LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

A Home for the Anthropocene: Planetary Time and Domestic Space in Richard McGuire's *Here*

Jon R. Hegglund

Washington State University

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Abstract:

My essay examines the concept of home in the context of the deep historical perspective of the Anthropocene. Drawing on ideas of non-human temporality from Eugene Thacker (the world-without-us) and Robert Markley (climatological time), 'A Home for the Anthropocene' explores the home as a representational site that juxtaposes spatial fixity with temporal mobility. I first discuss the difficulties that conventional narrative form has with rendering the non-human temporalities of planetary history—precisely because narrative *does* rely on some sort of anthropomorphic 'hook.' I then explore how *Here* incorporates the minimal anthropomorphic elements necessary for narrative through representative, everyday human activity rather than the sustained exposition of individualized human characters. Finally, I discuss how the defamiliarizing cognitive experience of reading *Here* is particular to the medium of graphic narrative, highlighting the experimental use of visual juxtaposition across temporal scales and the convergence of the projected storyworld with the materiality of the book itself. McGuire's narrative helps us see the Anthropocene from within the frame of everyday spatiality rather than through the rhetorical distance of scientific objectivity or the displaced futurity of post-apocalyptic narrative. As much as the narrative ranges through a time that both precedes and outlasts human existence, it still establishes a decidedly human *scale* through its storytelling devices.

Keywords: Anthropocene; domestic space; time; anthropomorphism; graphic novel; *Here*.

Author contact: hegglund@wsu.edu

The rapid unfolding of climate-influenced disasters in the late summer of 2017 gave the world acute insight into the uneasy status of 'home' within the Anthropocene. The ceaseless feed of images, video, tweets, maps, weather reports, and news stories about Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, as well as scores of destructive wildfires in the Western United States, made the precarious fate of home more immediately and powerfully visible than is possible through the discourse of academic prose. These images eloquently testify that the Anthropocene is not a planetary 'outside' to an intimate sense of home as refuge or retreat from the world at large. Climate-driven disasters leave behind a sense of melancholy far deeper than property and financial loss when we see well-worn couches and chairs floating in brackish floodwater, or family heirlooms bobbing along in the currents of an inundated residential street, or a skeleton of a house incinerated by roaring flames. And, while some will debate the particular influence of climate change on hurricanes and wildfires, there can be no doubt that images of Harvey and Irma, along with the fires in the West, are part of an all-too-rapidly expanding archive that renders the planetary transformations of climate change in terms of their damage to, and destruction of, homes. In the face of increasingly visible catastrophe and increasingly dire demographic predictions, the idea of home-as-refuge, a safe haven into which one can retreat from the world, seems like a quaint relic of a *belle époque*, a sense of place to which we shouldn't be too attached, given the rapidity and force with which it can be destroyed.

This essay is framed by two concepts—the Anthropocene and home—that are primarily associated with time and space, respectively—the former as an epoch of geology in which no space of Earth is left untouched by human endeavor, the latter as an affective location associated with spaces of domesticity and belonging. But, it isn't difficult to see the spatial in the Anthropocene and the temporal in the idea of home. The Anthropocene posits a new view of the planet in which systems cannot be disentangled according to disciplinary purview. The geological is intertwined with the biological, itself intertwined with the climatological, which is intertwined with the political, social, cultural, and so forth. No space is left untouched. Likewise, 'home' exists in an unmistakably temporal realm as well, whether through the individual time-scale of human and family lives, the historicity of gender, class, and race dynamics, or the problem of 'sustainable' housing for the future. Suffice to say, there is a fertile ground of inquiry at the crossroads of 'Anthropocene' and 'home,' which touches on a myriad of disciplines, from geology, to architecture, to cultural geography, to literary and cultural critique, to name just a few. This essay draws upon cognitive science, philosophy, materialist ecocriticism, and narratology to explore shifting concepts of the human as articulated through the convergence of planetary and domestic concerns. The Anthropocene tends to focus on the wide scale of the human species, where the discourse of home foregrounds individual subjectivities and narratives. We might, in other words, think of the human stakes of the Anthropocene as implicating the species, while the futures of home center on the scale of individual persons. Richard McGuire's 2014 graphic novel, *Here*, uses a narrative medium to explore the convergences between the intimate spatiality of home and the planetary, species-based concerns of the Anthropocene. I explore how the *topos* of home offers a compelling way for McGuire to blend narrative expectations about individual human character with a more detached sense of humanity's species existence within the deep historical time registers implied by the

Anthropocene. McGuire's novel, by fixing the narrative so completely in one place, makes the reader keenly aware of an imaginative mobility through time, which is often obscured in many narratives of home.

By incorporating the conceptual frame of the Anthropocene to discuss the mobility and transience of home, my essay expands the rubric of 'literary geography' along a temporal, as well as spatial, axis. As Neal Alexander (2015) points out, 'human geographers have long been interested in what literature can teach them about the relationship between humans and the non-human environment' (4). Even so, the terms 'human' and 'environment' still remain conceptually distinct in the vast majority of geographical scholarship. In human and cultural geography, the 'world' functions, often tacitly, as a background to both human activity and its various representations. The concept of the Anthropocene, however, denies any kind of meaningful separation between human and planetary realms, prompting a reassessment of the world as active, agential assemblages of 'vibrant matter' (to quote Jane Bennett's book of the same name) at times in confederacy, at other times in conflict, with human intentionality—the ground slipping into figure, and vice versa. But it is literary representation—in the case of *Here,* the representation of a home—that renders these planetary, ecological concerns within the realm of imagination, and as I will argue, narrative. Thus, the kind of literary geography I employ in my reading of *Here* considers the concept and representation of 'home' less in opposition to a surrounding world or environment and more as a cognitive frame that mediates the necessarily human, anthropomorphic element of narrative with the more abstract, non-human spaces and temporalities of a fragile, dynamic planet.

I first discuss the difficulties that conventional narrative form has with rendering the non-human temporalities of planetary history—precisely because narrative *does* rely on some sort of anthropomorphic 'hook.' I then explore how *Here* incorporates the anthropomorphic elements necessary for narrative but does so in a way that focuses on representative 'slices of life' rather than the exposition of individualized human characters. Home is rendered as a space that we anthropomorphize only indirectly; that is, we do not personify it as a 'character,' but it does prompt the reader's desire for and projection of biographical human lives within its walls. Finally, I explore how the defamiliarizing cognitive experience of reading *Here* is particular to the medium of graphic narrative. McGuire uses the affordances of graphic fiction to anchor the spatiality of the human in something both literal and material—the corner of the house is made material by the gutter between the two pages of each spread—such that the lack of particularity given to individual characters is replaced by the convergence of storyworld and medium in the very form of graphic fiction itself. In this, *Here* is not just a narrative that invokes the deep history of Earth in a thematic sense, but also one that integrates medium, discourse, and story in the rendering of a species-based account of an Anthropocene-inflected idea of home.

Here and the world-without-us

In *Here*, the domestic setting serves as an anchoring point that grounds the novel's radical experiments with narrative time. The reader is initially positioned within the everyday

temporality of conventional, middle-class Western domesticity, which provides an overlay for the chronological jumps to the deep past and distant future. In an essay titled 'Time, History, and Sustainability,' Robert Markley proposes three registers of time through which we can understand the historicity of the human within a planetary context: the experiential, the historical, and the climatological. Markley argues that our conceptions of sustainability and futurity are anchored in the first two registers, which speak to individual subjectivity and sociohistorical identity: the first level appeals to 'individual experiences of wind, heat, cold, rain, drought,' which we are then able to telescope into 'an unbroken sequence of embodied experiences from the past and into the future that presupposes sociocultural evolution taking place against the backdrop of the timeless present of an abiding Nature' (Markley 2012: 45). Markley notes, however, that climatological time, only 'accessible through and mediated by a range of complex technologies—complicates and disrupts the connections among personal identity, history, and narrative' (43). The sense of a deep time that is phenomenologically available to human cognition is therefore not a concentric circle that simply surrounds experiential and historical time at a larger scale; rather, it is a rupture of these more familiar modes of time that cannot be easily accommodated with other temporalities. It should be clear that narrative—particularly the novel—has been remarkably successful at mediating the first two forms of time (one need only think of Proust or Woolf for experiential time, George Eliot or Tolstoy for historical time). But to evoke the sense of deep historical, climatological, planetary time, narrative must approach this temporality through anamorphosis, periphrasis, or analogy—the conventional modes of realism, be they an externalized social realism or a subjective, psychological realism, will not suffice.

Here uses the resources of narrative to evoke Markley's sense of 'climatological' time, largely by rendering the other two, more conventional, time-scales in fragmented and elliptical ways. The narrative, which takes place entirely in the location of a house built in the early 1900s in the northeastern United States, is anchored both structurally and conceptually to the symbolic space of a house—in this case modelled on McGuire's own childhood residence. McGuire's original inspiration for *Here* came from the sale of his family home after his parents' death. 'The family home had to be sold,' McGuire recollects in an interview for *The Paris Review*. 'Just emptying it took a while. My parents lived there for fifty years, and the house was packed' (Shapton 2015: n.p.). McGuire originally created *Here* as an eight-page black and white comic in 1989, which appeared in the magazine *Raw*. He revived and expanded the idea to a full-color, book-length project, published in 2014. The narrative, simply put, renders a fixed point in space—initially a corner of a living room in a house constructed in the early twentieth century somewhere in the Northeastern United States. What we see from this unmoving perspective initially includes scenes from the domestic lives of unnamed families that hopscotch across the years, then jumps backward and forward to times before and after the existence of the house, ultimately encompassing a range from roughly 3 billion BCE to the year 22,175. Each two-page spread of the novel depicts a specific year, often with smaller, inset frames indicating different years, rendering glimpses into the same space at different chronological moments. At times there are people in the frame, at times not. We see moments that seem trivial, such as a woman looking for her car keys or people idly chatting by the television, and we

see those that imply more profound events, including an older man collapsing (and possibly dying), parents holding newborn infants, and personal relationships in crisis. Additionally, the panels from different eras are drawn in varied styles that range from a sleek, modernist minimalism, to a hazy impressionism, to entirely abstract splotches of light and color—but through all styles, few details of human faces are shown, and while we get enough detail in clothing, hairstyle, and body shape to suggest indicators of gender and age, none of the characters are ever given any strong individuating traits. The overall impression is a distancing, defamiliarizing effect that replaces empathy with characters in the storyworld with a kind of extradiegetic narratorial positionality—inasmuch as we see the same space through many millennia, we are cast into an inhuman role of pure perception, a kind of cosmic camera eye. This detachment shifts the perception of the storyworld from one of empathy and engagement to self-reflection. As comic artist Chris Ware puts it, 'One could claim that the main character of this book is the corner or space where it all happens, but it's really the consciousness of the reader that's at the center of the story' (Greenberg 2014: n.p.). I would go a step further than Ware and argue that these two 'character' placeholders—storyworld space and the reader's consciousness—are in fact not easily distinguished, and furthermore, that the deep-historical perspective of the novel can only come through a foregrounding of a recursive anthropomorphic response to a lived space rather than mimetic, individuated human characters.

The upshot of this particular narrative form is an intimation of a state that might be regarded, strictly speaking, as a narrative impossibility: a condition that Eugene Thacker has described as the 'world-without-us' (Thacker 2011: 5-6). Distinguishing this from both the subjective, anthropocentric 'world for us' and the objectified 'world in itself,' the 'world-without-us' identifies the impossible vantage point from which we—the human reader—could imagine the historicity of the human species within the geological, deep-historical register of time announced by the Anthropocene. Of course, this perspective is premised upon a contradiction described by Claire Colebrook: that 'even our current conceptions of deep time—a time beyond human histories—have emerged from a present reading of our own past' (Colebrook 2015: 16-7). As Thacker and Colebrook point out, the temporality of the Anthropocene implies thinking about the historicity of the human species itself—both its dawning and its extinction—from within cognitive frames that are necessarily limited to human concepts of temporality and history (i.e., Markley's experiential and historical time). The challenge of evoking the world-without-us is only magnified by the exigencies of narrative to include some kind of anthropomorphic 'hook,' most typically through the construction of individual minds and bodies that coalesce in the concept of character. *Here* gives only the faintest of anthropomorphic cues to guide our reading of it as narrative—but, because it frames its narrative through the space of the home (even as it represents moments before and after the existence of the home), it relies on our associations of domesticity and personal identity to imagine something like a free-floating, blank anthropomorphism of empty space. The effect of this is to generate something like a free-floating empathy that transcends the target of an individual character, instead cultivating an affective sense of 'humanity in general.' It does this precisely by fixing its narratorial aspectuality in one specific point: the corner of a living room in a house built in 1908 somewhere in the Northeast United States. McGuire's narrative relies on certain

top-down categorical associations that readers will have with the space of 'home'—a place of refuge, comfort, identity—to build an anthropomorphic frame that can prompt an understanding of the inherent uncanniness of a planetary temporality that brackets the finitude and contingency of human existence. The power of McGuire's narrative derives specifically from his choice of a domestic setting, which reverses the typical figure-ground epistemology wherein home is a self-contained locality within a wider historical and planetary 'outside.' *Here* proposes that the sense of home as belonging, emplacement, and identity is a *primary* condition of being-in-the-world and thus offers a lens through which the Anthropocene should be viewed. As Laura Bieger puts it, home is not fundamentally a physical space but rather, 'a place in the world without which both place and world would crumble' (Bieger 2015: 17).

Anthropomorphism: the character of home

The reader's experience of *Here* as a narrative with human beings but without human characters results from a process that channels an inherent anthropomorphic desire to apprehend individual human identities within a recognizable storyworld: to put this in more traditional terms, narratives encourage us to locate characters within a setting. As such, narrative comes with 'an anthropomorphic bias,' as narratologist Monika Fludernik (1996: 9) puts it. Not only do most narratives feature humans as characters by convention: as readers (or viewers, or listeners) we are cued to the activity of anthropomorphism through specific textual operations: naming, description, and character narration most obviously. Anthropomorphism, as many cognitive scientists argue, is fundamentally a cognitive reflex rather than an active choice—simply put, as humans, our minds are wired to scan our surroundings and pick out possible other humans (a cognitive capacity we share with other primates as well). While the majority of cognitive research does not distinguish between physical entities in the world and the representation of these entities (e.g. in art, photography, or literature), I posit that the basic dynamics are the same: at a fundamental cognitive level we are always assessing represented beings for their degree of anthropomorphic resemblance. When we encounter the formal conventions of crafted narratives, however, we can also be prompted to a higher-order, conceptual level of thinking that relies on metaphor, analogy, and inductive reasoning as we ascertain whether certain narrative entities are fully or partially human or whether they exhibit no meaningful anthropomorphic traits whatsoever. In short, when we encounter a dog in a narrative, for example, we might initially grant it little anthropomorphic resemblance—but if the dog is a narrator or is described in terms that imply complex consciousness or use an analogy to human traits—then we 'backfill' a more abstract level of anthropomorphism.

The cognitive biologists Esmerelda Urquiza-Haas and Kurt Kotrschal account for these degrees of anthropomorphism by positing two realms in which anthropomorphism takes place in human cognition of the world. They argue for two types, or processes, of anthropomorphism: implicit and reflective. Implicit anthropomorphism (which I will call 'primary') is 'automatic, fast and effortless' and 'not subject to conscious control' (Urquiza-Haas and Kotrschal 2015: 169). This reflexive response is one that precedes conscious reflection, and is premised on a number of features, including 'biological motion, human

body motion, hand and mouth movement, and facial expressions' (169). By contrast, processes of reflective anthropomorphism (which I call 'secondary') 'are more detailed ... subject to conscious control, are effortful, are slower than automatic processes' (169). Such processes often involve the imputation of mind or consciousness to entities, regardless of physical form. Thus, if we encounter a being (for example, a computer-based AI) that has no apparent physical form but responds to the world with the operations we associate with human minds, then it cues a secondary, reflective anthropomorphic response. In short, primary responses happen largely (though not exclusively) at the level of external, physical phenomena, while secondary responses happen largely (though not exclusively) at the level of internal, mind-based phenomena—with the vast majority cognitive assessments blending both levels. This schema also suggests that, with respect to narrative, different mediums will prompt different degrees of primary and secondary anthropomorphism: a prose narrative, on the one hand, evokes the image of storyworld entities in the reader's mind, but it does not represent them visually—hence the secondary level will generally be more relevant. On the other hand, a live-action film narrative presents the 'recorded' image of physical humans (though special effects can often blur the distinction between 'recorded' and 'produced'), thus putting primary anthropomorphism front and center.

Graphic novels such as *Here* tend to operate somewhere in the middle of this spectrum, as they combine the visual representation of entities (albeit typically drawn rather than photographed) with the presentation of linguistic signifiers. In the specific case of *Here*, the reader's cognition is drawn to the graphic representation of human forms, albeit ones that are abstracted through the medium of drawing, and further more through the *style* in which they are drawn, which persistently keeps these figures at a perspectival distance from the reader and only includes a minimum of distinguishing physical features. Comics theorist Scott McCloud posits a direct correspondence between the degree of abstraction with which a face is drawn in a comic and the viewer's ability to identify with— that is, project themselves onto—the minimally-drawn human visage (McCloud refers to this phenomenon as 'amplification through simplification' (McCloud 1994: 30)). Put in the terms of Urquiza-Haas and Kotrschal's model, McCloud suggests that such abstract representations (e.g., something as basic as a crude drawing of a circle with two dots and a line inside: :-)) cue the minimal degree of anthropomorphism for us to recognize this configuration of lines and dots *as* a human face. This minimally anthropomorphic drawing, however, leaves off the projection of an individualized identity—effectively creating a free-floating signifier which a secondary anthropomorphism may fill in with such details as a gender, a name, an occupation, and personality traits, or may leave largely blank (as is the case with the human figures in *Here*).

Even without the detailed graphic representation of particular facial features or other distinguishing traits, we would still easily ascribe individual human identity to a character who demonstrates a continuous, causally connected identity over time—an unseen narrator, for example. In *Here*, however, the achronological hopscotch of the narrative from one year to another, encompassing a range that far outstrips any individual lifespan, means that readers can scarcely begin to construct a biographical narrative out of any one of the many characters that appear in the narrative. While the primary level provides enough cues to help the reader understand that the characters are human, none of those

represented ever rise to the status of individualized personhood—largely because we are not given sufficient narrative cues to project individual minds, nor are we given enough information about any one person in the narrative to construct a cause-and-effect story about their life. What we have instead are isolated moments of experientiality—frozen snippets of life—that depend upon the reader's cognitive framing of the storyworld space as an abstract 'home' that exists independently of any of the individual identities that might give it personalized meaning during different moments of its existence.

With only minimal primary cues for anthropomorphizing characters in the narrative—the human entities in the narrative are devoid of distinguishing physical features, complex psychologies, and continuous biographies—the reader's secondary anthropomorphic attributions are open to more flexible and abstract connections. As the common space that links the individual human 'characters' in the novel, the house (and its physical location) prompts a faint secondary anthropomorphism: although it does not have a consciousness or even a fixed physical form, it holds the different lives we witness in a common cognitive frame. As this space is coded as a domestic one (simply because this is clearly established before the narrative jumps around chronologically), it overlays *every* page of the novel with a sense that the reader is viewing a space of home, a quintessentially human dwelling (even in frames in which the room is not present). The fixed space of the living room, given its association with human activity, functions as a negative image—or better yet, a fossil—for anthropomorphic projections: we infer the unfolding of individual lives through the brief moments that are directly represented, but in the absence of any meaningful access into those lives, our anthropomorphic desires for character are diverted to the fixed, anchoring space of the house itself (whether or not it is visible in the frame). What the reader projects into this space is generated from a cultural repertoire (which may or may not include direct experience) of homes: they are spaces in which individual and familial identity is conventionally anchored, and thus *Here* sidesteps our attention to particular identities—'characters'—and substitutes this with a generalized *concept* of human identity as a formal, rather than substantive, category. It must be said, of course, that McGuire's version of home is decidedly an American, middle-class one, and in no way can the domestic habitus that McGuire represents be said to be universal, or even prototypical. Even so, McGuire's expansion of the time frame to include epochs both before and after the existence of this particular house makes the geographical and cultural location of this home less central. The narrative is alive to the historical particularity of its geographical and cultural location, as it includes frames that show a pre-contact, indigenous community on the site, as well as snippets from the Revolutionary era before the home in question is built in the early twentieth century. While it's true that the narrative doesn't overtly engage with the politics of home—its gendered politics in particular—McGuire acknowledges that every home has its particular stories and its situated context. The larger point of *Here* is that all such domestic narratives are rooted in a common planetary fate.

Despite its contextual associations with twentieth-century, middle-class American domesticity, McGuire is careful to present his domestic space as largely uncluttered, both visually and narratively, and therefore available for the projection of the reader. From the inside of the front cover, including the title page and front matter, there are six spreads that depict a domestic space without any human presence: an undated drawing that shows

only the shape of the room, with a window and fireplace to indicate that it is a living room in a house. Then, in succession: a 2014 spread with a sofa, another 2014 spread with a partially-filled bookcase and an empty box, a 1957 spread in pink and mauve tones with more furniture, including a child's playpen, a 1942 spread with a no furniture and a ladder by the window, and a 2007 spread with an unfolded sofabed. Our first encounter with a person—a 1957 woman in profile with no distinguishing facial features saying 'Hmm…now why did I come in here again?' with an inset frame of a cat from 1999—only comes after we have been introduced to the space with traces but no direct representation of human life (Figure 1). The following spread then portrays the same woman, in an inset frame, against the background of a 1623 watercolor scene depicting a snowy forest scene (Figure 2). Although this initial sequencing seems random, it curates the reader's cognitive orientation to the narrative in a very specific way. By introducing a lived, but empty, space of domesticity, McGuire prompts the reader to fill this void with characters to whom we can attach the traces of this lived experience. Yet when we do see one such possible character, our expectations are frustrated both by the paucity of visual details and the inability, because of the temporal jumps, to establish this character in a sustained personal narrative (indeed, she will only reappear at the very end of the narrative). Moreover, the repetition of the elements of the room indicate to us quite clearly that each spread depicts the same physical space. When we encounter the juxtaposition of the woman with the woodland scene and the year 1623, we can quickly infer that we are seeing the same location before this house, or any settlement, has been built. The upshot of this sequencing is that the conceptual anchor of 'home' frames every single page: when we see spreads from 1623, or 3,000,000,000 BCE, it is impossible not to think: 'There will be a home here.' When we see spreads from both near and distant futures, it is impossible not to think: 'There was once a home here.' It is the peculiar alchemy of the reader's personal and cultural experience, along with the minimal cues from the human inhabitants of the house, that anchors the deep history of the planet to domestic inhabitation at the same time that it intimates the radical non-humanity of the 'world without us.'

The graphic novel and ghostly anthropomorphism

To what degree might similar aesthetic ends—the notions of climatological time and the 'world-without-us'—be presented in other narrative forms? The ecocritic Greg Garrard distinguishes between the two most common mediums subject to narrative analysis, the written word and the cinematic sound-image, in assessing the possibilities for representing a 'disanthropic' setting (as he refers to a world devoid of human presence):

> The helpless allegiance of written genres to narrative voice and anthropomorphic characterization makes disanthropic literature conspicuously self-contradictory, and probably impossible. In film, though, the ostensible impersonality of the camera— its mechanical indifference, even—makes it possible to bracket out both humans as objects and, to some degree, the human subject in its most obtrusive forms. (Garrard 2012: 43-4)

Figure 1. Illustrations from *Here* by Richard McGuire, copyright © 2014 by Richard McGuire. Used by permission of Pantheon Books, an imprint of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved.

Figure 2.

Graphic narrative would seem to fall somewhere between written and audio-visual narrative in the contrast that Garrard identifies. Graphic narratives typically contain written words, in the form of speech or thought bubbles, along with extradiegetic written narration. Yet the written component is ultimately not a necessity: plenty of graphic narratives (frequently in shorter comic strips) tell their stories through images alone. Graphic narrative does not need an 'allegiance' to narrative voice, but nor can it reflect the 'mechanical indifference' of a camera—even the most naturalistic styles of graphic fiction cannot be mistaken for photographic reproduction. In *Here*, the medial affordances of the graphic narrative are used to distinctive effect to communicate the uncanniness of a narrative driven by a species-based rather than character-based humanism. Specifically, three aspects of *Here* that are features of its particular media form—its fixed visual perspective, its spatial juxtaposition, and its hand-drawn style—illustrate how its unconventional storytelling is derived from the specific medium of graphic narrative.

Here is rendered through a perspective that is at once visually fixed and temporally unbound. As the narrative slides along the axis of temporality, its optical viewpoint remains unmoved. This position implies a kind of species-based omniscience—that is to distinguish it from, on the one hand, a character-specific focalization, and on the other, the (by now clichéd) formulation of a 'God's-eye' view: a 'pure' omniscience that is, in many cases, indistinct from the ground-zero of authorial creation. Jan-Noël Thon refers to this perspective as 'non-narratorial representation,' which can be 'attributed not to a (fictional) narrator, but to the author or author collective of the graphic narrative in question' (Thon 2013: 87). While I understand the resistance to adding an unnecessary layer to the communicative model of narrative, I do think the non-narratorial position through which *Here* is rendered is marked as a radical departure from convention through the combination of its spatial fixity and temporal mobility; in other words, we are bound, at some point, to wonder about the source of this narrative positionality and to what being we might attribute this perspective. McGuire positions the visual perspective in the middle of a large living room, which we can infer, based on the position of windows and a fireplace, to be oriented toward a corner formed by two exterior walls. From this vantage point, we have both an ample stage for human action as well as a sense of domestic space as bounded and finite. As Gaston Bachelard writes in *The Poetics of Space*, the corner within the house has a peculiar phenomenological resonance with respect to being. The corner, he writes, 'is a haven that ensures us one of the things we prize most highly—immobility' (Bachelard 1994: 137). It is 'the chamber of being,' and 'all corners,' he continues, 'are haunted, if not inhabited' (138, 140). The corner is an inspired choice for McGuire, not simply because it gives dimensionality and depth to the visual field, but also because it offers a kind of vortex into which the reader's attention is drawn and anchored, no matter what else is happening on the page. The specific identities of the fleeting figures that appear on the page are less important than the corner as a 'chamber of being'; it forms a ghostly imprint for the reader so that 'human life in general' overwrites any kind of specific attachment we might form to individual human characters in the frame. This time-traveling but spatially-fixed positionality helps us see the Anthropocene *from within the frame of everyday spatiality* rather than through the rhetorical distance of scientific objectivity or the displaced futurity of post-apocalyptic narrative. As much as the narrative ranges through time—preceding and

outlasting humans—it still establishes a decidedly human *scale* through its visual perspective.

This spatial familiarity is offset by a sense of chronological vertigo, as we spin forward and backward, at times moving across millennia in consecutive spreads, and at other times taking in up to a dozen years *within* a single spread. This temporal uncanniness depends upon a careful interplay between the sequencing of pages and the overlay of inset frames. Although the hopscotching of dates in the narrative seems arbitrary, it is carefully calibrated to establish the reader's orientation within the space of the house before bracketing the house's history within more epochal time frames. After six two-page spreads that show the corner of the house in a non-chronological sequence of different years, the seventh presents the aforementioned two- water-color woodland scene from 1623, with two inset frames—a woman standing in front of a couch in 1957 and a cat licking its paw in 1999. Eventually, we will see spreads that depict years both before and after the house's construction, culminating in an abstract young-Earth landscape from 3 billion BCE, which occupies the two pages at the exact center of the book (Figure 3). In every case, however, the template of an interior corner—and its associations with modern domesticity— overlays both past and future images. Significantly, each spread locates the corner precisely in the vertical line of the book's gutter, the materiality of the medium itself haunting of the space represented within the initial storyworld. The importance of sequence, at least on a macronarrative level, is underscored by two spreads, both depicting the woman from 1957. She is the first and final human figure to appear in the book: in her initial appearance, she stands next to a striped sofa and says to herself, 'Hmm…now why did I come in here again?' while the concluding image of the book, presumably passing a mere moment of story time, shows her reaching for a book on the coffee table, saying, 'Now I remember.' These appearances bridge a brief, unremarkable slice of lived experience in the storyworld, while folding the dizzying scale of deep historical time into one passing moment of everyday life. The use of inset frames of different dates within the overall format of the two-page spread projects the cognitive experience of simultaneity onto the overall achronological sequencing of the narrative. McGuire's use of inset frames is carefully coordinated: after several pages of whole two-page spreads, the frames are added, two and three at a time initially, until many spreads within the heart of the book contain five or six frames, with one spread populated with 18 temporally distinct insets. The reader is prompted to find associations between different moments that occupy the same spread, and indeed McGuire exploits this readerly desire in a number of instances: in one spread each frame marks the celebration of Christmas, in another the caring of newborn infants, in another the different types of dancing from throughout the years. The frames can also be used as a kind of epochal stop-motion photography, in one example showing a young sapling from 1579 overlaid onto a mature tree from 1775 (Figure 4).
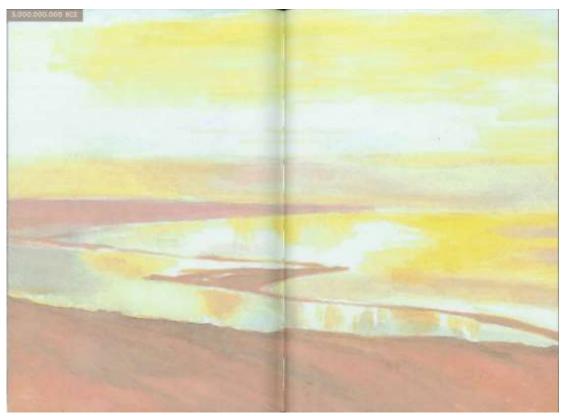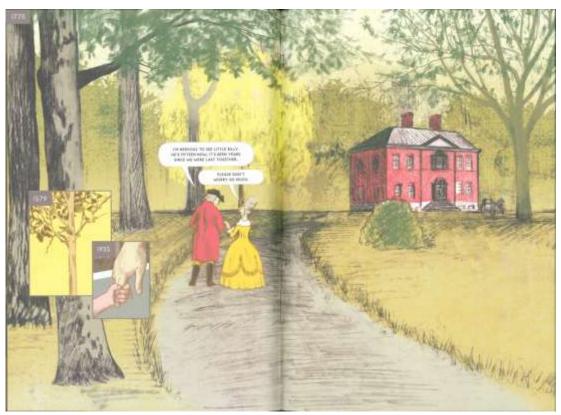
Figure 3.

Figure 4.

Conclusion

I have described the discursive mechanisms of the novel in such a way that one might be forgiven for believing that *Here* is largely a formalist exercise, with no significant target for human empathy, given its rejection of conventional modes of anthropomorphism and character individuation. Even the affective notation of 'home' as the storyworld in McGuire's narrative might seem a flimsy architecture onto which one might build a phenomenology of the Anthropocene. But McGuire inserts resonant moments of experientiality that the reader can see doubly: both as irony-laden narratorial commentary *and* fragmentary slices of everyday human life. In one spread from 1999, for example, a family watches a documentary about the sun swallowing up the earth, while a teenager comments, 'Glad I won't be around for that!' In an inset from 1986, a youngish man wears a t-shirt emblazoned with 'Future Transitional Fossil.' Song lyrics also add a layer of discursive commentary (and McGuire himself has described 'the whole structure as being musical' (Gabel 2014: n.p.): snippets from songs of their respective era echo through a the deep-historical framework of the discourse: Peggy Lee's 'Is That All There Is?' ('Let's break out the booze and have a ball'), Herman Hupfield's 'As Time Goes By' ('It's still the same old story / The fight for love and glory'), and Nat King Cole's 'Our Love is Here to Stay' ('The Rockies may crumble / Gibraltar may tumble'). Such moments as these cultivate a sense of double-temporality that Ranu Mukherjee and Alicia Escott (through their fascinating web project The Bureau of Linguistical Reality) refer to as 'shadowtime,' which they describe as 'a parallel timescale that follows one around throughout day to day experience of regular time. Shadowtime manifests as a feeling of living in two distinctly different temporal scales simultaneously' (Bureau of Linguistical Reality 2014: n.p.). This sense is only possible within the simultaneous cognitive grasp of both storyworld and discourse, an awareness of the lived experience of the novel's characters alongside the formalized presentation of the narrative.

The power of *Here* lies in its ability to bring the alienating, non-human temporal sublime of the Anthropocene home, both figuratively and literally. But, as I've suggested, the concepts 'home' and 'Anthropocene' are endlessly complex and multivalent, and their meaningful rendering in narrative is no simple task. The larger project to which this paper is addressed is one of finding narrative forms that can accommodate both 'home,' implying a sense of belonging, life, temporal continuity, and the Anthropocene, with its concerns about planetary limits, and potentially (as Colebrook chillingly puts it) 'non-survival temporalities' of the human (Colebrook 2015: 12). *Here* is just one example of how narrative can be pushed toward its conventional limits to accommodate both imperatives: not by jumping us forward into a post-apocalyptic future age, nor by reverting to the rhetoric of objectivity and detachment of science. Narrative, instead, might find the expansion of temporal and spatial scale in the uncanny moments when deep future and deep past are mobilized to enter into a surprising simultaneity with the banalities of the everyday present. As Thacker puts it, 'the world-without-us is not to be found in a 'great beyond' . . . rather, it is in the very fissures, lapses, or lacunae in the World and the Earth' (Thacker 2011: 8). *Here*, as I hope to have demonstrated, comes close to literalizing

Thacker's description: the world-without-us—the deep-historical scale of temporality announced by the Anthropocene—is also somehow always *with* us, in that vanishing point of negative space where the corner of a house merges with the fold of a book.

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