the structure of the narrative overall. Hardy takes frequent pauses from the human action of his narrative to describe the scene, sometimes in brief sentences that describe how the sun is coming up or the direction of the winds, but other times these diversions can last for entire paragraphs. By letting the environments of *Jude* linger with the human action, Hardy asserts that one does not exist without the other, that the human players are grounded in a physical environment that must be described and attended to.

Wuthering Heights creates a space in which, despite narrative assertions to the contrary, we are able to access our secret linguistic hyperobject and to consider that we can also think about hyperobjects on a narrative scale, as we saw with social organization

in this chapter. When we think about hyperobjects on a narrative level, we are able to ask broader questions about the way that the narrative is working, organized, or received that we might otherwise not be able to ask. *Jude the Obscure* starts a different conversation with these hyperobjects – Hardy's narrative is deeply invested in creating a relationship among the human, the nonhuman animal, and the environment, in showing how enmeshed all living beings are on this planet.

This brings us back to the assertions at the end of the first chapter – we have now entered a critical period in which we can see beyond the limitations of species, being, world, or object, a place in which we can theorize beyond these borders. But this realization has also lead to the conclusion that we cannot move beyond our own human minds – try as we might, we cannot experience the world as dogs, viruses, fictional characters, or teacups. But we can, as I've attempted to demonstrate, acknowledge that literary productions reflect these other lives, that when we read this hyperobjective vision into narratives, we can see the lives of these other objects existing just beyond the human reach of the narrative. Some authors, like Hardy, make a conscious effort to move into the minds of those other beings, risking anthropomorphism in the process. But we must commend these ventures into the nonhuman – when an author attempts to breach the limitations that surround our human perspective, we can gain an understanding as to what kinds of things are most important, what sorts of things define *life, human*, and *existence.* To explore the nonhuman is to explore the human, a journey that ultimately seeks to unite us all.

Conclusion

Throughout this study, I've shown that when we think about narrative hyperobjectively, we change the way we critically understand these texts. To think about a text hyperobjectively, we open our criticism to new voices that seek to diversify the perspectives from which we consider a narrative and to complicate an otherwise anthropocentric stance that we might take. Hyperobjective criticism as outlined here asks that we consider language and social organization in new and progressive forms that move beyond our human worldview and realize that other beings are capable of experiencing the world in ways that we cannot access. Narratives allow us access to these other forms of experience and allow a glimpse into the ways people of the nineteenth century understood nonhuman subjectivity. We can also use this form of criticism to change the way we see the historical moment in which these texts were produced and the conversation that was happening around and within these literary creations.

The nineteenth century, so similar to our own in many ways, is the ideal century in which to study the evolution of thought around the human, the animal, and the environment. The nineteenth century was a time in which "human" and what it meant to be considered a human was profoundly questioned – Darwin, the Industrial Revolution, and the ever-growing amount of knowledge about the world around us fundamentally destabilized the ground on which the human stood. Writers like Thomas Hardy most obviously pick up on this tension and many of his novels deal with or address this intellectual upheaval. But other writers, like Brontë, Kipling, and a number of other authors I have not touched on here, are also responding to this seismic shift. Though we often need to rely on our twenty-first century theories to read further into these narratives,

it cannot be denied that these texts are responding to the changes happening all around them.

I've examined the work of three major authors from the nineteenth century, all of whom wrote from around mid-century into the early twentieth century. A more lengthy examination of the ways in which hyperobjectivity manifests *throughout* the long nineteenth century, from Romanticism through Modernism, could demonstrate how hyperobjective thinking developed and reveal moments of cultural or intellectual change. This work could also be carried over strictly forward into studies of modernism to reveal how the twentieth century adapted and understood this theory. Even a brief examination of *Ulysses* reveals Joyce's commitment to making an earth that speaks, to creating an entire world around Bloom and Stephen that is filled with characters that get the opportunity to have their own say. We briefly inhabit a dog's consciousness at the end of "Proteus," hear machines thump-thumping throughout "Aeolus," and hear a number of non-human (and non-living) objects speak in "Circe."

This thesis has largely ignored the Industrial Revolution and the mechanical objects present throughout these texts. Hardy's novels, perhaps not surprisingly, contain the largest number of industrial machines of the texts I've examined, and he frequently mingles them with human life in fascinating ways. How does technology, and the rapid development of new technology, impact the way that we think about animals and the environment in the nineteenth century? How did it change thinking *within* the nineteenth century and how has this thinking influenced the way that we think about technology, both generally and with Artificial Intelligence (AI), today? How did conversations about technology reflect, modify, or reject discussions about humans, nonhuman animals, and

the environment in the nineteenth century? And, again, did we inherit any of these lines of thinking today?

As we've made the move from 'conventional' ecocriticism into OOO-based dark ecology, we've come to find that questions about animals and plants tend to fall by the wayside to make room for larger statements about our conceptions of the 'environment' (*Ecology without Nature* 2). Shunting these lines of inquiry aside was, no doubt, crucial in the early stages of environmental criticism, but we have reached a point in our theoretical understanding where we can start to bring the theory back around to these questions of existence that we initially moved beyond. How does the theoretical frame we've constructed here take on the new call for an "ecology without world," and an "ecology without matter" (*Hyperobjects 99, 150*)?

Ecology without world removes both Nature and life – "What exists outside the charmed circles of Nature and life is a *charnel ground,* a place of life and death, of death-in-life and life-in-death, an undead place of zombies, viroids, junk DNA, ghosts, silicates, cyanide, radiation…" (ibid. 126). When we are theorizing within this wide-open space, suddenly nothing is off-limits for our scholarship. We can consider viruses, cattle, and the plants in Victorian gardens equally. Ecology without matter is, admittedly, a much more difficult venture, but it will allow us to move beyond a simple theorization of embodied beings and into the stranger, more abstract land we've merely glimpsed here.

Once we have shifted our thinking, we will find that it is impossible to go back. We will not be able to remove our hyperobjective understanding of the systems from our conception of humanity, animality, or environment. These connections will literalize the 'mesh,' will force us to pay attention to the deep, *fundamental,* connections that exist

among all living and non-living things. The movement towards ‘dark ecology’ and a ‘posthumanist ecology’ are just now beginning this conversation. In terms of literary study, though, it seems that these critical explorations are still largely limited to texts that bring the environment into the center of focus, to authors like Wordsworth and Shelley. In order to truly achieve a dark ecology, however, we must consider all kinds of texts in all time periods. Without such an expansive exploration, we can never hope to truly understand the evolution of our anthropocentric thought. Ultimately, the goal of hyperobjective criticism is to highlight the fact that we exist alongside other humans, yaks, beanstalks, tubes of chapstick, and Hermione Granger… that we are all participating in a universe *together.*

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