Editorial *Ecozon@ Issue 7.2*

Axel Goodbody

"Urban Ecologies" is the thematic focus of the Special Section and the Creative Writing and Arts Section of this number of *Ecozon@.* As Catrin Gersdorf notes in her introduction, the city is traditionally associated with processes of replacing rather than harbouring nature, and ecocritics for a long time neglected towns and cities, preferring to focus on texts and genres devoted to the organic and the wild rather than civilisation and the built environment. Throughout most of history, the human population has lived in a rural setting. Although the first cities emerged over five thousand years ago, only a small proportion of people lived in them until relatively recently. This is no longer the case: today, over 50 percent of the world's population live in urban areas, and the figure is steadily increasing. Building sustainable cities and managing urban areas are among the most important development challenges of the 21st century. The world's growing cities need to build basic infrastructure in a sustainable way, and even cities with a relatively stable population in high-income nations need to adapt existing infrastructure and patterns of consumption to become sustainable. Cities account for 75 percent of the world's energy use, and over 70 percent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions. A resource-intensive consumer society currently drives urban lifestyles, contributing significantly to the pressure on the planet's ecosystems. At the same time, cities have the potential to act as hubs for the development of smart, sustainable solutions that can help meet human needs while minimising the ecological footprint. Providing transport, housing, electricity, water and sanitation for a densely settled urban population is typically cheaper and less environmentally damaging than providing a similar level of services to a dispersed rural population. It falls to town planners and architects in the first instance to create the cities of the future. But fiction, poetry, art, film and popular culture also have a part to play in imagining an alternative urbanity.

Gersdorf starts her introduction to the special section by asking whether the High Line in central New York, formerly a stretch of elevated railway, now a 20-block popular recreational area, can be regarded as a model of how to accommodate the presence of non-human life (mainly plants, but also animals) in the modern city. She then traces the emergence of Urban Ecology in the 1970s, and notes how Urban Ecocriticism, which began in the 1990s, has witnessed a spate of recent publications. The four essays presented in this journal use literature and film as a diagnostic tool for understanding the history of the city in the modern imagination, and as a resource from which new ideas and conceptions of urbanity can be gained. Rachel Nisbet writes on James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*; Christopher Schliephake looks at the work of an American visual artist and a South Korean film maker; María Isabel Pérez Ramos examines three dystopian

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images of the urban future set in the arid south west of the US, and Chris Pak views narratives and images of future cities in the writing of H.G. Wells, Frederick Turner and Kim Stanley Robinson from the perspective of the Anthropocene.

The General Section contains five essays. In the first, Anastasia Cardone examines the aesthetic concepts underlying Annie Dillard's classic of contemporary American nature writing, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974). Nora Vergara Legarra discusses (in Spanish) the geographical and social environment of Barbados as represented in the poems of Kamau Brathwaite, in which place is reconfigured through African-derived orality, approaching them from a perspective of colonial difference. John Ryan considers botanical melancholia in the work of the Australian poet and activist John Kinsella, arguing that his radical pastoralism provides an essential counterforce to prevailing idyllic depictions of the Australian landscape. Writing in Italian, Rossella Di Rosa analyses the ecological thinking in *Alonso e i visionari* (1996), Anna Maria Ortese's last novel, and shows how the author shared and even anticipated some of the key tenets of Posthumanism and contemporary Animal Studies. Finally, Katarzyna Olga Beilin reviews the experiments in alternative socio-economic structures which have emerged in Spain in response to economic crisis and climate change, and assesses the role which considerations of individual wellbeing play in the cultures of these forms of alternative biopolitics.

The Creative Writing and Arts section presents photos by Laura Sánchez-Vizcaíno (to whom we owe the image on the cover of this issue) and Christian Arpaia, and poems by Kathryn Jo Kirkpatrick and Dean Anthony Brink. In her introduction, Serenella Iovino draws out the part these artists working respectively in Spain, Italy, the United States and Taiwan play in the contributing to the "naturalcultural imagination of and around urban ecologies".

The reviews section presents detailed assessments of Christophe Bonneuil's important publication, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, and works on bullfighting in contemporary Spain, reviewed by Michael Boyden and Kathleen Connolly.

We hope our readers will find pleasure as well as instruction in this latest number of Ecozon@.

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Urban Ecologies: An Introduction

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The High Line, New York City, April 3, 2015 © Catrin Gersdorf

The image that provides the visual epigraph to this "Introduction" to the special section on urban ecologies is a photo I took when I walked the High Line, "New York City's park in the sky" (David/Hammond), on cool, drizzly day in early April 2015. Dominated by steel, wood, brick, glass, and concrete, this vista shows no traces of living matter, no plants, no animals, not even any human beings engaged in the frenzy of their daily business. It seems the quintessential spatial representation of urbanity, a space defined by architecture and language, not by nature or geography. Traditionally, the city is associated with processes of replacing rather than harboring the natural and the wild. In its idealized form, the city symbolizes what Yi-Fu Tuan has described as the human tendency to seek to "escape" the vagaries of nature. In such an imaginary, urban spaces are conceived as bulwarks against "nature's undependability and violence" (Tuan 1998: 10). They protect, shield, and separate the human from the non-human, the civilized from the wild. In such a scenario, the city's liberatory promise rests in its potential "to overthrow the tyranny of nature" (Benton-Short & Short 5).

But isn't this very distinction between the urban and the wild, between environments created and inhabited by humans, and environments created by natural forces and inhabited by non-human animals, plants, and other living creatures, an expression of our anthropocentric myopia? As German biologist and nature writer Bernhard Kegel reminds us in *Tiere in der Stadt: Eine Naturgeschichte* (2014; *Animals in the City: A Natural History*), almost every place on earth is inhabited by organisms, and

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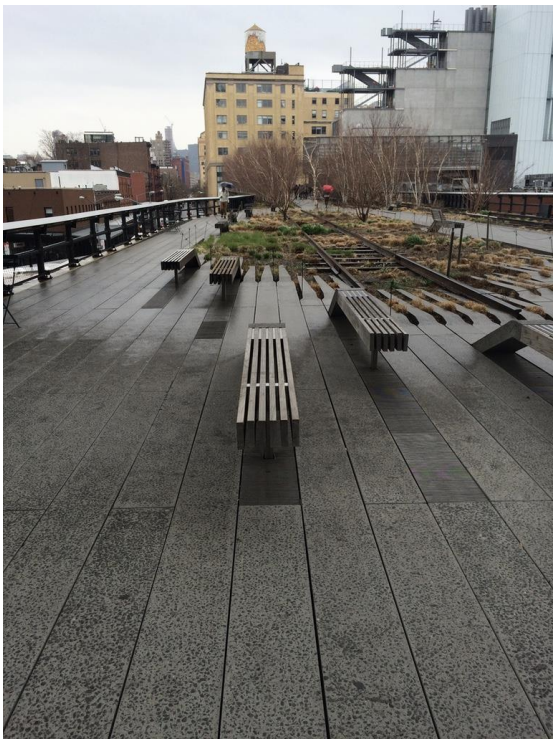
they include the beautiful and the ugly, the obnoxious and the admirable, the charismatic and the disgusting, the wonderful and the dangerous. The High Line is not exempt from such presences. But in order for us to see them, we need to readjust the viewfinder. Just turning 180° may produce a different picture:



The High Line, New York City, April 3, 2015 © Catrin Gersdorf

Suddenly the trees are there, the bushes and the grass, competing with the architecture and the flagstones, pushing into the foreground and claiming their place in the city. One could actually join Walter Benjamin's flâneur and, literally, go "botanizing," if not on the asphalt, then in the vestiges of old railroad tracks.[1]

A shift in perspective may add a distinctly material dimension to *urban ecology*, a concept that first emerged in the early 20th century when urban sociologists, mostly of the Chicago School of Sociology, used it metaphorically in descriptions of the city as a complex living organism. With the publication of *Contemporary Urban Ecology* (1977), the outcome of joint research efforts of urban sociologist Brian J.L. Berry and urban geographer John D. Kasarda, the emphasis shifted to adopting the methodological approach of an ecological inquiry. As Berry and Kasarda stated: "The basic premise of the ecological approach is that, as a population develops an effective organization, it improves its chances of survival in its environment" (qtd. in Poston 1006).[2]

During the same decade, biologists began to study the existence of plants and animals in cities, thus drawing attention to the presence of non-human life in an

[1] I have discussed Walter Benjamin's figure of the flâneur and flânerie as ecocritical practice in more detail elsewhere. See Gersdorf 2013.

[2] More recently, Kasarda has envisioned the future city in purely commercial terms, as *Aerotropolis*—the city that is built to meet commercial rather than ecological needs.

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environment otherwise perceived as the spatial and organizational epitome of human societies. Kegel's work cited above stands in that tradition, one that follows a similar path as the research of environmental historians such as William Cronon and Martin Melosi, and urban geographers such as Matthew Gandy as well as Lisa Benton-Short and John Rennie Short. All of these scholars have contributed to our understanding of the city as part of "a society-environment dialectic" (Benton-Short & Short 4), one in which "the city is an integral part of nature and nature is intimately interwoven into the social life of cities" (5). Or as Gandy suggests, "the production of modern cities has altered the relationship between nature and society in a series of material and symbolic dimensions" (Gandy 5). But he also insists that "alternative modernities [...] vie for representation in the urban landscape, as different conceptions of meaning and identity are etched into the fabric of the city" (5). Gandy's use of words such as *fabric*, *representation*, *etch*, and *urban landscape* reveal his way of thinking about the city as a space defined by both materiality *and* textuality. Much like Gaston Bachelard, Henri Lefebvre, and Edward Soja he approaches the space of the city *literally*, as the material reality that shapes modernity, and *literarily* (or poetically), as a text that encodes the truth about modernity. This brings me back to my visit to the High Line.

Interested in the changing relationship between nature and the city, I had loosely followed the development of that project for almost a decade before I actually had a chance to be and move in that post-industrial, post-modern space myself. Before the elevated train tracks, stretching over roughly twenty blocks in midtown Manhattan, were retrofitted into a now popular recreational area for New Yorkers and their guests, they were known as the West Side Line. Back in 1847, the tracks were laid on street level along 10th Avenue for the purpose of shipping freight. In 1929, the state of New York, the city, and the New York Central Railroad agreed on a plan to build a viaduct in order to decrease the number of traffic accidents along the Line and improve the safety in one of the city's busiest commercial districts. The Line opened in 1934. By midcentury, trucks had started to dominate the freight shipping business. The last train ran on the High Line in 1980, "pulling three carloads of frozen turkeys" (Friends of the High Line website). For almost two decades, hardly anybody seems to have paid particular attention to a slowly disintegrating monument to the industrial city. Plant seeds took root along the old tracks and created a linear wilderness in New York City's urban grid—a form of spontaneous self-generation that created a rough beauty captured in the images of photographer Joel Sternfeld (see "NYC Parks: The High Line" on the Museum of the City's website). In 1999 Joshua David and Robert Hammond, residents in the High Line neighborhood, founded Friends of the High Line and began to advocate the structure's preservation and use as a public space. Successful in soliciting the support of the City of New York, the initiative gained traction and eventually the first section was opened to the public on June 9, 2009. Since then, most of the structure has been transformed into a space whose industrial past functions as a frame for its horticultural present and future.

Yet on my April walk, when spring had just started to assert its seasonal rights, most of the plants in the High Line had barely begun to awaken from their wintry hiatus. Their lusciousness was a promise rather than an insistent materiality, their physical

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presence in a space that was still defined by the commercial and residential infrastructures of the modern city symbolic rather than competitive. From a semiotic perspective, the plants in their clearly delineated beds have a function not unlike that of the word that gave a name to a black wooden shack located under a covered bridge stretching across the High Line: terroir. As I learned later, "terroir" was (and still is) the name of "the world's best wine bar" (wineisterroir.com), which makes sense, given how important that mix of soil, topography, and climate is for producing a wine's distinct character. However, at the time I just saw a word that reminded the visitor of the nature underneath the urban superstructure; a word foreign to the lexicon of the official language spoken in one of the world's largest cities; a word that perhaps was part of an environmental art installation. A word that ultimately made me wonder whether the grasses, bushes, trees, and flowers on the High Line were just that—pieces in an environmental art installation. But no matter what the answer, both the word (and what it represents) and the plants (as well as the animal life they support), have become an integral part of New York City's urban ecology. Referencing the geological foundation of human existence (the ground on which cultures may or may not thrive) as well as a cultural institution such as the wine bar, *terroir* serves the pleasures of body *and* mind. So do the plants that provide a space and a microclimate that may help to make life in the most human of all environments tolerable while at the same time reminding us of the existential proximity of our non-human neighbors.

How does the High Line fare in comparison to New York City's Central Park? Established in 1857, Central Park was built to provide urbanites with an environment whose landscaped features denied, or at least concealed the city. Inserted into the rectangular geometry of New York's urban grid, it simultaneously emphasized and undermined what Bruno Latour has described as modernity's project of 'purification' and 'translation'. While the grid sought to "purify" modern human culture of the seeming irrationality of wild nature, the design of Central Park imitated and simultaneously translated wilderness into a recreational asset for a growing urban population. Gandy has aptly summarized the "political rationale" behind the nineteenth-century interest in creating city parks: "public health and social order" (Gandy 104). Inspired by an ethic that combined the preservation of nature with that of human health and social peace, Central Park also served the economic logic of real estate development, raising the financial value of adjacent property.[3] Today, we would perhaps perceive the creation of Central Park as a form of gentrification, given that the squatters' shacks that one could still find in the vicinity of the Central Park site in 1862 (cf. Gandy 90) were eventually removed and replaced by more stately buildings. And certainly, the creation of the High Line Park in midtown Manhattan raised at least one pair of skeptical eyebrows. In an op-ed for the *New York Times* published on August 21, 2012, Jeremiah Moss called it several names: "a catalyst for some of the most rapid gentrification in the city's history," "the home of a neatnik with expensive tastes, afraid I would soil the furnishings," and a

[3] For a more detailed discussion of these issues see Gandy, Chapter 2 "Symbolic Order and the Urban Pastoral." For a more detailed discussion of the relation between the city, nature, and the concept of the grid see my essay "Nature in the Grid: American Literature, Urbanism, and Ecocriticism" (2010).

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"snake" "destroying neighborhoods as it grows" and doing so "by design." Moss reports that property values around the High Line increased 103 percent between 2003 and 2011, dramatically changing the character of West Chelsea, which used to be "a mix of working-class residents and light-industrial business" (*NYT* online). Realities like this are now "etched into the fabric" of New York City. Perhaps the *terroir* on the High Line should be recognized as one of the major signatures of urban post-modernity, located at the opposite end of the global scale of urbanity from the *favelas* in Brazil and other similar post-colonial places on this planet.

In light of the problematic social and political narratives it has come to support and the gentrified reality it has helped to create, can we still cite the High Line as an urban artifact that acknowledges the presence of non-human life in the history of the modern city? Is the High Line so radically different from Central Park, a space that was located outside the city limits when it was first created in the nineteenth century, but now, in the twenty-first, interrupts the regularity of the grid and invites visitors with a philosophical inclination to critically contemplate the relationship between the city and its most prominent park? Or do we have to look for images of an alternative urbanity elsewhere, in fiction, poetry, art, and popular culture?

Whatever the answer, these and similar questions inspired *Ecozon*@'s call for contributions to a special section on "Urban Ecologies." The idea was also to give another push to the study of urbanity within ecocriticism, a mode of inquiry within literary and cultural studies that began to emerge in the mid-1990s, has since developed into a vibrant field within the humanities all over the world. For a long time Ecocriticism was fixated on the study of nature and wilderness as well as on the investigation of texts and genres devoted to what could be summarized as ecological, or environmental consciousness raising. Attempts to embrace the study of real and imagined urban environments as a legitimate ecocritical project are few and far between. The first milestone on ecocriticism's path to the city was Michael Bennett and David W. Teague's *The Nature of Cities: Ecocriticism and Urban Environments* (1999), a collection of essays that addressed issues such as "The Nature of Cities," "Urban Nature Writing," "City Parks" as well as conceptual intersections of race, gender, urbanity, and wilderness, and that closed with a section on "theorizing urban space." As Bennett and Teague wrote in the introduction, the volume had two major purposes: 1) "to point to the self-limiting conceptualizations of nature, culture, and environment built into many ecocritical projects by their exclusion of urban places;" and 2) "to remind city dwellers of our placement within ecosystems and the importance of this fact for understanding urban life and culture" (4).

A little more than ten years later, Stefan L. Brandt, Winfried Fluck, and Frank Mehring edited *Transcultural Spaces: Challenges of Urbanity, Ecology, and the Environment* (2010). Its publication by a German academic press and its placement in a series devoted to "Research in English and American Literature" may account for the book's invisibility in the international community of ecocritics. Among the essays in this volume that may be of interest beyond the disciplinary confines of North American Studies is Lawrence Buell's "Nature and City: Antithesis or Symbiosis?" Buell discusses

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"six metaphors for encapsulating the place of nature in relation to cities: metaphors upon which both theory and fiction have often drawn," and that "operate" by an aesthetic logic originally described by Paul Ricoeur and summarized by Buell as an oscillation between "abstracting us away from the factical object [...] and retrieving it with a richer heuristic plenitude" (Buell 5). These metaphors that shape the ways in which we think and imagine urbanity are "the city-nature binary" (5); the city as body or "macro-organism" (7); "city as palimpsest" (8); "city as fragmentary assemblage" (11), as "network" (13), and, finally, as "apocalypse" (14). Buell's list provides the urban ecocritic with a valuable tool for analyzing literary and cultural texts of all genres and for assessing their function in the production of real and imagined urban spaces.

Three publications that have come out just recently herald a possible renaissance in urban ecocriticism. In 2015, Mark Luccarelli and Sigurd Bergmann edited *Spaces In-Between: Cultural and Political Perspectives on Environmental Discourse*, a volume that contains several essays looking at urban design, urban planning, urban gardening, and the creation of urban parks as practices that produce spaces "between the social and the natural" (15). The year 2016 saw the publication of Ursula K. Heise's essay "Terraforming for Urbanists" and Christopher Schliephake's book on *Urban Ecologies: City Space, Material Agency, and Environmental Politics in Contemporary Culture*. Both scholars are interested in identifying literary and cultural texts that provide cognitive models for overcoming crusted images and concepts of the city as "an antithesis to nature or a biological wasteland" and, instead, envision it "as itself a form of nature" (Heise 11). Heise finds one such example in Kim Stanley Robinson's sci-fi novel *2312* (2012), a narrative that suggests at least one addition to Buell's list of urban metaphors: terraforming. The other prominent example she discusses is Harriet Mullen's *Urban Tumbleweed: Notes from a Tanka Diary* (2013), a book of poetry that reimagines Los Angeles as a space that is not only defined by urban sprawl and congested freeways but also by hummingbirds, giant hibiscus flowers, and "a profusion of oleanders" (Mullen qtd. in Heise 21). Drawing on Hubert Zapf's conceptualization of cultural ecology, Schliephake (who is also a contributor to this special section) embarks on the project of analyzing "examples taken from contemporary culture dealing with urban life and the complex interrelations between urban communities and their (natural and built) environments" (Schliephake xiii). Like Heise, he looks for a language and for images that articulate the city differently—as a reality shaped by the discourses of space, materiality, environmental politics, and, last but not least, literary and popular culture. In Schliephake's book, "urban ecology" becomes an epistemological tool for deconstructing the city-nature binary and a critical practice that participates in creating "a new 'image' of the city," one that moves us beyond the perception of the city as "some strange other, an ugly concrete stain on an otherwise beautiful landscape" (xvi).

The essays collected in this special section follow a similar critical program: to one degree or another, they all use literature and film as a diagnostic tool for understanding the history of the city in the modern imagination, or as a resource for fueling new ideas and concepts of urbanity; and they investigate the effects of storytelling on the material reality of urban space and urban life. The section opens with Rachel Nisbet's essay on

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"James Joyce's Urban EcoAnarchism." Taking *Finnegans Wake* (1939) as the object of her critical analysis and drawing intertextual connections to the work of Italian philosopher Giambatista Vico, Nisbet makes a strong argument for the presence of ecological thought in conceptualizations of the city since the Enlightenment, while at the same time pointing at the significance of urban ecology in the development of modernist literary aesthetics. Christopher Schliephake's essay "From Green to Brown Landscapes" links a historical narrative about the "the changes that have occurred in our urban landscapes (and our cultural images of them) since the age of industrialization" with a discussion of the work of American visual artist Alex Grey and South-Korean filmmaker Hae-jun Lee's *Cast Away on the Moon* (2009). Schliephake argues that through their work, both artists offer "new ways of conceptualizing cities as integral parts of a living, interactive biosphere." María Isbael Pérez Ramos looks at the effects of the climatological and geographical condition of the arid and semi-arid Southwest of the United States on imagining an urban future for that particular region. All three novels under investigation in her contribution – two published in the early 1990s (Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* and Rudolfo Anaya's *Alburquerque*) and one in 2015 (Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife*) – represent urban ecologies as dystopias, spaces that are characterized by the social and economic injustices resulting from neo-liberal, profit-oriented modes of managing the region's water resources. Yet as Pérez Ramos shows, even in narratives grounded on apocalyptic metaphors, novelists offer glimpses of the possibility for alternative urban futures. The last contribution, Chris Pak's essay on "Terraforming and the City," takes a closer look at narratives and images of future cities from H.G. Wells' *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933), to Frederick Turner's epic poem *Genesis* (1988) and Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy (1992-1996). Discussing these literary texts within the conceptual framework of the Anthropocene, he argues that "images of animals, plants and bacteria are fundamental to the way terraforming narratives" conceptualize future cities.

As all four essays demonstrate, the process of thinking urbanity in relation to questions of ecology, environmentality, and the future of human existence began at least a century ago. To focus on urbanity may still smack of anthropocentrism, an ideology that privileges humans and their needs and desires. Nevertheless, ecocriticism cannot afford to ignore that, perhaps with the exception of viruses and bacteria, humans are a species that has the most lasting effect on the organic and anorganic foundations of life. Nor are we, as a species, anywhere near extinction. In order for us to continue life on planet Earth and not to succumb to fantasies of human existence on other planets, we need to rethink the ways in which we take up and occupy space. In the late 1960s, architect Paolo Soleri introduced the term arcology, a concept that imagined the spatial future of human collectives as being defined by *arc*hitecture and ec*ology*. Arcology "proposes a highly integrated and compact three-dimensional urban form that is the opposite of urban sprawl with its inherently wasteful consumption of land, energy resources and time, and tendency to isolate people from each other and the community" ("What is Arcology?" on the arcosanti.org website). At the core of such thinking is a reconceptualization of urbanity as a mode of life that sustains what German philosopher

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Andreas Weber recently called a "culture of enlivenment" (66). Such a culture can unfold "in highly diverse contexts—traditional societies, indigenous cultures, Internet culture, urban spaces, land and water management, and many others" (42). For Weber, "self-organised communities of people" (42) are the precondition of an ecologically as well as socially and politically sustainable future. He is convinced that such communities "are bypassing the NeoDarwinian/neoliberal model by inventing their own, novel forms of self-provisioning and governance" (42). With this special section we want to suggest that in the twenty-first century, the preservation of the world may no longer be in wildness alone, but in new visions of urbanity.

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James Joyce's Urban EcoAnarchism

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Abstract

In this paper I contend James Joyce invests *Finnegans Wake's* river-woman Anna Livia Plurabelle with the agency to reconnect Dublin's inhabitants to the environs that resource their urban ecology. In early twentieth-century Dublin, Nature retained the fearsome power of Giambattista Vico's thunderclap. Regular typhoid outbreaks contributed to increased infant mortality rates in the inner city; and, as Anne Marie D'Arcy observes, the River Liffey delta could not absorb the raw sewerage discharged from the city's wealthy coastal townships, so this washed upriver, offering the ideal conditions for typhoid's parasitic bacterium to multiply. There is no place for the Romantic sublime in such a setting. Yet *Finnegans Wake* nurtures the hope that Dubliners might remediate their city's urban ecology. Anna Livia gifts the city three key means to this end: birth control to limit population growth, an uprising of the poor to redistribute wealth, and gout to curb greed and thus reduce natural resources consumption. While these steps might initiate the beginning of an egalitarian society in Dublin, they require the city's inhabitants to gain a heightened consciousness of their actions. With such a revolution, recalling Peter Kropotkin's ecoanarchism, played out on an intergenerational timescale, urban Dublin could regain equilibrium with the environs that sustain it, countering the global phenomenon of the 'Great Acceleration'. Reading the *Wake* as ecoanarchism is one approach to discover that, like his fictional alter-ego Stephen, Joyce seeks to change the urban ecology of Dublin by pricking the conscience of generations of readers who enjoy the privileges of education, and contemplation.

Keywords: *Finnegans Wake,* Vico, ecoanarchism, urban ecology, post-pastoral.

Resumen

Este trabajo argumenta que James Joyce otorga a Anna Livia Plurabelle, la "mujer del río" de *Finnegans Wake's* el poder para reconectar a los habitantes de Dublín con los alrededores que forman su ecología urbana. En el Dublín de principios del siglo veinte, la naturaleza retenía el poder aterrador del trueno de Giambattista Vico. Brotes frecuentes de fiebre tifoidea contribuían al aumento de la tasa de mortalidad infantil en el centro de la ciudad, y, como destaca Anne Marie D'Arcy, el delta del río Liffey no podía absorber las aguas residuales que venían de los ricos municipios costeros, así que ésta subía a contracorriente, creando las condiciones óptimas para el desarrollo de la bacteria que produce la fiebre tifoidea. No hay lugar para el concepto de lo "sublime" del Romanticismo en este escenario. Sin embargo, *Finnegans Wake* de Joyce alimenta la esperanza de que los dublineses quizá puedan remediar la ecología urbana de su ciudad. Anna Livia ofrece a la ciudad tres claves al respecto: métodos anticonceptivos para disminuir el crecimiento poblacional, el levantamiento de las clases pobres a fin de exigir la redistribución de la riqueza, y la gota para contener la codicia y de ese modo reducir el consumo de recursos naturales. Aunque estos pasos tal vez iniciarían el principio de un Dublín más justo y equitativo, requerirían que los habitantes de la ciudad fueran más conscientes de sus acciones. Con esta revolución, evocando el ecoanarchismo de Peter Kropotkin y aplicándolo a una escala de tiempo intergeneracional, el Dublín urbano podría recuperar el equilibrio con los alrededores que lo mantienen, contrarrestando el fenómeno global de la "Gran Aceleración". Leer *Finnegans Wake* desde el punto de vista del ecoanarquismo es una

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forma de descubrir que, como su álter ego Stephen, Joyce busca cambiar la ecología urbana de Dublín, apelando la conciencia de generaciones de lectores que disfrutan los privilegios de la educación y de la contemplación.

Palabras clave: *Finnegans Wake,* Vico, ecoanarquismo, ecología urbana, post-pastoral.

This article focuses on the Anna Livia Plurabelle (ALP) chapter of *Finnegans Wake,* reading it as a post-pastoral text that seeks to alter the relationship of its largely urban, privileged readers to the rural environment(s) that sustain them. I begin by reviewing some recent ecocritical readings of Joyce's fiction. Hereafter, I describe Dublin's socio-environmental context in Joyce's lifetime, the pastoral pleasures of the wealthy, and the anti-pastoral reality of the poor. Next, I consider the influence of Italian Enlightenment philosopher Giambattista Vico's *New Science* on two central figures in the *Wake*: the married couple HCE (Here Comes Everybody) and ALP, who are human characters, and a mountain and river respectively. The river-woman ALP instils fear in urban Dublin when she visits her ills and gifts of hope upon the city; she might thereby reinitiate a veneration of her waters. This is one aspect of ALP's active role in revivifying her watershed. In the final section of this article I discuss how her distribution of ills to urban Dublin also seems intended to promote ecological justice by limiting resource consumption, reducing birth rates, and initiating insurrections amongst the poor. Her gifts defend her ecosystem's integrity, by encouraging the equal flourishing of human and non-human life, and thereby expanding the community of justice in urban Dublin (Schlosberg 143). Her gifts also foster the ecoanarchist ideal that insurrection might establish complete social equality, and human coexistence with the natural world. As contemporary readers, ALP's gifts might prick our consciences, as they address socio-environmental issues associated with the ongoing 'Great Acceleration' of human population, resource use, and environmental degradation.

James Joyce's modernist fiction is increasingly viewed as exploring the interdependence of the biophysical, social, economic and spiritual in urban Dublin and its environs. For instance, in the recently published *EcoJoyce: The Environmental Imagination of James Joyce*, Anne Fogarty observes how Joyce's "programmatic urbanism" underscores the "anti-pastoral aspects of 'dear dirty Dublin'" (xv). The term 'anti-pastoral', coined by Raymond Williams, describes literature that offers "a corrective" to the "deceptions" of the pastoral tradition (Gifford 22). For Terry Gifford, anti-pastoral texts depict "rural reality", and outline "pastoral responsibility" (22). While offering such a corrective, Joyce's fiction also utilises what Gifford calls a post-pastoral mode, undermining the human/nature divide, and illustrating the complexity of human-environment interrelations in urban Dublin (26). In *The Ecology of Finnegans Wake,* Alison Lacivita analyses these complex human-nature interrelations. Developing Finn Fordham's contention that the *Wake* is a story of rubbish generated on a planetary scale, she argues the *Wake* is an "exemplary text" of urban ecology, which belongs within the ecocritical canon (Fordham, *Lots of Fun* 20; Lacivita 1). While despair, alienation, and

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stylistic experimentation are more familiar modernist themes than urban ecology, Lacivita draws on Scott J. Bryson's contention that ecological modernism deploys these familiar themes to explore "a fundamental uncertainty about the relationship between human and non-human nature" (Bryson 591, qtd. in Lacivita 6).

I find Bryson's view compelling, as the *Wake* represents Dublin's urban dwellers as part of a cyclical "creative-destructive process" that shapes the physical earth (Gifford 27). At the start of the twentieth century, Dublin, like nearly all cities, began to absorb and process increasing amounts of "water, energy and materials" from the natural environment and to discharge a growing amount of pollutants, garbage and solid waste as its urban population increased (McNeil 287). Accordingly, the land area sustaining an urban population like Dublin's, most probably "an order of magnitude greater than that contained within municipal boundaries", was put under increasing environmental stress (Rees 121). Responding to these factors, *Finnegans Wake* offers a "collideorscape", or collage of points of view, in its transhistorical narrative of Dublin and its 'environs' (*FW* 143.28).

Urban Dublin's Socio-geography

The socio-geography of early twentieth-century Dublin gave rise to two main visions, or scapes, of the natural world. Rich Dubliners lived in the city's suburban townships that were created by a "Protestant and Unionist Middle Class" (D'Arcy 254). Here, they maintained privileged links with a romanticised, pastoral Nature, enjoying the provision of piped water, lawned gardens, and picturesque views, such as the Wicklows: these hills were deemed romantic by Leitch Ritchie, in his *Ireland: Picturesque and Romantic* (1837). In contrast, Dublin's most underprivileged inhabitants were housed in the crowded, disease-ridden city centre (Ó Maitiú 15, qtd. in D'Arcy 265). This urban centre is built on the deltaic marshlands of the River Liffey, whose poor drainage compromised the health of its inhabitants. In 1911 one third of Dublin's families (21,000 of them) lived in central Dublin, in one-room tenements, and twice as many young children died here, compared to the suburbs (O'Brian 109). Clearly, Dublin's poorest inhabitants still experienced abysmal living conditions at the start of the twentieth century, even though suburban gentrification made Dublin, statistically, a healthier city than in prior decades, when the city had "the unenviable reputation of being the unhealthiest city in the United Kingdom" (O'Brian 105). In the inner city, measles, whooping cough and diarrhoea epidemics claimed the lives of Dublin's poorest young children; typhoid and tuberculosis routinely killed those over 25 years old (O'Brian 105). Urban poverty created this health epidemic: half of all typhoid fever deaths in the Leinster province (20,000 km^2) arose in central Dublin (Creighton 299). Joyce had first-hand experience of this 'natural violence', from which city walls offered no protection. As D'Arcy notes, Joyce lost his sister Mabel to typhoid in 1911, after his family moved from the city's privileged township of Rathgar to the inner city; prior to this, in 1902, his brother Georgie died, probably of peritonitis following typhoid fever (278-280; S. Joyce 133). Thus Joyce became part of an urban ecology, where humans

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were potential vectors of typhoid's parasitic bacterium due to their exposure to effluents, large amounts of which discharged into the Liffey's mouth from ash-pits and water closets in the Rathmines and Pembroke townships. This raw sewage washed up the river, back into the city centre, on the tide (Redmond, qtd. in D'Arcy 257).

These two polarised visions of Dublin, the one pastoral and the other post-pastoral, did not preclude upward mobility in urban Dublin. An Irish Catholic middle class was politically ascendant in the City Hall (D'Arcy 262). Consequently, while Protestant Unionists still lived in the affluent coastal suburbs, Dublin's middle classes increasingly aspired to their elite lifestyle (D'Arcy 265). For instance, as D'Arcy observes, Joyce's Ulysses, Leopold Bloom, dreams of an ideal home supplied by the new municipal Vartry water scheme, featuring a bathroom with shower; an upstairs water closet; a water-sprayed rockery, and a lawn sprinkler (*U*, 666-667, qtd. in D'Arcy 269-270). Bloom may subconsciously aspire to bathe in an Edenic spring, but he overlooks the link between increased piped water consumption and the saturation of the subsoil surrounding the Liffey delta due to seeping "raw sewerage and stagnant water from numerous wells abandoned with the event of Vatry water" (D'Arcy 275). In the first decades of the twentieth century, this shift in urban ecology, which was directly linked to the recent provision of piped water to Dublin and its wealthy townships, engendered a sharp increase in typhoid deaths in central Dublin, even amongst the middle classes (276).

In *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (1916) Joyce's fictional persona, Stephen Dedalus, voices the "despair" felt by those inhabiting Dublin's rank inner-city environment (*P* 254). When this young man removes a louse crawling on his neck, he is distressingly "illclad, illfed, louseeaten" (254). From this abject standpoint, Stephen seeks to prick the conscience of Dublin's privileged inhabitants, living in the wealthy, suburban, independent townships, within, as D'Arcy notes, households paying substantially lower rates that those in central Dublin (D'Arcy 265). Stephen regards these people as rich "patricians of Ireland housed in calm" (*P* 258). His use of the Roman epithet "patrician", here meaning aristocratic, and his allusion to these people's thoughts of "land agents"—stereotyped as managers of English Absentee landlords' agricultural holdings—gesture towards British colonialists' continued profit from Ireland's human and natural resources in the early twentieth century (258-259). Given that Joyce's later Wakean persona, Shem the Penman, is expected to "develop hereditary pulmonary T.B.", and like Stephen needs to be "properly deloused" to have a hope of escaping his plebeian origins, and the risk of typhus, it seems highly plausible that this text, too, is crafted to prick the social and environmental conscience of a privileged, urban elite in the aftermath of the First World War and the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922 (*FW* 172.13; 175.03). This pricking of conscience involves the interrogation of the excessive consumption of material resources, which might be viewed as an attempt to regain those prelapsarian pleasures associated with the pastoral. By exposing the city's dirt to those who geographically partitioned themselves from it, in a text that draws on both anti-pastoral and post-pastoral modes, Joyce may have intended to bring the 'environmental

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footprint' of Dublin into focus for privileged members of urban society, who by aspiring to a pastoral ideal draw most heavily on the earth's natural resources.

Vico's Influence on the Eco-narratives of Anna Livia Plurabelle (ALP) and Here Comes Everybody (HCE)

Environmental conscience is a veiled, yet constant political concern in the *Wake*. Vico's definition of urban space and civilisation's progress in *The New Science* is particularly relevant to the *Wake's* urban environmental conscience. Attention has only recently been focussed on Vico's influence on the *Wake's* environmental imagination, yet Lai neatly pinpoints how the *Wake* "declares its debt to Vico from the opening word 'riverrun'" (98). The course of the River Liffey brings us back "by a commodius vicus of recirculation", to another reading of Dublin's environmental history (*FW* 3.02). Vico's *The New Science*, read schematically, describes civilisation's progression through three stages: the first two, the age of gods and the age of heroes, are associated with poetic imagination; the third stage, the age of men, is associated with the faculty of reflection (Costelloe 2015, online). These three stages are followed by a period of recurrence, or *ricorso*. James Atherton, following Samuel Beckett, identifies the four books of the *Wake* as imitating this programmatic account of history; each book represents a different age, though as Fordham notes "there are cycles within cycles" in the *Wake's* books (Atherton 46; Beckett 7-8; Fordham, *Lots of Fun* 7, 18). Robert Pogue Harrison similarly finds that characteristics of all three stages co-existing within a given historical period for Vico (*Juvenesence* 56-58, quoted in Falconer). Contemporary research continues to examine the *Wake* in relation to Vico's notion of historiography, from the angle of Irish History, and with Lacivita's *The Ecology of Finnegans Wake* from the perspective of environmental history (Fordham 2007a 18; Lacivita 79-80; 102-103). For instance, Lacivita observes how, in 1929, additions Joyce made to the sketch "Haveth Childers Everwhere" (another name for the patriarch HCE) demonstrate "the move away from the countryside and from agriculture and into cities" (96). She notes that this trajectory parallels Vico's stages of human history.

The river Liffey, whose cyclical flow recalls Vico's cyclical history, is one of the two central topographical and ecological figures in the *Wake;* the other is the mountain, HCE. This patriarch, HCE (Here Comes Everybody), is mountain to his wife ALP's river, and father to the abject Joycean persona, Shem the Penman. According to Eugene Jolas, Joyce claimed that while "time and the river and the mountain are the real heroes" of his last fiction, stories about these natural features are dramatised using novelistic elements: the interactions between "men and women", and events of "birth, childhood, night, sleep, marriage, prayer, death" (Jolas 11-12). HCE's progressive alienation from the land, and his pollution of the river Liffey shapes his narrative. For instance, the *Wake* describes HCE's plough time as a "prefall paradise peace" (*FW* 30.15). This evocation of an agrarian paradise derives from Vico's description of a Saturnine "golden age", the first age of the world when "the years were counted in grain harvests" (4, "The Idea of the Work"; 172, bk. 2). Vico associates successful harvests of golden corn with a healthy

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civis, or 'urban space': "the plough rests its handle against the alter… to give us to understand that ploughed lands were the first alters of the gentiles" (9, "The Idea of the Work"). These ploughed lands, therefore, are sacred. For Vico, the first cities, also known as alters, were all founded on cultivated fields, or luci, "burnt lands within the enclosure of the woods", irrigated by "perennial springs" (9-10, "The Idea of the Work"). As Lacivita notes, it is the plough rather than city or town walls that initially demarcates urban space in Vico's cosmology (175). Distorting the normal usage of the word *urbs*, he contends that urban spaces were first demarcated by the plough's wooden moldboard, implements "first called *urbs*" (174, bk. 2). In fact, 'city walls' is the common definition of urbs in Latin, according to Charlton Lewis and Charles Short[1]. In the Viconian scheme, respect for the harvest's temporality, and "prizing and cherishing" the natural environs that resource a city, particularly its springs, are vital to the health of the urban environment and its citizens (170-171, bk. 2).

HCE's initial, nurturing relationship to the arable lands surrounding Dublin is alluded to when he is described as an agrarian "husbandman handling his hoe" (*FW* 5.09). HCE meets William the Fourth, England's "Sailor King", in a similar guise (1830-1837; *FW* 31.11; McHugh 31-32). He encounters the King whilst carrying an earwig trap, and the keys to a Dublin turnpike road. The trap and keys imply HCE works two jobs at this stage in the *Wake's* narrative: he patrols gardens located south of Dublin, in an affluent costal area on Sunday afternoons, collecting trapped earwigs that damage young seedlings; and he oversees a turnpike road, where tolls are collected for the crown purse. In his first, agrarian role, HCE fights a pest on 'his' native land; in his second, civic role, paid by the government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, he forfeits his nurturing relationship with the land, and becomes its aggressor. That HCE is dressed in British military garb, which protects him from the wet Irish climate: "plus fours, puttees, and bulldog boots" further dramatises his physical remove from the soil, and his assimilation by a foreign, colonial power (FW 30.24). Additionally, the image of these boots caked in red earth, evoking blood, "ruddled cinnibar with flagrant marl", implies his physical violence towards the land, if not those inhabiting it. Hereafter, he becomes a Dublin statesman, a "maximostbridgesmaker" focused on social and civil engineering (*FW* 126.10; 34.18-20). With this shift, Dublin's environs no longer provide a habitat where earwigs, men, and plants co-exist. Instead they become material resources, subject to taxation and revenue: consequently, Dublin's environs are discussed in the language of utility. Harrison associates this rational language with Vico's age of men (*Forests* 122-123). Duty of care, which is exemplified by familial bonds, and the notions of respect, vigilance and economy that govern households, are debased in this new, utilitarian relationship with the land (*Forests* 143).

Vico's contention that politically corrupt civilizations may fall to an even more degraded condition because of their growing enslavement to their passion for luxury is a thought that seems to have influenced Joyce's parody of Vico. Joyce identifies this passion for material goods as a significant threat to the urban ecology of early twentieth-

[1] The Perseus Project records 22,058 instances of this usage (perseus.tufts.edu)

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century Dublin.[2] It is a psychological trait like greed, not physical uncleanliness, which Vico finds characteristically "abject" (Vico 381).[3] He writes:

> If the peoples are rotting in this last civil illness… providence decrees that, through obstinate factions and desperate civil wars, they shall turn their cities into forests and the forests into dens and lairs of men. In this way, through long centuries of barbarism, rust will consume the misbegotten subtleties of malicious wits, that have turned them into beasts made more inhuman by the barbarism of reflection than the first men had been made by the barbarism of sense. (381)

Vico's rationale for this return to a barbaric state of "Nature" is that the first men, characterised by an embodied "barbarism of sense… displayed a generous savagery, against which one could defend oneself or take flight or be on one's guard", whereas men of reason hide "a base savagery, under soft words and embraces, plots against the life and fortune of friends and intimates" (381). It is necessary, for Vico, to return to a sensual emersion in the physical world: from this perspective we might revise our place within the urban ecology. From such an embodied perspective a new polis could be constituted that would nurture and cherish the physical world that sustains and defines the city. Such a return involves shifting our attention from the complex, abstract language Vico associates with the stage of men, to the poetic imagination he associates with the 'barbaric' stage of gods, and the stage of heroes, respectively. The *Wake* often plunges into Vico's poetic imagination. As Michael Begnal writes, "in its initial difficulty *Wake* language reflects" the shifts in language described by Vico (2000, 639). This comment recalls Beckett's earlier description of *Wake* language as the "reduction of various expressive media to their primitive economic directness"; he contends this language is "pure Vico" (16).

Water, the 'element' of Anna Livia Plurabelle, is vital to urban ecology; yet water does not speak, it babbles. If civilizations begin with water for Vico, Joyce implies they also founder once they have become estranged from the poetry of water's babble: once the language of the polis becomes disembodied, and abstract, then urban water is gradually dirtied. Accordingly, and as Lacivita also notes, the physical environs of Dublin are foregrounded in the *Wake's* opening clauses through the description of the Liffey "riverrun" that connects the "environs" of Dublin to its morphing urban centre (85). This lyrical description continues a sentence begun on the *Wake's* last page, where the dying allegorical river-woman, Anna-Livia, flows out of the city to join the ocean (*FW* 628.15-16). As numerous critics observe, by allowing this sentence to flow from the end to the beginning of his book, Joyce's structural mimesis evokes the water cycle's closed circle. This natural cycle transcends the rise and fall of civilizations. In the *Wake* (as in *1001 Nights*, often cited in the *Wake*), Joyce adopts this notion of endless cycling as a device to string stories together and recycle them. A recurring theme in these stories is HCE's fall, which occurs in Dublin's Phoenix Park: Phoenix is, tellingly, a corruption of the Irish

[2] See the ecoanarchism section below.
[3] In the section that concludes *The New Science* Vico contends that civilizations that give in to their "unrestrained passions" were "falling back into all the vices characteristic of the most abject slaves" and will eventually "become subject to [i.e., colonized by] better nations" (380-81).

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fionnuisce, or 'clear water' (Slepon[4]). A whispering campaign claiming HCE exposed himself in the park to two women as they urinated, increasingly gains credence in the public sphere. These rumours, which Vico might term base savagery, precipitate HCE's fall as a Dublin statesman (*FW* 126.10; 34.18-20). In Vico's scheme, water, used in the age of gods and heroes for ritual or sacred ablutions, later became associated with the cleanness of civil government. Writes Vico: "from *politeia*, which in Greek means 'civil government', was derived the Latin *politus*, 'clean' or 'neat'" (102). Joyce adopts this theme, suggesting that when government is unjust, for instance if its mismanagement of water resources leads to effluent-contaminated water killing the poorest members of society, then statesmen will be deemed (metaphorically) unclean in their private lives. Given the metaphorical and literal import of water in *Finnegans Wake*, it is striking that Joyce's fictional personae, Stephen and Shem, dislike this 'element'. In *Ulysses*, Stephen is described as a "hydrophobe", who distrusts "aquacities of thought and language" (*U* 626). Thus he anticipates Shem's intense dislike of water's baptismal connotations: a downpour that soaks Shem is treated as "parsonal violence" (*FW* 174.24-25). What is repugnant to Shem is the association of water's regenerative cyclical flow with the cleanliness of civic government (*politea*), which in colonial Ireland, as now, is justified through the connection of church and state—both asserted to be of divine origin. It appears to have been repugnant to Joyce as well: D'Arcy reads Joyce's fiction as suggesting he considered the Dublin Corporation's engineering of a clean water supply for the city's 'patricians' forced the poorest inhabitants to imbibe the dirt of the wealthiest (170).

HCE's fall in Phoenix Park offers a veiled allusion to water's veneration in the 'mythic imagination' of Celtic Ireland. The women urinating in the park recall how Anna Livia does "her pee" on a Wicklow hillside (*FW* 204.11-12). Anna's "pee" develops the mythic dimension of her narrative: micturation is an act of creation for Irish pagans, urine being associated with "rain, rivers, and amniotic fluid" (Gibson, 2006, 53). The salacious rumours about HCE exposing himself to the life-giving flow of women urinating, indicate the rational understanding of water-as-resource is shadowed by a mythical imagining of water as a sacred, generative feminine body that can be abused.

ALP, Vico, and Post-Pastoral

In the Anna Livia chapter, two gossiping washerwomen dramatise how Dublin's rich patricians dirty the waters of Dublin's poor. The washerwomen's chatter as they wash laundry in the River Liffey at Chapelizod constitutes an eco-narrative, offering a poetic, spiritual understanding of the Liffey catchment that counters the prevailing view of the river as a material resource. Joyce makes ecological symbols of the washerwomen; their intimate local knowledge, and place-oriented storytelling recalls those 'indigenous' peoples who regard themselves as an integral part of their ecosystem (Nettleton *et al*. 461). Indeed, the women's metamorphosis into a stone and tree, respectively, at the

[4] fweet.org

close of the chapter embeds them within the syncretic spiritual cosmology their narrative evokes; for instance, the stone recalls the Greek *omphalos* marking the world's centre. On another level, stone and tree can be read as androgynous entities (Glasheen 288; Fordham, "The Writing"). Plausibly, this androgyny results from the washerwomen's 'existence' within the *Wake's* written, masculine discourse, which communicates on behalf of a feminized natural world. However, the masculinist view of a silent, passive, feminised nature is resisted by the washerwomen's banter, and Anna Livia's own song, discussed later in this section of my article (*FW* 201.5-20). Indeed, the ALP chapter, and the *Wake* more generally, upholds the ecofeminist insight that exploitation of the earth is unjustifiable; the earth should not be deemed willingly submissive to powerful masculine rule: post-pastoral texts characteristically take this stance (Gifford 27).

The washerwomen's chatter brings the dirt and stains of Dublin's bourgeoisie inhabitants out into the open. For instance, one of them is "lathering hail" (*FW* 200.34-35), or lathering the hell, out of Dublin poet Denis Florence MacCarthy's underwear to wash it clean. This is an act of retribution: MacCarthy's underwear acts as a metaphor for human sullying of the physical environment, where the elevated consumption rates of society's elite, including MacCarthy's family—his father was a wealthy catholic merchant—increase the city's environmental footprint (Stewart[5]). The aggressive washing of MacCarthy's underwear also constitutes a rejection of a Romantic sublime. Bloom, the water lover and pastoralist who aspires to an elite lifestyle, has a copy of MacCarthy's *Poetical Works* on his bookshelves, with a stylish bookmark left at page five, suggesting the volume was acquired by him as 'cultural capital', but not seriously read (*U* 661). Bloom embodies the privileged reader who basks "in the panorama of all flores of speech" after their "dayety in the sooty, having plenxy of time off on his gouty hands" (*FW* 143.3-5). Despite owning MacCarthy's full *Poetical Works*, Bloom would not know MacCarthy's collection *Underglimpses* contains a Wordsworthian poem, "The Bath of Streams", which chapter 1.8 parodies, if he never read past page five in MacCarthy's *Poetical Works* (McHugh 200). In "The Bath of Streams" pure streams, anthropomorphised as "girls/ In their loosen'd curls", form a river flowing oceanward; this aqueous path, associated with life's hopeful course, terminates in heavenly union with eternal soul (9-10). This description parodies the Romantic sublime's assertion of natural infinitude, which Thomas Weiskel interprets as "an attempt to revise the meaning of transcendence precisely when the traditional apparatus of sublimation—spiritual, ontological, and (one gathers) psychological, and even perceptual—was failing to be exercised or understood" (Weiskel 4). Rejecting the Romantic sublime, the *Wake* anticipates Thomas Weiskel's astute observation that "we have lost the obsession, so fundamental to the Romantic sublime, with natural infinitude" as we live "once again in a finite material world whose limits are beginning to press against us" (*ibid.*). If, as Simpson argues, the Romantic sublime may be negatively associated with the infinite "expansion" of empire, then this concept would troublingly conceal an untenable

[5] ricorso.net

ecological model for the urban space of Imperial cities on (human) intergenerational timescales (Simpson 246). Processes of deforestation, mining and resource extraction, originally associated with colonial expansion, and more recently with the support of increasingly urban post-colonial populations, are unsustainable on intergenerational timescales, and detrimental to the health of both rural and urban populations (Stephens 2012, online).

The washerwomen's dialogue in the *Wake* rejects the sublime, unsullied trajectory described in "The Bath of Streams". Instead, their chatter provides insight into the harsh living conditions of Dublin's poor, and their stressed urban ecology. To evince how these conditions arose, one washerwoman transports her interlocutor on a millennial scale environmental history of the Liffey catchment as she narrates Anna Livia Plurabelle's life. The extent to which the Liffey catchment's ecology has been damaged by colonisation is conveyed in the washerwoman's veiled account of the cultures supported by this river basin: the Celts (pre 427 A.D.[6]), early Christian settlers (427-795 A.D.), the Norse (795-1022 A.D.), and finally the English (post 1022 A.D.). An analeptic narrative maps this history onto the river Liffey's course in answer to the question, who was the first that sexually despoiled Anna Livia: "who was the first that ever burst?" (*JJA* 43, vol. 48; draft 1.8§1.*2, 47474-110). Ultimately this question leads to the river Liffey's source, located in the Wicklow Hills. These hills are located above the "Garden of Wicklow", a name that recalls the Garden of Eden (*JJA* 7, vol. 48, draft 1.8§1A.*0, MS 47471b-76). Here, a "whole drove of maiden hawthorns" witness Anna wriggling in rain pools, after she has released her generative stream of urine (*FW* 204.20). The hawthorn tree introduces a further mythic, Celtic association: in Ireland it is considered "a faerie tree", sacred because "the hawthorn guards wells and springs" (Gifford J. 58). Additionally, it is linked to "lovemaking, conception and birth" (*ibid.*). Joyce may be drawing on all these connections to suggest the River Liffey be venerated as a life source again. A letter he wrote to Harriet Shaw Weaver on January 27th, 1925, demonstrates he knew "the Irish alphabet (ailm beith, coll, dair etc) is all made up of the names of trees" (Joyce, *Letters* I, 225). The hawthorn tree, *Huath*, H in the Ogham alphabet, is associated with the period of May 13th to June 9th in the Celtic Tree Calendar (Gifford J. 56). The washerwoman's tracing of the River Liffey's history and physical course back to its life-giving mountain springs therefore provides an example of Vico's theory that the health of the *civis* depends on nurturing the "perennial springs" that support it (*NS* 16-17, pt. 1).

Joyce associates Celtic imagery with the Liffey's source; additionally, Anna Livia's song, composed before Joyce began to draft chapter 1.8 in February 1924, expresses the river-woman's desire for renewed intercourse with Celtic culture when her colonialist husband, HCE, does not adequately nurture her. Seeking to revivify her riparian environment, ALP's song evinces her agency: unsatisfied in her co-habitation with her "old Dane" of a husband, ALP wishes for an uprising that will improve her environment, and offer environmental justice: With her pantry "out of … milk" - which may signal

[6] These dates derive from William Collier's *History of Ireland,* which Joyce possessed in his Trieste library.

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anthropogenic environmental stress, ALP can't wait for her "old Dane" to waken (*FW* 201.16; *FW* 201.08). Singing "its up and off with me", she plans to rise up and head to Clontarf (*JJA*, 48, 4, draft 1.8§1A.*0, MS 47471b-74v; *FW* 201.18-19). Here, at the tidal mouth of the Liffey, Boru's Celtic army defeated a Norse-Irish alliance on Good Friday in 1014 (Collier 46-47). Significantly for Joyce, this battle of 'indigenous' succession was imitated in the 1916 Easter Rising of the Irish against the colonial English in Dublin. However, intriguingly given this context, the closing words of Anna Livia's song subverts the colonial metaphor of *entrada* or penetration into 'virgin country': ALP desires the sexual adventure that brings fresh languages (saywint) into her impoverished milieu; she wants to feel "the race of the saywint ([seawind/saying wind] up me ambushure"; she welcomes the mixing of languages in her watershed (*FW* 201.19-20).

ALP's song recalls the Viconian model, where urban civilisation breaks down when the city does not nurture the environs that support it. What is radical in Joyce's interpretation of Vico is that Anna Livia, as river environment, becomes an active agent, uprising against those who do not nurture her. As an ecological body that exhibits what Jane Bennett, with a nod to Bergson, calls "Vital materialism", ALP blurs the boundary between life and inanimate matter, the human and the divine (63). She challenges human mastery, reacting as if human ill treatment threatened her own survival. From an ecological perspective, Joyce was a pioneer in dramatising the natural environment as having agency in the early 1920's. His sense of ALP as a dynamic life force may derive from Henri Bergson's *élan vital*, a concept he introduced in *Creative Evolution.* The term describes "the tremendous internal push of life", the "initial impulsion which thrusts it into the world" (104; 284). Joyce had a copy of the 1914 edition Bergson's original, *L'Evolution Créatrice* in his Trieste Library (Ellmann 101). In contrast with Joyce's portrayal of a dynamic river-woman, who can rise up against those who colonise her, the American terrestrial ecologist Frederic Clements, writing in 1916, evokes a passive physical environment, "occupied" or "invaded" by host organisms (142).

ALP rises, and her agency is felt anew, when she is misused in the early twentieth century; her riparian ecology becomes stressed due to urbanisation. As she travels from the Wicklow Hills towards Dublin, she gradually loses her natural colour, and begins to stink. Upon this journey, Anna also travels from the Viconian stage of Gods to that of Men. In the Wicklows, she retains her babbling, 'primitive' nature: indeed, she is ironically described as a "bushman woman" and an "igloo dweller", recalling Vico's age of Gods (*FW* 207.32-33). On the plains, she enters Vico's saturnine golden age, shod in "a ploughboy's nailstudded clogs, a pair of ploughed fields in themselves" (*FW* 208.06). Her hat is adorned with a golden "band of gorse", the tree associated with Lugh, Celtic god of light (Gifford 37). Without sunlight and water there can be no harvesting of "the barleyfields and pennylotts" that Anna Livia courses through on her way to Dublin (*FW* 203.06). The shades and textures of ALP's bright underwear indicate her riparian ecology is still characterised by a species rich biodiversity in the rural counties of Wicklow and Kildare; her stockings have "salmospotspeckle[s]", her "bockknickers" are "bloodorange", and her teddy is decorated with "swansruff" (*FW* 208.12-19). However, the weighty garb of civilisation mutes this vibrant rural ecology, as Anna flows into

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Vico's rational age of Men, characterised by the language of utility (Harrison 122-123). ALP's heavy corduroy coat, a "civvy codroy coat with alpheubett buttons", is closed with that characteristic marker of civilisation, writing. It is also "boundaried round" by a "twobar tunnel belt", an allusion to the freight line that crosses the Liffey at Chapelizod and runs under Phoenix Park (*FW* 208.18-20). The Irish rail network was justified, in part, because it could transport the country's valuable exports towards its docks far quicker than the old canal network. In the 19th century, the River Liffey supplied fresh water to the "seepy and sewery" Grand and Royal canals that conveyed export goods from five Irish counties through the Liffey delta, and overseas (*FW* 207.13; Harness, "Map of Ireland", reprinted by the National Library of Ireland; McHugh, *Sigla* 37). In 1837, exports valued at 2.6 million pounds left Ireland via this route (Harness, "Map of Ireland", reprinted by the National Library of Ireland). Intensified industrialisation at the beginning of the twentieth century, and Dublin's growing urban population, justified the building of a rail network, but this 'progress' also led Anna Livia to wear a "clothes-peg tight astride on her … nose" so she did not smell the polluted "rreke" (reek) of her stagnant waters (*FW* 208.22-24). Clearly, by dramatising the environmental history of the River Liffey in this manner, Joyce rejects the Romantic sublime, finding it tarnished by association with infinite colonial expansion.

Anna Livia's EcoAnarchism

With her waters becoming increasingly polluted in the twentieth century, Anna Livia actively defends her life-giving potential with a plague that promotes the ecoanarchist aims Peter Kropotkin sets out in his writings. Ecoanarchism is a perspective strongly influenced by the scientific research and political ideals of Elisé Réclus, and Peter Kropotkin, anarchists, and environmental scientists writing at the end of the nineteenth century (Purchase 21; Macauley 298). It adopts anarchist political theory, which John P. Clark identifies as having four ideological features, among them viewing the ideal society as "noncoercive and nonauthoritarian" and proposing strategies to immediately institute this ideal society (Clark JP. online). Ecoanarchism, like ecofeminism, associates the domination of one group of humans by another with humans exerting control over the natural world (Macauley 299). The alternative, ecoanarchist ideal is a radical ecological one, which envisages coexistence with the natural world, as using "appropriate or libratory technology, decentralization, and organic ways of living and thinking" (*ibid.*).

Joyce had four of Kropotkin's publications in his Trieste library: *The Commune of Paris*, *La Conquista del Pane* (The Conquest of Bread), *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, and *La Granda Rivoluzione* (*The Great French Revolution*; Ellmann 116). Kropotkin views the earth as a self-regulating system, and contends that community interactions shape the physical environment; therefore he argues consumption should be needs based to prevent material resources from becoming overly limited (Purchase, 2003, 20; 22). In *The Great French Revolution*, Kropotkin writes how commerce "accumulates incredible riches in the hands of those who monopolise the lands, the mines, the ways of

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communication, and the riches of Nature" (1909, online). He also calls for people to "rise against the monopolisers of the soil", and evokes a "law of mutual aid" (*ibid*.). These assertions echo the socialist values of the Fenian proclamation of 1867, which argues that: "The soil of Ireland, at present in possession of an oligarchy, belongs to us, the Irish people and to us it must be restored... our war is against the aristocratic locusts, whether English or Irish, who have eaten the verdure of our fields" (Lee 56).

While Joyce likely knew Kropotkin's views on the social aspect of ecoanarchism from the above-mentioned texts, he seems to have encountered his systems-based geographic thinking second-hand, through the writings of environmental geographers Elisée Reclus and Léon Metchnikoff. Reclus, a close friend of Kropotkin's, wrote the preface to Metchnikoff's *La Civilisation et les Grandes Fleuves Historique,* and was one of the first thinkers to adopt "a global ecological view of the Earth" (Grinevald 36-7, qtd. in Purchase). In the month that Joyce first began to detail Anna Livia's bag of ills, Joyce also made notes on Metchnikoff's *La Civilisation et Les Grands Fleuves Historique*. His note "green Nile/ in fermen/tation" appears to gloss Metchnikoff's contention that the green Nile, in its first flood phase, is poisonous because it carries fermented, organic debris (Deane *et al.* 64 - VI.B.1.034/a; Metchnikoff 213). This note introduces the possibility that poisonous waters might initiate political ferment. If ruling elites typically establish a dominant onto-cosmology that explicates the "secret workings of natures", as Metchnikoff contends, then the Liffey's unexpected pestilence could undermine political authority, inciting uprisings (194-5). This admittedly speculative chain of events nonetheless resonates with Joyce's notes from Metchnikoff; his personal experience of losing a sister to typhoid; and his claim that the *Wake* is about "an uprising of the little people" (*FW,* 615.14; D'Arcy, 2013, 278; Joyce, qtd. in Fordham, *Lots of Fun* 36).

Anna Livia gifts a "pison plague" (*sic*) to overcrowded, early twentieth-century Dublin (*FW* 212.24). This is retaliation, yet Anna Livia's plague harms the city's poorest inhabitants the most. Joyce, in developing this section of the washerwoman's narrative, employs a listing technique. In the published version of the *Wake* this list extends over four pages. Since a 'gift' is offered to each of ALP's 1001 children in turn within this section, this rhythmic passage attests to the 'plurability' of Anna Livia, her flowing life force is capable of sustaining, or condemning, a dearth of individuals. The majority of the early entries that Joyce makes to this list introduce maladies as gifts; and on March 7th 1924, in a letter to his patron Harriet Shaw Weaver, he explicitly describes Anna Livia's sack of presents as a Pandora's Box containing "the ills that flesh is heir to" (*Letters* I, 213). By this date, Joyce appears to have dramatised Anna Livia as bringing few illnesses and ills to Dublin's richer residents. One example I find in the earliest draft of this passage is the gift of a "puffpuff" to Pudge Craig (*JJA* vol, 46, 33; draft 1.8§1A.*1/1B.*1; MS 47471b-88). This could plausibly be interpreted as giving fat Craig a railway line, linking Dublin's wealthy coastal townships to its city centre (D'Arcy 265). In a later draft, Joyce adds another character associated with affluence: "gouty Gough" receives "spas and speranza", enjoyment (*spass*, in German) and hope (*speranza*, in Italian). In contrast with this paucity of offerings for Dublin's privileged inhabitants, Dublin's poor are showered with 'gifts', including tuberculosis symptoms, a drinker's nose and an alcohol

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related skin disease, nerve palsy, and a harelip[7]. Marriages of strife may also be preferentially gifted to this social group (*FW* 201.11-12). Anna Livia gives a whole stream of women monthly periods, and because birth control was not widely practiced by Dublin's poor, largely Catholic families, the responsibility of caring for large families created significant tensions in these homes (*FW* 212.06-15). In 1921, Dublin obstetrician Gibbon Fitzgibbon evokes this strife in a letter to the *British Medical Journal*. He writes that in Dublin, while middle class parents practiced some form of birth control, the working classes did not, giving rise to their "constant deprivation" (qtd. in Preston 191).

The above examples demonstrate that the ills 'gifted' by ALP are cast disproportionately on the poorest members of society. However, in another letter to Weaver, written three weeks later, Joyce reminds her that Pandora does not only bring "malaise" (Joyce, *Letters* I, 222). From the perspective of urban ecology, potentially the most hopeful gift Anna Livia brings to Dublin is one of the last she distributes; this is introduced within the first draft of this passage, suggesting it was part of Joyce's original plan for this section of chapter 1.8. The moon-woman, "Selina", of the healthy oyster river "Susquehanna" receives a condom, a "pig's bladder balloon" (*FW* 212.05-6). Contraception gives Selina the means to prevent her sexual desires leading to unplanned children. Other figures receiving presents from Anna Livia clearly exhibit sexual desire, for instance the masturbating Elisie Oram; the Joycean persona who receives a libertine's pile, possibly a beam or erection; and the lust-filled Magdalena (*FW* 211.05-12). Hope stems from the ability to curb population growth by dissociating sexual desires and intercourse from pregnancy and childbirth, thereby reducing environmental stress, financial deprivation, familial strife, and human mortality. Joyce glosses some of these associations in a succinct amendment to a 1927 draft of chapter 1.8, written one year after contraception became illegal in the Irish Free State: "out of the paunschaup on to the pyre" (*FW* 209.31). In other words, once you've pawned all your belongings, for instance to fund family expenses, you're bound to die soon. In 1928, Joyce again amends this passage, adding: "And they all about her, juvenile leads and ingenuinas, from the slime of their slums and artesaned wellings" (young boys and girls crowd Anna Livia, coming from the slime of their slums and artisanal dwellings; *JJA* vol. 48, 357; draft 1.8§1.17; MS 47475-86; *FW* 209.31-33). With this addition, Joyce further emphasises the extreme poverty of children in Dublin's poorest areas, before introducing the list of Anna Livia's gifts. The acknowledgement of peoples' 'primitive' libidinal desires, accompanied by the active use of contraception, could reduce birth rates. This, Joyce seems to suggest, might be the key change Dublin's inner city slum dwellers could make in their lives to improve their environment.

Reduced consumption of natural resources, or further civil unrest, are other possibilities of 'hope' afforded by Anna Livia's gifts. Dublin's wealthier inhabitants appear characterised by "Blind and gouty Gough", who Roland McHugh suggests might be the Irish General Gough, a man who led army campaigns in South Africa and India,

[7] Tuberculosis symptoms, "a cough and a rattle and wildrose cheeks"; a drinker's nose and an alcohol related skin disease, "a brazen nose and pigiron mittens"; nerve palsy, "deltoid drops"; and a harelip, "a hairclip" (*FW* 210.08-22; McHugh 210).

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and so fostered the British vision of infinite colonial expansion (*FW* 211.25; McHugh 211). One hope may be that Dublin's largely protestant elite might associate their excessive enjoyment of natural resources with the bodily swellings, burning pains, and stiffness of gout. Consequently, their happiness and hopes might be interrogated, and their consumption patterns changed. Finally, early in the passage introducing ALP's sack of gifts, Joyce links "rickets and riots" (*FW* 209.33). This intimation of insurrection propounded by ill health and poverty, which is reinforced by several other allusions to previous Irish insurrections in the passage under discussion, could be interpreted as a call for Finnegans to wake up, and change the political status quo[8]. Indeed, as Peter Maguire observes, the word 'Finnegans' recalls the Fenian uprising and their demand for Home Rule in the wake of the Irish famine (319-320). However, unlike these fights for social justice, Joyce's text construes insurrection more broadly in terms of ecological justice.

In Vico's scheme, extensive civil unrest can result in a *ricurso*, a regression into the forest, into poetic imagination, and into barbarism. In the *Wake*, *ricurso* might be understood as a form of environmental justice that would ameliorate the Liffey environment by developing the poetic imagination of Dublin's inhabitants, so Nature becomes animate for them, and therefore worth protecting. A *ricurso* might also lead them to acknowledge their irrational, libidinal and material desires, and their often-negative effect on Dublin's urban ecology. As such, Joyce's "rickets and riots" might also be intended to evoke the writings of ecoanarchist Kropotkin, for whom "revolution is a concrete event where participants achieve heightened consciousness of their own actions", as they move towards the goal of complete equality (Macauley 320). Where Joyce is most innovative in his vision of ALP's ecoanarchism, which initiates the *ricurso,* is that he frames it as an intergenerational phenomenon. As such *Finnegans Wake* anticipates Augustin Berque's concept of *Médiance*, which posits that humans exist always already in relation to nature; we are responsible for our descendants and for willing them (in the legal sense) the conditions for a decent humane life (Berque, quoted in Hess, 333-335). Certainly, in his association of urban ecology, rates of consumption, and population control, Joyce had some insight into the factors influencing what is now termed the 'Great Acceleration'. The increase of human populations, urban populations, water use, and primary energy use that began in the 1750s, has increased, often exponentially, since the 1950s. These changes now have far-reaching consequences for urban and rural ecosystems, as they have affected the functioning of the 'Earth System' (Steffen *et al*. 81). In Chapter 1.8 of the *Wake* Joyce suggests that the deceleration of

[8] The list, in chronological order, includes defeat of the Norse-Irish by Brian Boru's Celtic Army, "A praises be and a spare me days for Brian the Bravo" (*FW* 211.06-07); the big drum used to commemorate the 1690 Battle of the Boyne, "A big drum for Billy Dunboyne" (211,33-4; 1B 75; Glasheen 3rd Census, 80); Oliver Bond's sentencing to be hanged for his role as secretary to the United Irishmen in 1798, "For Oliver Bound a way in his frey" (211.03-4); the tearful sadness of Sarah Philpott, whose fiancé Robert Emmet was executed after the Irish Rebellion of 1803, "For Sarah Philpot a jordan vale tearorne" (210.30-1), and the 1916 Easter Rising, that recalls Boru's rising of 1014: "A niester egg with a twicedated shell and a dynamight right for Pavl the Curate" (210.36).

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many of these phenomena would remediate Dublin's urban ecology, for the good of this city's future inhabitants, and the surrounding environment.

In this essay, I've argued the *Wake* might prick the conscience of generations of readers through the narrative of ALP. This follows the River Liffey's course from the Wicklow Mountains to Dublin Bay, using this as a chronotope that "deranges" temporal scale, and dramatises the long-term socio-ecological consequences of urban expansion in Dublin (Clark 148-150). Writing in 1924, when the Irish Free State was newly independent, Joyce evokes the Celts' veneration of a sacred natural world, for instance by describing a hawthorn grove situated at the Liffey's source; this tree traditionally safeguards springs in Celtic myth. In contrast he associates the Liffey's polluted river waters in urban Dublin with the rational thought of Vico's age of Men. According to Vico, this age no longer interprets the world using poetic imagination; consequently, the ploughed fields sustaining a city like Dublin, and the waters irrigating them, are no longer considered sacred (9-10, "The Idea of the Work). The ills ALP brings to Dublin seem designed to create fear in this urban society, recalling how Jove's thunderclap "humanely engenders fear" of the divinity in Vico's cosmology ("The idea of the work", 13; Book II, 233). By inducing fear, ALP's visit to Dublin might foster renewed veneration of the Liffey. Significantly, Joyce disassociates this veneration of the land from the Romantic sublime's embrace of natural infinitude; and he satirizes his own masculine fictionalisation of feminine 'nature', showing ALP to be neither a passive, nor a silent figure of infinitude. The two washerwomen who gossip about ALP are acutely aware of the limitations of the physical world: their hands are blue cold; their backs ache ("my hands are blawcauld" *FW* 213.04; "my back, my back", *FW* 213.17). Consequently, they describe a river-woman who is equally conscious of physical limits, and who seeks to remediate the Liffey's stressed ecology by curbing population growth, reducing consumption rates, and creating a more equal society through uprisings that might redistribute wealth: we might look to similar solutions for current socio-ecological predicaments. Significantly, rather than a top-down "biopolitic" that imposes behavioural changes within a population through "regulatory technology", the river-woman ALP initiates ecoanarchism from the bottom up (Foucault 249). As a river-woman, who connects the geosphere, biosphere, and atmosphere, she influences individuals, one by one, using fear and hope to initiate behavioural changes that will promote the flourishing of Dublin's urban ecology.

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From Green to Brown Landscapes – and Back Again: Urban Agriculture, Ecology and Hae-jun Lee's *Cast Away on the Moon*

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Abstract

My essay looks at contemporary developments in urbanism that re-negotiate the place of nature in our cities. Looking at the example of bottom-up and top-down models of urban agriculture, two alternative approaches to urban systems are presented which try to re-embed them in the natural-material cycles of life. Firstly, the changes that have occurred in our urban landscapes (and our cultural images of them) since the age of industrialization are discussed, to uncover the socio-historical dimension of the subject. The second part analyzes the cultural urban ecology invoked in South Korean director Hae-jun Lee's film *Cast Away on the Moon* (2009). As I show, the film imaginatively deals with these issues and invites a re-consideration of our urban lifestyles before the background of the question what place nature has in our cities and in how far working with the soil can lead to regeneration.

Keywords: urban ecology, agriculture, farming, ecomedia, storytelling.

Resumen

Mi ensayo contempla los desarrollos contemporáneos en urbanismo que renegocian el lugar de la naturaleza en nuestras ciudades. Observando el ejemplo de los modelos ascendentes y descendentes de la agricultura urbana, se presentan dos enfoques alternativos a los sistemas urbanos que tratan de incorporarlos en los ciclos de vida naturales-materiales. En primer lugar, se debaten los cambios que han ocurrido en nuestro paisajes urbanos (y nuestras imágenes culturales de estos) desde la época de la industrialización, para descubrir la dimensión socio-histórica del asunto. La segunda parte analiza la ecología urbana cultural invocada en la película del director surcoreano Hae-jun Lee *Cast Away on the Moon* (2009). Tal y como muestro, la película trata estos temas de forma imaginativa e invita a reconsiderar nuestros estilos de vida urbanos ante el trasfondo de la pregunta de qué lugar ocupa la naturaleza en nuestra ciudades y en cuánto puede llevar a la regeneración trabajar con el suelo.

Palabras clave: ecología urbana, agricultura, cultivo, medios de comunicación ecologistas, narración.

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Introduction: From Green to Brown

In his influential 2001 monograph study *Writing for an Endangered World*, Lawrence Buell called for the need to "put green and brown landscapes, the landscapes of exurbia and industrialization in conversation with one another" (Buell 7). He based his call on Lance Newman's observation that "the environmental crisis threatens all

landscapes—wild, rural, suburban, and urban" and that "South Boston is just as natural (and wild) as Walden Pond" (Newman 71). Although some might regard this statement as a provocative one—obviously there are differences between natural and human built environments in both a phenomenological and a conceptual sense—I take it as the starting point for my essay in order to illustrate how contemporary developments in urban planning re-negotiate the boundaries between "green" and "brown" landscapes. I want to address this renewed urban ecology through the example of urban agriculture, which has become an increasing trend in post-industrial nations and newly industrialized countries alike. Comparing bottom-up with top-down models of urban farming, I will present two alternative approaches to urban systems that try to re-embed them in the natural-material cycles of life and that seek new ways of conceptualizing cities as integral parts of a living, interactive biosphere, in which non-human and human built environments are interrelated and depend on each other for survival. First, I will briefly sketch out the changes that have occurred in our urban landscapes (and our cultural images of them) since the age of industrialization, in order to provide the discussion with a socio-historical framework. This is important in so far as the "green knowledge" involved in contemporary urbanism, especially with regard to urban food culture, harks back to a long tradition of working with the environment and with the soil and could lead to a re-negotiation of urban landscapes and innovations in the conception of living—innovations that, interestingly enough, do not emanate from utopian visions out of thin air, but that look back and take their impetus from a premodern time period. In the second part of my essay, I will discuss the cultural urban ecology presented in South Korean director Hae-jun Lee's film *Cast Away on the Moon* (2009). As I aim to show, the film deals with these issues imaginatively and invites a re-consideration of our urban lifestyles before the background of the questions what place nature has in our cities and whether working with the soil can lead to regeneration.

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Re-Greening City Spaces: The Example of Urban Agriculture and its Historical Roots

From a cultural-historical viewpoint, the decline of nature and the coinciding ascendancy of an urbanized world have turned into a narrative template quite common in public environmental discourse and among scientists. Since the time of industrialization, urbanization has gone hand in hand with industrial practices and economic processes that have an adverse effect on the environment. This era also gave way to a tradition of thinking about cities as urban enclaves or fortresses, radically separated from their surroundings, as if city and country were miraculously sealed off from one another by an invisible wall.[1] This view has been encapsulated in many cultural projections evolving from the environmental movement. For instance, in a description of his 1989 oil painting *Gaia*, American artist Alex Grey writes about the inspiration behind his work:

[1] This observation is also the starting point of Raymond Williams' influential study *The Country and the City* (1973).

> Gaia was the tree of life or web of life with her roots in the subatomic, atomic, molecular, and cellular levels of matter (mater/mother) reaching upward through the oceans, stones, soil, grass, forests, mountains, lakes, rivers, air, and atmosphere to nurture all plants and creatures. A natural cycle of birth, sustenance, and death was woven into the tapestry of Nature (…) Gaia's body was being ravaged and destroyed by man, reflecting the present crisis in the environment. A diseased and demonic phallus had erected structures [sic] all over the earth to suck dry Gaia's milk and turn it into power and money. The wasteland of a disposable culture was piled high and was seeping into the microgenetic pool causing diseases and defects in the Great Chain of Life. (Grey, *Gaia*)

Famous for his anatomical artworks, probably best encapsulated in his series of life-sized paintings *The Sacred Mirrors*, Alex Grey is both an artist concerned with the interaction between bodily matter and spiritual mind and a mystic, whose glowing, translucent prints and installations are tied to belief in the transcending power of creation and the healing effect of what he refers to as "performance rites."[2] As his impressive body of work, featured in dozens of magazines and the cover art of popular bands like Tool or Nirvana, as well as the quote above show, there is also an ecological train of thought embedded in his artistic vision. Already the title of his latest book, *Net of Being* (2012), expresses an ecological sentiment, connected to a perception of the world as a vast, interconnected network of bodies and material or spiritual agencies. The metaphor of a "net" can also be found in the painting *Gaia*, which presents its viewers with two inter-related visions of the biosphere: a green paradise of peaceful equilibrium on the one hand and a downtrodden, hellish and almost apocalyptic industrial world on the other. It is interesting to note that both belong to the same web of life, visualized by a small globe at the center of the painting, from which concentric circles emanate and reach out to its margins.[3] The "cycle of death and life" alluded to by Grey is symbolized by a lush tree that encapsulates all of creation, human and non-human beings. However, the dense network of the human sphere of entitlements and practices and the biophilic order to which it is inextricably linked also seem to exclude each other like two sides of the same coin. More important still is the fact that the industrial wasteland on the right is clearly identified as an urban world. The pollution spewing smokestacks and towering skyscrapers feed on the land and have maimed the life-giving power of the environment. The message engrained in this painting seems to be clear—our ecological crisis is both part and outcome of a process of industrialized urbanization.

[2] For further information also see the biography on his webpage alexgrey.com/bio/.

[3] The message behind the painting as well as its title may evoke associations with the "Gaia hypothesis" originally developed by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis in the 1970s. According to Lovelock and Margulis, organisms and their non-organic surroundings make up a complex system that constantly adapts to changes and self-regulates to make up the conditions for life on Earth. The "Gaia hypothesis" has attracted a good deal of criticism, not only because of its neglect of some aspects of (co-)evolution like selection processes, but also for its holistic approach that conceptualizes the Earth as a unified whole. Recently, Bruno Latour has taken up the "Gaia hypothesis" to re-think the tension inherent in the original concept between the image of a sublime nature and the anthropogenic vision of mastery over the system Earth (see Latour). For a concise discussion of Lovelock's and Latour's respective take on "Gaia" see Schrape.

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In this context, it is interesting to note that both the painting and Grey's description focus on the material processes of urban life. There seems to be a material exchange between cities and their environments. However, in Grey's vision they are primarily one-sided. Industrialized urbanization, it suggests, brings with it a pollution of the environment through greenhouse gasses and toxic sewage that cannot be turned around, while nature has been relegated to the wastelands surrounding the city space—it does not seem to figure prominently within the proper urban area. Not merely a cultural projection, this view is also implicitly encapsulated in scientific concepts of urban climates and ecological footprint analysis.[4] Both provide models that conceptualize city areas as dense material networks, which may affect their surroundings, but that are seldom influenced by material flows from the outside, as places where nature is likewise present in myriad ways. As William Cronon has shown with the help of Chicago in his classic study *Nature's Metropolis*, this rigid division between city areas and their respective hinterlands has never been the case. He argues that if one traces the flows of goods, water, even of pollutants, the mobility of people and capital, the boundaries that exist in our imagination between country and city become permeable and it becomes clear how they depend on each other (Cronon 8). Nature is very much present in our cities and although urban metabolisms are characterized by a higher degree of emissions and higher temperatures in comparison to their surroundings, the material flows that come in from the outside are every bit as important as the material products of the city space proper (Schliephake xii-xiii, xxviii-xxxiv). Nonetheless, the modern age *has changed* our cities. Factories, and later the automobile, have considerably altered the way our cities look, smell, and feel, often removing green areas from inner city districts in favor of industrial sites or parking lots. Early pioneers of green urban design and sustainable architecture like Frederick Olmsted, Patrick Geddes, and Ebenezer Howard were among the first to criticize this development and to counter it with visions that sought to re-embed nature into urban landscapes. In these concepts, the natural environment was to be transformed into a built, engineered environment on principles transferred from nature. Howard in his influential garden city concept argued for the importance of bringing nature back into cities, and suggested the need of decentralization and urban containment for managing urban growth (Eaton 301). Similarly, Geddes proposed the idea of a bioregion where he highlighted the importance of a comprehensive consideration of the interrelationship between cities and their surrounding ecosystem (Wong and Yuen 2-3). He insisted that it is crucial to understand cities as being embedded in their rural hinterland (Girardet 5).

[4] The Canadian ecologists William Rees and Mathis Wackernagel deveolped ecological footprint analysis as a model to imaginatively visualize the global areas required to supply cities with resources as well as absorb their output of gases and wastes (Girardet 113-114). While their model is certainly important for rendering the global impact of local urban living, it implicitly presupposes that cities feed on their surroundings like great machines, absorbing materials and emitting waste. It does not reflect on the ways in which cities can actually absorb emissions, bring about biological diversity, and mitigate problems of population density and transport—these aspects are often mentioned in the many books which welcome our current urbanization patterns (Saunders or Glaeser as examples). However, it is important to underline that these positive impacts on the environment depend on how urban policies and how cities are actually managed (Wong and Yuen 2-10, Hambleton 208-233, Lehmann 212-241).

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Many contemporary urban planners and architects would agree with these visions and, at least in post-industrial countries, nature has indeed returned to our cities on a grand scale, either by reconquering abandoned industrial sites, overgrowing asphalt and concrete, or by the conscious human planning of park areas, canals, and recreational spaces.

Probably no other sphere illustrates the shifts that have occurred since the modern era in spatial as well as ecological terms in cities better than agriculture. In most major cities, agricultural practices made up a large part of daily urban life until urban growth, an increase in population and commercial trade demanded new methods of production, with agriculture moving out of the city and big industries moving in. Recent urbanization patterns, with statistics projecting a dramatic increase in urban population rates until the middle of the 21st century (Hambleton 36-41), have made the question of food supply and transport important for urban policies and put them on the agenda of politicians, scientists, and economists alike. More than a question of green capitalism or consumerism (both feature prominently in the debates), this is a subject that could well lead to a re-conceptualization of urban landscapes and a re-interpretation of land use patterns. In both ecological and architectural terms, the issue of whether to build on or rather into nature has been relevant and disputed since the early 20th century (Ingersoll 577). Contemporary concepts of urban agriculture seem to offer a middle ground, trading in the "on" or "into" for a "with nature". In this context, landscape has been re-discovered as a fundamental ingredient of urban planning. Rather than being a passive repository of resources or space to be built on, it is now increasingly seen as an agent itself which "holds tremendous potentials for the re-shaping of urbanizing territories" (Shannon 637). Especially in the fast-growing urban centres of Asia and Africa, landscape has turned into a structuring element in urbanization patterns. The outskirts and improvised spaces at the edge of cities are thereby thought of as hybrid zones where traditional rural habitats and urban ways of life meet and merge. The migration from country to city holds enormous potential for these urban communities, because it co-occurs with a transfer of knowledge from rural areas, where most people had grown up as farmers. It is interesting to note that "this emerging hybrid morphology" makes use of a mixture "of urban and rural activities" (McGrath and Shane 653) and is predominantly a development led from the bottom up, unregulated by state authorities and characterized by spontaneity, improvisation, and innovation.[5] Urban planners have increasingly started to adapt to these developments and to translate them into more focused and strictly outlined concepts. For instance, the new town center of Guangming in Shenzen, China, is designed "to develop a city paradigm reconciling the contrasting needs of urban growth and rural preservation" (Lim and Liu 51). Based on "the hybridization of city and arable land" (56), this design should safeguard a swift transition for the rural-urban migrants and benefit the urban community as a whole—not only with regard to food supply, but also by increasing the presence of green spaces,

[5] In post-industrial nations, too, the "village" evolves as a new paradigm in urban planning which provides a mixture between urban and rural practices and which leads to a hybridity in social and spatial terms (Girardet 170-174).

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including a responsible use of the natural morphology of the landscape and rivers. However, technology also features prominently in this framework, since advanced farming techniques, harvesting machines, and (green) energy resources should be used to guarantee an efficient workforce and surplus yields. Urban farming is thus increasingly characterized by a mixture of factors: bottom-up initiatives are met with top-down planning, natural landscape features are engineered in ways that should provide an efficient use of space, and local markets are created to boost (green) consumerism.

Interestingly enough, this is not only a trend in developing countries or the booming cities of Asia, but rather a global phenomenon with distinct local characteristics. In Europe and North America, peri-urban farming has strong historical roots and produces enough food for millions of urban dwellers (Girardet 236-251). But still, urban agriculture and gardening has grown into a trend as grassroots movements and guerilla gardeners take it upon themselves to re-fashion city spaces. Let us look at the example of Brooklyn: According to Linder's and Zacharias' monograph on the subject, *Of Cabbages and Kings County: Agriculture and the Formation of Modern Brooklyn* (1999), Kings County was a leading vegetable producer until the end of the 19th century, and had been one for over 250 years, mostly due the many farms in the outer-borough area, until its land was rendered almost entirely urban residential in the early 20th century. The land was most productive on those parcels that were urbanized and built over and the book outlines how Brooklyn residents' relationship to the land shifted drastically during that period. However, it also makes clear that Brooklyn's agriculture persisted in outer-borough areas, and shows how its agricultural history shapes Brooklyn today. For although it is now dominated by residential districts and industrial sites, agriculture is actually staging a huge comeback on the rooftops of abandoned factories and in grey back alleys. This development has to do with urban space that became available when old industries left the city. It also had to do with a renewed sensitivity in nutrition, an interest in local food and in knowing the provenance of what you eat. There are now many commercial vegetable and chicken farms in Brooklyn including the Eagle Street Rooftop Farm and the Brooklyn Grange farm, a commercial farm that grows a wide variety of produce and keeps chickens on rooftops in Long Island City and the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and these continue to expand.[6]

If we compare Brooklyn to what we are currently witnessing in Asia, a wholly different picture arises. On a continent where about three quarters of the current urbanization patterns are occurring, making cities self-sufficient and independent from foreign exports is literally a matter of life and death. Singapore is an example of a city state which promotes urban agriculture. Here, the agriculture looks a little different from Brooklyn's innovative, but very traditional methods. The private enterprise Sky Greens has developed some of the first fully functional vertical farms in the world, where vegetables and plants grow under ideal, but also artificial and engineered

[6] As an example, see *Brooklyn Grange*.

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conditions.[7] Their soil based vertical farms produce one ton of vegetables a day and are far more productive than a regular farm. The vertical system is carbon hydraulic water-driven, using less water, energy and natural resources, to achieve a sustainable green high-tech farm. This vertical farming system, called "A-Go-Gro" technology, grows vegetables in A-shaped towers six meters tall. The water powering the frames is recycled and filtered before returning to the plants. All organic waste on the farm is composted and reused. According to official statistics, the whole system has a footprint of only about 60 square feet, or the size of an average bathroom (Krishnamurthy). A total of 120 such towers have been erected in Singapore, with plans to build over 2,000 towers in the next few years. It is a fascinating vision that could fundamentally alter our city landscapes and that could be a true alternative to the many "food miles" that cities all over the world are piling up in their food imports. Of course, as Krishnamurthy rightly points out, there are problems involved: "Requirements such as pollination in an insect-free environment, controlling the environment within the buildings with regards to lighting, temperature, arrangement of plants, etc., make food production in a vertical farm a very expensive affair" (Krishnamurthy). Another issue is that these farms are, more or less, laboratories, artificial environments that do not interact or add to the urban nature around them. So while they can certainly mitigate problems of transport and supply shortages, they do not necessarily lead to greener cities.

It is easy to criticize Singapore's concept of urban farming in the light of Brooklyn's grassroots and community-based movements and methods. If one takes into account the precarious situation of a city state which has to rely on its neighboring states and the stability of trade routes, however, a different view arises. Although Singapore's farming is artificial and reminiscent of a food factory, it could prove to be a viable alternative for millions of people who live in cities where peri-urban farming is not possible for climatic or other reasons. One clear advantage is that food mileage is drastically reduced to local distances, thus minimizing carbon emissions. A disadvantage is that it is costly and, so far, only the affluent middle- and upper-class residents can afford Sky Green's products. In consequence, my goal is not to play off one version of urban farming against the other, but rather to see the connecting links, which consist in a renewed sensitivity to local environments in a globalized age. Clearly, from a communal and ecological perspective alone, Brooklyn's rooftop and back-alley gardening is to be welcomed for the immediate interaction it enables with the landscape and the raw matter of the urban soil. Leaving aside the aspect of public health and community building, this interaction with the urban environment also means creating an integral vision of how urban landscapes can be re-designed to bring about resilience and sustainability. In both approaches, this vision does not develop out of utopian thinking, but is rather rooted in the premodern or preurban history of the places themselves. And it is in this context that culture becomes an integral part of urban ecology as a repository of knowledge and imagination. The stories attached to city space,

[7] I take my information from their webpage, which presents the technical methods of their vertical farming in detail. While this technology works in countries in the Southern Hemisphere, it is not applicable to countries in the North, for reasons of climate and hours of sun (*Skygreens*).

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along with the alternatives one can envision for a particular environment, can become every bit as important as present realities. That is why I will, in the following, look at how a film, set in contemporary Seoul, South Korea imagines an urban ecology for the 21st century.

The Urban Ecology of Hae-jun Lee's *Cast Away on the Moon*

South Korea is no stranger to urban aspiration and innovation. With the help of international star architects and architectural consortia, one of the first eco-cities[8] of the world has been built along reclaimed land on Incheon's waterfront, near Seoul. Situated in the Incheon Free Economic Zone, New Songdo could easily become the template for a new urban design, focused on both ecological and economic functionality as breeding ground for a new, relatively homogeneous middle class. It would be worthwhile to delve deeper into the narrative and ideological fabrics of an eco-city like Songdo, yet, for the sake of the length and the initial topic of my essay, I will not do this at this stage. It probably suffices to note the utopian vision and political determinacy included in the planning of this large scale urban project—while it holds great promise for a future based on mutual prosperity and well-being, there have been set-backs as well: Initially planned for roughly 70,000 inhabitants, the city now holds about half those people.[9] The implementation of the project has been more costly than initially calculated, and the city primarily hosts a population whose mobility is constrained by various factors: I do not mean this in the literal, spatial sense of the word, but in both social and cultural terms. While the public transportation system is excellent and walking distances have been reduced to a bare minimum within the city space, Songdo is planned *for*, not *by* its inhabitants. Career paths and job opportunities are pre-determined, there is not much room for individuals' initiatives; moreover, it has been made up of parts of already existing cities, including a central park, an opera house modeled on Sydney's, and vast shopping malls resembling Dubai's sumptuous duty-free areas. People move *in* Songdo, but are they really moved *by* their city? A retort city like Songdo has the problem that it lacks a history, a sense of place based on a long interaction with the environment, its structures have not grown in laborious processes, but were imposed on a blank slate. This is the primary reason why critics of eco-city projects predict a somber future for these cities as their top-down modelled design misses the cultural aspects of urban ecology and communal identity (Sze, Ouroussoff). In an environmental sense, they also dodge the difficult question of what to do with already existing cities which may not be as sustainable or self-sufficient. What is needed is not so much a look ahead to shiny urban projects, but rather a look back to the environmental history of our cities: Where do they come from and how have they negotiated the shifting landscapes of their surroundings? How can they work with their natural environments to reach an ecological equilibrium and a sound base for biophilic well-being? That South Korea's

[8] On eco-cities Hagan 87-105, Girardet 274-294 as well as the essays in Wong and Yuen.
[9] New Songdo is featured prominently in Frédéric Castaignède's documentary series *Cities of the Future* (2014), produced by European tv channel ARTE. One part of this series also investigates urban farming.

leading politicians are not blind to this issue can be seen in Seoul, where government-led green initiatives have seen the implementation of natural reserves along the shores of the once polluted Cheonggyecheon River. In the late 1970's a four-lane elevated highway was built atop the Cheonggyecheon creek near downtown Seoul which once served as drainage for the city until the 40's. After safety concerns and much debate, the expressway was turned into a pedestrian park in 2005 that reclaimed the river, decreased the number of cars in the area and increased the use of public transit, turning a brown landscape into a green one. The river and its biosphere have recovered and have turned into a popular local recreational space with beneficial effects on Seoul's urban climate and its (non)human inhabitants (Dunn and Jamieson 101). When it comes to urban planning, the simplest measures sometimes have the greatest effects.

This can, in fact, be seen as an integral part of what constitutes ecological knowledge within our cities: a sensitivity to natural landscape features and an experience in dealing with them, based on a long history of nature-culture interaction. What are marked characteristics of South Korea's urbanism—versatility, contradictions, and grand designs—are also signature features of its vibrant film industry. Finding themselves in a middle space between East Asian neo-realist cinema and Hollywood's genre films, South Korean directors like Kim-Ki Dook, Park-Chan Wook and Bong Joon-Ho have made the playful transformation of generic conventions and the variation of cinematic themes a distinct quality of their respective films (Schliephake 158-160). It is no coincidence that life in the city, the dense network of everyday constraints and entitlements, practices and dreams, finds increasing attention by filmmakers who develop their own imaginative take on South Korea's socio-political realities. In the following, I want to illustrate this with the help of Hae-jun Lee's 2009 film *Cast Away on the Moon*. A major success when it was first released, it has found a cult following in South Korea but otherwise failed to attract a wide international audience. This may have to do with the absence of synchronizations of the film, but equally with the inversion of genre expectations. Although *Cast Away on the Moon* is a romantic comedy and uses moments of comic relief and the motif of star-crossed lovers, the protagonists do not meet until the last moment of the movie. In fact, the film leaves open whether we are dealing with a love movie after all and rather employs the theme of a developing love interest as a subplot to deal with issues of alienation, abandonment, social depravation and isolation, presenting its viewers with a critical take on modern communication and capitalist estrangement. As I want to show in the last part of my essay, it interweaves these issues with a critique and re-imagination of contemporary urbanism and invites a re-consideration of the place of nature in our complex urban ecologies. Moreover, it challenges modern urban lifestyles by re-integrating agriculture within our cities and shows how communal involvement with other beings can not only inspire change, but also lead to regeneration.

The film is set in present-day Seoul and functions along the lines of a goofball comedy and romantic escape movie, depicting the struggle of the protagonists against a fantastic-realist take on urban nature on the one hand, and the claustrophobic constraints of dense city space on the other. Woven into the double helix of the story are

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two narrative strands that explore these settings with the help of a male and a female protagonist respectively. Both are named Kim and struggle with problems of alienation and isolation, yet in totally different circumstances: The male Kim is stranded on an abandoned island in the Han River. Initially, he had planned to take his life by jumping off a bridge, but he survived only to be washed up on Bamseom, which lies directly below the bridge. Although the city is in full sight, he is stuck on the island, because he cannot swim and so he is literally cast away in the middle of a city of millions. After a while, he makes the best of his situation and enjoys his carefree lifestyle. The female Kim is a young woman, who is a castaway of her own making, since she is agoraphobic and has not left her room in years. She spots him through the viewfinder of her camera while engaging in her nightly habit of photographing the moon. They soon begin exchanging messages, with the woman venturing out of her house at night in a jumpsuit and helmet, which give her the look of a kind of urban astronaut, to throw bottled messages onto the island, and Kim writing his replies in the sand. The climax of the film arrives with a torrential storm which destroys the man's farm that he has begun to set up on the island and sweeps away the possessions he has collected. Eventually, he is found by a group of workers sent to clean up litter on the island. He boards a bus in the city in a desperate attempt to go to a skyscraper from which to jump to his death. The woman, who watches how Kim is taken away from the island, is afraid for him and manages, after overcoming her anxiety, to meet him in the bus. They shake hands and although the film stops at this point, it becomes clear that they have, in a twisted turn of events, saved each other.

Cast Away on the Moon is a remarkable film for various reasons. It interweaves a cultural discourse, which is critical of social developments, with a highly imaginative take on urban ecology. From its beginning, it addresses problems of the failure of communication in a digital age and the (self-)deceiving disguises and roles played in a world dominated by advertisements and social networks. The female protagonist has become so obsessed with the Internet and inventing profiles for her websites that she trades in the virtual world for the real world, giving in to a strict routine of computer "work". That there is another world waiting behind the closed curtains of her dim room becomes clear at night, when she photographs the moon and enjoys the stillness of the sleeping and lit silhouettes of the city. Locked in a big apartment block, the noisy and hectic everyday life of a big city is too much for her and her alienation from her environment is rendered in stark images of the claustrophobic atmosphere of her room. Shutters block out the sun and the cinematography makes use of dark and somber colors, including brown, to underline the forlorn situation of the female protagonist. For instance, Kim forces herself to sleep in her closet, covered with sterile cellophane tape. This death-in-life motif is the visualization of a symptomatic estrangement from the environment and of a dysfunctional social life, which is not only rooted in psychopathological disorders of the individual but also in modern (urban) life itself. This is echoed in the suicide attempt of the male protagonist, who, as disclosed right from the outset of the film, is deep in debt. A series of flashbacks shows how he was lured into high expenses by advertisements and how he was let down by his family, his girlfriend, and his employer. The calls for help he can send off with his low-battery cellphone are

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either ignored or misunderstood as pranks and so he is left to his own devices. The business suit he is wearing, along with the many plated credit cards and the ID he keeps in his wallet, are symbols of conformity and interchangeable commodities, which add to his increasing sense of disintegration. On the island, they are of no use to him, serving only as dress for a scarecrow Kim forms out of wooden sticks.

In this context, the setting of the main action of the film gains increasing relevance: The island becomes the stage for an imaginative counterdiscourse which presents the viewers with a surprising take on urban nature and retains, at the same time, various genre conventions, which are undermined in the course of the film.[10] The failure of communication, which remains a key subject until the end, and the alienated living situations of the two protagonists evoke themes of absurdist drama. Yet, the film does not stop here but rather presents these in the guise of a modern Robinsonade.[11] It plays with many themes and motifs found in Defoe's initial version of the story and there are many interpictorial references to more contemporary adaptions like the Tom Hanks movie *Cast Away* or the Christopher McCandless story depicted in Jon Krakauer's reportage and Sean Penn's movie *Into the Wild*.[12] While abandonment, outsiderdom, loneliness, and isolation are therefore major themes of the film that strike home a social message, which consists in arguing for conviviality, community, and face-to-face communication as opposed to other modern life styles in the virtual world, there is also another aspect to the story that brings environmental issues into swift focus: The island on which the male protagonist gets stranded is, despite its location in the middle of the Han River, completely desolate and resembles a jungle in an outback wilderness. That it has not been untouched by human hands altogether becomes clear at the end of the movie, when it is disclosed that it is, in an ironic twist of events, a nature reserve. However, human impact on it can be seen much earlier, because it is littered with garbage. Especially plastic bottles and polythene bags remind us of the way in which our food is normally packaged. Most of it may not be visible in the city space proper, because it gets disposed of by garbage trucks and the like, but the film reminds us that it has real consequences for the environment, since it does not easily dissolve, but stays, even in places removed from full human control. The plastic on the island is echoed by the many scenes in the film that depict the female protagonist next to heaps of waste that she piles up in her room (she is clearly messy). There are also contrasts, however: Where her room is cramped and claustrophobic, very much like the city streets she forces herself to traverse at night, the natural environment on the island is bright and open. There is room to breathe and also to interact with non-human beings and matter. The film thus works along a dialectic of a series of polarities: between culture and nature, built and natural environment, light and darkness, freedom and constraint. In this context, it is

[10] In my cultural ecological reading of the film I draw on Hubert Zapf's theory of cultural ecology (Zapf).
[11] Even in Defoe's original version of the story, nature takes on the role of a counterdiscourse (Novak).
[12] Christopher McCandless was an American college graduate who gave all of his possessions to charity and decided to tramp through the United States and, finally, Alaska in an escape from a dysfunctional family and modern lifestyle commodities. He died in Alaska, presumably due to poisoning by wild berries. The converted bus he used as shelter became a symbol after he was found; in *Cast Away on the Moon*, Kim uses a pedal boat in the form of a duck as shelter.

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important to note that the film achieves this effect mainly through clever lighting and a creative take on cinematography: since there is only little dialogue in the film, these contrasts are depicted by visual means. The dark and muffled atmosphere of Kim's room is opposed to the bright colors on the island; and whereas the scenes in the city space mostly take place at night, the island is usually visited during daytime. Sun and moon, green and brown landscapes constantly alternate; yet, they are not only contrasted, but the visual design correlates them so that it becomes possible to reflect on their interlacement and possible interconnections.

However, it would be too simple to claim that the film tries to oppose a culture critical version of modern urban life with some idyllic version of tree-hugging bliss. Rather, it questions whether we are truly fit for a life removed from the comforts of modern life and what it takes to live self-sufficiently. As I mentioned earlier, food is a major motif in the film: Whereas the female Kim mainly relies on junk food that her caring mother serves her every day, the male protagonist has to learn to survive with what little he spots on the island. The food residue he finds in plastic bags is not enough to nurture him and so he starts to spear fish and tries to capture birds. He is not very talented at either of these undertakings, until he, one day, dissects the dung of the birds that nest over his camp. He buries the seeds he finds in it in the ground and uses the dung as a natural fertilizer. After a laborious and long process, he can finally reap corn and make noodles out of it. His triumph does not last long however, because a freak storm demolishes his little plantation and destroys his camp. It is interesting to note that Kim's effort in working with the soil of the island and in growing his plants make up much of the core of the film. At many instances, we enter the island via the viewfinder of the female protagonist's camera. Like her, we follow his work and his almost Neolithic struggle for survival with an ethnographic interest. The little island becomes an imaginative laboratory amidst a huge concrete and glass city and the movie turns into a reflection of alternative lifestyles in the vast urban jungle of our modern era, where the old and the new, the ancient and modern can co-exist and complement each other. That this process is neither balanced nor harmonious can both be seen in the environmental pollution through garbage and the storm that wreaks havoc on the built and natural environment alike. And while the latter is a stark reminder of how our urban ecologies are intertwined with natural, thermodynamic weather systems and geological landscape features, the vision of the nature-culture interaction in our modern cities projected in the film is still a regenerative one: Through the commitment to his surroundings and through working with the soil, the male protagonist finds a new perspective and outlook on life, while the female protagonist is inspired to plant corn in her room herself and finally manages to overcome her anxiety in the end. In both instances, the presence and interrelation with urban nature play fundamental roles in bringing about personal change and in re-envisioning lifestyles.

What can a film like *Cast Away on the Moon* tell us with regard to our thinking about urban ecology and urban environments? On the one hand, it shows that culture is one way of bringing "the green and brown landscapes of industrialization and exurbia in conversation with one another." The film focuses on urban nature—it is not a nature

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untouched by human hands, nor is it entirely engineered or built on. Like the approaches to urban agriculture discussed in this essay, *Cast Away on the Moon* vividly illustrates that urban nature is a hybrid zone, where brown and green landscapes, human-built and natural environments constantly interact. As the bottom-up and community-based initiatives of urban farming all over the world make clear, cities harbor manifold possibilities of (re-)introducing green styles of living which can bring about new ways of using and conceptualizing city space. City space is thereby seen as a space of creative interaction, whose state can be seen as an indicator of how we treat our environment and, in turn, ourselves; and a space that allows for patterns of land use long abandoned in the age of urbanization, where green modes of knowledge can be tested and rural ways of life be brought back into the city. On the other hand, *Cast Away on the Moon* also shows that we cannot turn our backs on our modern lifestyles altogether. Our cities are here to last and they will, for better or worse, continue to grow in the near future. What we need is not an imagination that helps us break free of this world, but rather an imagination that helps us to see them with new eyes and to shape our urban environments in ways that are more sustainable for our current biosphere and future generations.

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The Water Apocalypse: Utopian Desert Venice Cities and Arcologies in Southwestern Dystopian Fiction[1]

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Abstract

Numerous stories have and are being written in both fiction and non-fiction about the future of the United States' Southwest; and nearly always that future is considered to be closely linked to the vicissitudes of water. In a multidisciplinary work that combines ecocriticism, environmental history, and decolonial theories, this paper analyzes the socio-technological complexities behind water (mis)management in the Southwest with a focus on urban environments, and their socio-environmental consequences.

A lush sprawl development called 'Venice' is proposed in Arizona in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991). In the same line, Chicano author Rudolfo Anaya presents struggles over water rights and plans for turning Albuquerque into a 'desert Venice' city in his novel *Alburquerque* (1992). Fictional plans like these become very real when one reads the posts and news about the water-demanding Santolina sprawl development currently proposed for Albuquerque's West side. On another note, Paolo Bacigalupi's last novel, *The Water Knife* (2015) presents arcologies (self-contained, self-sufficient buildings) as an option to escape what he perceives will be a hellish region when climate change worsens and water underground levels are eventually depleted. Migration, xenophobia and environmental re-adaptation then become central issues to consider. A nuanced decolonial analysis of these dystopian narratives calls into question current decision-making around water management in the Southwest through the perspectives of these authors. If one argues that the environmental degradation of the arid Southwest is partly a consequence of the cultural oppression of the native local inhabitants, by imposing an inappropriate socio-environmental culture and ethics over the region, dystopian novels such as these become all the more relevant when proposing alternative futures.

Keywords: water, management, arcologies, desert Venice, dystopia, ethics.

Resumen

Numerosas historias se han escrito, y se continúan escribiendo tanto en crítica como en literatura, acerca del futuro del Suroeste de Estados Unidos, y prácticamente siempre dicho futuro va mano a mano con las vicisitudes del agua. En un trabajo multidisciplinar que combina la ecocrítica, la historia medioambiental y teorías decoloniales, este artículo analiza las complejidades socio-tecnológicas que se encuentran tras la (mala) gestión del agua del Suroeste con especial atención a contextos urbanos, y sus consecuencias socio-medioambientales.

[1] I would like to thank the participants of the 2015 ELC Postgraduate Forum for their initial and useful feedback on this project, and Sverker Sörlin, Marco Armiero, Joni Adamson, and Jesse Peterson for their opinions on my drafts, although I am the sole responsible person for any possible mistakes or inconsistencies in this article. This research has been funded by KTH internal funds and the Carl Bennet donation for the KTH Environmental Humanities Laboratory.

Leslie Marmon Silko, en su obra *The Almanac of the Dead* (1991), presenta los planes para construir en Arizona una lujosa urbanización llena de fuentes y lagunas llamada 'Venecia'. De forma similar la novela *Alburquerque* (1992), escrita por el célebre escritor chicano Rudolfo Anaya, presenta los esfuerzos de un candidato a la alcaldía por conseguir los derechos sobre el agua de la zona y sus planes para convertir la ciudad en una 'Venecia del desierto'. Dichos planes provenientes de la ficción resultan particularmente creíbles cuando una lee las noticias sobre la urbanización Santolina, propuesta al oeste de la ciudad de Albuquerque. Por otra parte, la novela *The Water Knife* (2015), de Paolo Bacigalupi, presenta arcologías (edificios autosuficientes) como una posible opción para escapar de lo que prevé será una región infernal, una vez se agoten los acuíferos naturales y empeoren las inclemencias derivadas del cambio climático. La emigración, la xenofobia y la readaptación medioambiental se convertirán entonces en temas clave. Al analizar estas narrativas de ficción a través de una lente decolonial se cuestiona la actual gestión del agua en el Suroeste. Estas novelas distópicas resultan centrales a la hora de proponer futuros alternativos si se argumenta que la degradación medioambiental del Suroeste se debe en gran medida a la opresión cultural sufrida por los habitantes locales y nativos, al imponerles una cultural y una ética socio-medioambiental inadecuada.

Palabras clave: agua, gestión, arcologías, Venecia del desierto, distopía, ética.

> The apocalypse has already begun and the ongoing evidence is all around us in the die-off oceans, forests, reefs, and habitats, desertification or salinization of soil, species extinction, and bioaccumulation of carcinogenic toxins. (Andrew Ross 23)

On 14th July 2015, I found myself in Northwestern Spain, during an extended heat-wave, looking at the U.S. Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) webpage. News-feeds conveyed the latest news: "Low lake level pumping station helps ensure access to water" / "Preparing for Water Shortage" / "Nevada Drought Forum".[2] Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), Rudolfo Anaya's *Alburquerque* (1992) and Paolo Bacigalupis' latest novel *The Water Knife* (2015) (the one that took me to the SNWA's site), all became the more real, the more urgent, while the heat reverberated outside my own window, and the word 'drought' (¡sequía!) rang incessantly in my own ears.

The water apocalypse: water depletion in the US Southwest

The Southwest of the United States has some of the fastest growing and most populous cities in the country, with Los Angeles (and the state of California) as the second most populous in the whole nation, and Phoenix as the sixth (*U.S. Census Bureau*).[3] It is moreover a semi arid region that contains four major deserts, namely the Sonoran, Mojave and Great Basin deserts and part of the Chihuahuan desert. With

[2] *Southern Nevada Water Authority*.
[3] Web. Info for 2014.

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snowpack decreasing in the Rocky Mountains (Sangre de Cristo) and the Sierra Nevada considerably, the natural underground aquifers being fast depleted, and the region suffering from a long ongoing drought,[4] the prospects for water in the arid Southwest are far from optimistic (*USDA*-NRCS; White; *USGS*; "The West", *NASA*; "Groundwater Deficit", *NASA*).

> The extent of drought in the American Southwest are reflected well in the GRACE map [illustration 1]. California, Nevada, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, Arizona, Oklahoma, and Nebraska have been suffering from various degrees of long-term drought that has parched the land surface and prevented the replenishing of groundwater below. […]
>
> A new study by scientists from NASA and the University of California–Irvine (UCI) has found that more than 75 percent of the water lost since 2004 in the drought-stricken Colorado River Basin has come from underground sources.
>
> "We don't know exactly how much groundwater we have left, so we don't know when we're going to run out," said Stephanie Castle, a water resources specialist at UCI and the study's [GRACE Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment] lead author. "This is a lot of water to lose. We thought that the picture could be pretty bad, but this was shocking." The Colorado River basin supplies water to about 40 million people in seven states [mostly Southwestern states] and irrigates roughly four million acres of farmland. (*NASA* "Groundwater…")

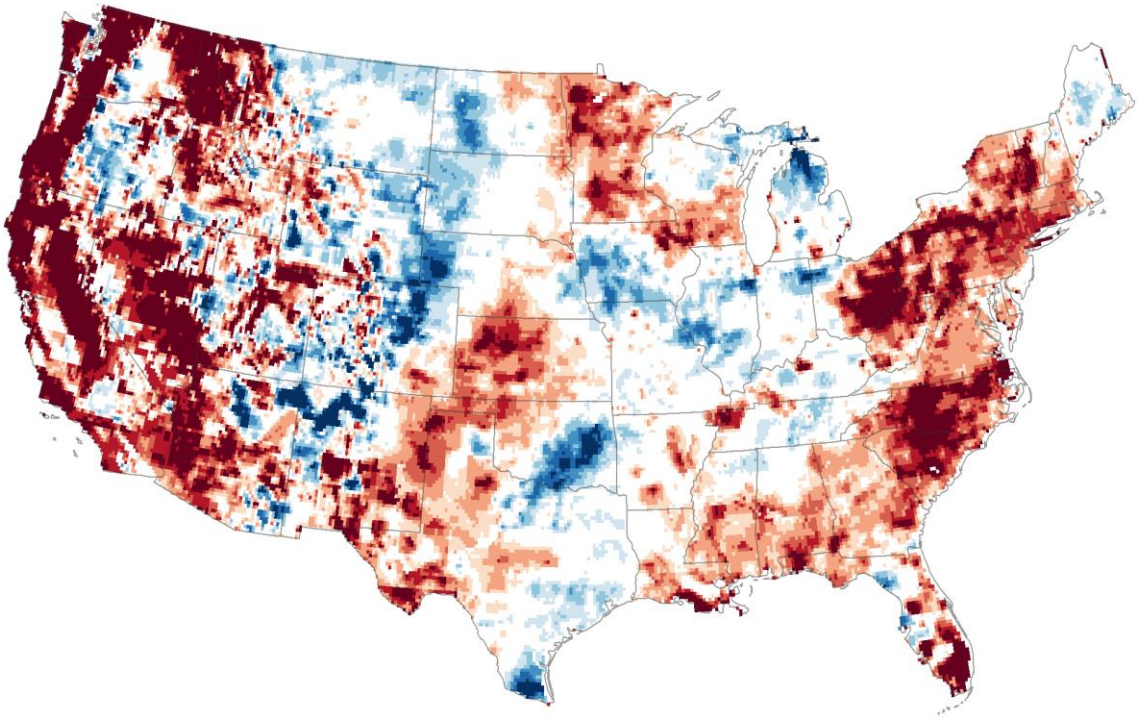

Illustration 1: Ground Water Storage (14-09-2015). NASA.

The map shows how water content in mid-September 2015 compares to the average for the same time of year between 1948 and 2012. Dark red represents areas where dry conditions have reached levels that historically occur less than 2 percent of the time (once every 50 or more years). (*NASA* "The West Dries Up")

[4] California, for instance, has been suffering from a drought since 2012 (*California Drought*).

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In this light water management becomes 'the issue' in the region (especially in the current context of climate change), and therefore in nearly any academic inquiry about it. This paper analyzes three dystopian fictional narratives written about the United States Southwest from 1991 to 2015, all of them with significant references to water (mis)management and its repercussions on urban ecologies: Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), Rudolfo Anaya's *Alburquerque* (1992), and Paolo Bacigalupis' *The Water Knife* (2015). All three novels were produced at times of environmental uncertainty due to severe droughts, or acknowledged water depletion due to excessive use and climate change.[5] They all present speculative futures or ideas for the future, imagining eccentric or innovative urban plans. Silko and Anaya envision desert Venice cities, Silko through a residential area she names 'Venice', and Anaya through the 'El Dorado' plan, defined in the novel as "a desert Venice" (119). Both plans aim at resembling the city of Venice, in Italy, well-known for the canals that crisscross it. Desert Venice cities, therefore, refer to urban environments in the desert converted into surreal oases by channeling water through canals, ponds, and fountains, as enticement to prospective wealthy buyers and tourists. In Bacigalupi's story the Southwest is a desolate place swept by extreme heat as a consequence of climate change, where so-called "arcologies" (magnificent large buildings with self-contained oases) become the symbols of an eco-apartheid. Arcologies[6] were first envisioned by architect Paolo Soleri in the 60s as three dimensional cities which aimed at condensing the urban space, reducing urban sprawl and therefore land use. They are closed systems, promulgating better energy and resource use. Their compact design also intends to decrease mobility, reducing the need for roads and the use of automobiles (*Arcosanti*, web). Although Soleri's vision was utopic, envisioning a more just and sustainable society, Bacigalupi's arcologies represent a dystopic system where only the powerful and wealthy can take refuge from environmental devastation.

Almanac explores ideas of political corruption and human depravation in the context of a world suffering from an extreme moral crisis,[7] leading to what is presented as spiritual and environmental self-destruction. The chapter on 'Venice, Arizona' focuses on water and its relevance in arid urban ecologies and Leah Blue's ambition of building a green and lush residential area in drought stricken and increasingly depopulated Arizona. *Alburquerque*[8] further explores the base problem in the Southwest: misdistribution and mismanagement of water, which is simultaneously the cause and effect of the degradation of environmentally sound local ecologies of ethnic minority communities. Through Frank Dominic, and his 'El Dorado' plan that would turn Alburquerque into a desert Venice, Anaya delves into questions of cultural identity,

[5] *Almanac* and *Alburquerque* were composed during/after the great drought of 1988 which, together with the latter effects of El Niño really affected the whole of the country, especially agriculturally (Robbins).
[6] Arcology is a compound word, formed by combining architecture and ecology ("What Is Arcology?"). The first arcology project, Arcosanti, was started by Paolo Soleri and some volunteers in central Arizona (near Phoenix) in 1970, and its construction is still ongoing.
[7] A world full of smugglers, pedophiles, policemen filming snuff movies watched in turn by majors and judges, white hegemonists creating viruses in laboratories and spreading them among communities of color, governments fostering drug addictions, and a long etcetera.
[8] Anaya keeps the old Spanish spelling of the city in the novel.

political corruption, and environmental degradation. Lastly, *The Water Knife* imagines a dystopian future distorted by power disparities where advanced technology fosters an extreme eco-apartheid in a climate-devastated Southwest. That technological 'dream' is mainly materialized in the urban arcologies.

I will first analyze the different utopian urban plans and dystopian scenarios depicted in the three novels. Secondly I will analyze the ethics surrounding the management of water in the Southwest as well as the ways these ethics are dealt with in each novel, and the message the authors aim to convey through their works. The novels suggest that solving a crisis of misdistribution and mismanagement of water is as much a human socio-ethical problem as a scientific and technological endeavor: we all need to understand the circumstances and risks and take a stance on the future. I follow the line of decolonial theory (mainly Walter Mignolo's work), which "proceeds from the prospective assumption that locus of enunciations shall be decentered from its modern/colonial configurations and limited to its regional scope" (Mignolo, *The Darker* xvi). The universalism of modern and colonial thinking, achieved by the imposition of the knowledge produced in the colonial loci on the colonized territories and peoples, which Mignolo terms the 'geopolitics of knowledge,' should therefore be debunked and substituted by multi-ethnic alliances acknowledging regional and traditional knowledges. Alternative understandings of the world (other than the hegemonic 'Western' values of commodification and constant economic growth) are therefore necessary in order to rethink our moral standpoint and learn to cooperate, if we are to survive this crisis successfully. Applying such a decolonial approach to the United States Southwest in the search for a fair and sustainable future would imply a deep revision of the water management logic that currently prevails, as well as of the current social structures and power relations, as the novels here analyzed propose.

Silko's and Anaya's novels engage in a fictional negotiation of the issue of what has been termed the 'environmentalism of the poor' (Joan Martínez-Alier; Nixon). Bacigalupi's climate fiction, on the other hand, uses a future post-apocalyptic scenario to discuss aspects already explored by Donald Worster in books like *Rivers of Empire* (1985), and foretold by Marc Reisner in his iconic book *Cadillac Desert* (1986): mainly that the current water management in the Southwest is unsustainable and doomed to fail, ideas also discussed in a more recent work by Andrew Ross, *Bird on Fire* (2011). By fast-forwarding the predictions of Worster, Ross, and especially Reisner, Bacigalupi forces the readers to consider what kind of future they want, and what needs to be done in order to make it happen. Literary fiction can therefore prove useful in this decolonial quest as I will argue in this paper, an original ecocritical discussion on desert Venice cities, water management, and the future of urban environments in arid regions.

Desert Venice Cities: or how to get to the end of the world with style

All three selected novels look at water management in Southwestern urban environments: through the plans for a luxurious, water-filled real estate in the middle of a depopulated and water-lacking Arizona (parallel to the building of silos meant to be

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launched into space with the remaining uncontaminated resources from Earth) (Silko); an Alburquerque menaced by gentrification, struggling between keeping what remains of its sustainable traditional irrigation systems or becoming a touristy 'desert Venice' that would further discriminate traditional cultures and ways of life (Anaya); and a climate-change struck Phoenix suffering from an acute lack of water and extreme social disparities fostered by the urban layout (Bacigalupi). Interestingly enough, all three imagine urban desert oases in their narratives: two (Silko and Anaya) in the shape of desert Venices, while Bacigalupi fantasizes about closed-loop oases that conserve and reuse water, in the shape of arcologies.

Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) is set in the near future and is the most complex of the three novels. The story has an apocalyptic tone: revolutions (mostly led by indigenous peoples) are taking place all over the world. At the time of the novel one has already taken place in Africa successfully, while another one (Silko's background story) is germinating across the Americas (an alliance of indigenous peoples from Canada to Mexico, symbolically confronting through their coalition the imposed borders on the native inhabitants by the Europeans)[9]. Parallel to this background story of global revolutions there are several other plots, two of which are of particular interest in the context of this paper. One is a water scheme with two relevant characters: the real estate agent Leah Blue, determined to develop a desert Venice city, and the Barefoot Hopi, a Native American connected to a group of self-defined 'ecowarriors' who blow up Glen Canyon dam. In the utopian scenario depicted by Silko, Arizona is already starting to suffer from depopulation due to lack of water while Leah (whose surname, Blue, might well refer to her fixation with the liquid element) sees this as the perfect opportunity to build a magnificent and attractive Venice, full of fountains and springs, for wealthy customers. Her plan to get the water is to drill deep wells. Leah believes in the promises of technology as a solution to aridity: "Tell me they are using up all the water and I say: Don't worry. Because science will solve the water problem of the West. New technology. They'll *have* to" (Silko 374; italics in original). In order to achieve her aim she confronts a group of environmentalists and also gets a judge to impugn a water-rights suit by some Native Americans from Nevada, setting a precedent that would ensure her right to the water (Silko 374-6). As Ruxandra Rădulescu notes, Venice, a surreal "postmodern oasis" (131), represents a further aggression to the already damaged land (and to the natives' rights), implying a "reconquest of the Southwest within the Southwest" (ibid.). Leah represents an individualistic, profit-oriented attitude that completely disregards the ecological conditions and needs of the arid environment where she lives and works (replicating colonial attitudes). In contrast, characters such as the Barefoot Hopi struggle to build alliances among different groups of people (prisoners, 'eco-warriors', homeless people, etc.) to achieve a more just world, connecting human wishes of social justice with a respect for the needs of the other-than-human world.

[9] The story, moreover, prefigured the Zapatista uprising in Mexico that would emerge only 3 years later. This revolt took form in two parallel dimensions: as a direct reaction to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and as a protest against the Mexican government's detrimental politics towards the peasants' rights and the environmental health of the Lacandon Jungle.

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The other relevant plot is about Serlo, "a genuine blue blood", who funds, together with other wealthy white-hegemonists, the building of 'Alternative Earth units': "once sealed the Alternative Earth unit contained the plants, animals, and water necessary to continue independently as long as electricity was generated by the new "peanut-size" atomic reactors" (Silko 542).[10] Only the wealthiest and powerful would benefit from this plan. The aim is not just mere survival on Earth, but to ultimately launch these units into high orbits around the earth by rockets after having replenished them with "the last of the earth's uncontaminated soil, water, and oxygen" (ibid) so that "the select few would continue as they always had [...] look[ing] down on earth as they had once gazed down at Rome or Mexico City from luxury penthouses" (ibid). This second plot takes the reader away from damaged urban ecologies and into space, complicating even further the question of civil responsibility for the wellbeing of the planet and even the cosmos. Both plans—a 'wet' urban environment in the desert and a spaceship earth-like project with the remaining 'clean' resources from Earth— question the increase in (urban) eco-enclaves in the context of environmental degradation.

Overall, *Almanac* conveys a feeling of urgency through its complex environmental justice discourse and its apocalyptic tone. It is a call to arms to the readers, to take action in order to stop socio-environmental degradation and related eco-apartheids before it is too late and drastic measures (such as sabotaging dams) need to be taken. Silko provides examples of pro-active characters, such as the barefoot Hopi, who undergoes different actions in his struggle for justice (from writing poetry to partnering with radical environmentalists in order to free the water and the people of the United States) and points to international and inter-ethnic cooperation as the means to achieve a better future.[11] It is in the light of these coalitions that Jessica Maucione sees Silko's discourse as "purposefully anarchistic" rather than "darkly apocalyptic" (156), opening an avenue for regeneration and hope. It is, in brief, a story about a war that is being forged (Silko 532, 728), with a strong warning about environmental destruction (734) and (xenophobic) technological-fixes.

Published only a year after Silko's *Almanac*, Rudolfo Anaya's *Alburquerque* (1992) also includes a plan for a desert Venice city; none other than the El Dorado plan, this time in the context of New Mexico and the Chicano/a and Pueblo communities.[12] Urban historian Carl Abbot writes in *Imagined Frontiers* that the plots in these [*Almanac* and *Alburquerque*—and other related] novels mean to: "Unmask the processes through which Anglo Americans have asserted and established claims to the land. The attention to real

[10] These units are a reference to Biosphere 2 "a glass and steel enclosure built in 1987 in the Sonoran Desert just north of Tucson, Arizona, by Texas billionaire Ed Bass and cofounder John Allen" (Adamson 169). Biosphere II was used, since its inauguration in 1991 (the time of Almanac's publication), as an enclosed system, in order to study and analyze earth natural cycles. The ventilation system stopped being a closed-system in 1996, but water cycles in an enclosed system are still at the core of the ongoing research projects. The University of Arizona is currently in charge of the scientific research at Biosphere 2.

[11] Not coincidentally, Silko's book was published shortly before the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit took place in Washington, D.C..

[12] The term 'Chicano/a', although accepted by academia, is still a controversial term for many Mexican-Americans. In this research 'Chicano/a' refers to people of Mexican descent living (and writing) in the United States.

estate makes visible what was previously concealed or invisible (the "invisible hand" of the market)" (13). It should be noted, though, that the origins of foreign claims to the land are certainly to be found much earlier than the Anglo-American annexation of 1848 in the Southwestern context, they rather go back to the Spanish colonization of New Mexico in the 1500s. It is also debatable up to what point those processes had been 'invisible' before. Chicano/a literature has always criticized the doings of speculation; early examples are Maria Ruiz de Burton's *The Squatter and the Don* from 1885 and Fabiola Cabeza de Baca's *We Fed Them Cactus* from 1954. Literature about the Chicano/a experience has also been highly critical of this fact, as in Frank Waters *People of the Valley,* 1941 or John Nichol's so-called 'New Mexico Trilogy', 1974-1981. Anaya's novel should therefore be seen as a continuation in the subversive struggle carried out by Chicanos/as and Native Americans against the hegemonic system, which produces and perpetuates socio-environmental injustice.

Alburquerque's background story is the political struggle of several candidates to mayoralty, including the struggle of one of the candidates to control the water rights. Frank Dominic, who already owns most of the real state and "undeveloped" land in the city, intends to acquire all remaining water rights from the Pueblos in order to canalize the water from the *acequias* into the city, turning Alburquerque into a desert Venice where gambling would be legal and an impressive casino surrounded by canals would reign over the city. In Anaya's novels *acequias* always play an important role, representing the history and the values of the native communities. *Acequias* are earth-ditch irrigation canals, which channel the meltdown water into the fields.[13] They are communally managed by a *mayordomo* who has to ensure that everyone in the community will get their fair share of water. *Acequias* are claimed to be beneficial for the semi-arid southwestern environment, for they create small bioregions along their margins and help replenish underground water (Peña, "A Gold Mine" 264-5). Decrease in snowpack means less run-off and therefore less water for irrigation through this traditional means. The decrease in snowpack (attributed to anthropogenic climate change), combined with factors such as the loss of land grants and water rights by many local communities, unemployment and depopulation of rural areas, as well as Federal, private, and corporate encroaching of traditional lands, mean the subsequent degradation of the *acequia* watersheds and of Chicano/a and Native American communities, as Anaya portrays in his work.

In Dominic's view, however, water is being wasted in the hands of the Pueblos and Chicano/a villages, who are not farming any longer or do so on a very small scale only, producing no real benefits for the city or the State (that is, not producing any significant 'cash crop'). His plan, on the other hand, would turn the city into a tourist attraction, rebooting urban sprawl (119-122). This plot raises numerous issues well known to ethnic minorities in the Southwest, such as the loss of land grants by Chicanos/as in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, after the Mexican-American war, and the subsequent loss of water rights, urban segregation, and

[13] The *acequia* system was introduced by the Spaniards, who learned it from the Moors, and resembled already existing practices of some Native American communities in the Southwest.

gentrification[14]. The loss of water rights is mostly due to the Bureau of Reclamation's eagerness to dam all available water in the Southwest and channel it to cities and large agricultural endeavors, which resulted in higher taxes, as Worster (1992) and Reisner (1993) masterfully elucidate in their work. The plot therefore hints at the complexity of the water law in the region and at the political maneuverings behind such historical losses. Alburquerque is moreover depicted as a city divided by an internal border: "The Anglos lived in the Heights, the Chicanos along the valley. The line between Barelas and the Country Club was a microcosm of the city. One didn't have to go to El Paso and cross to Juarez to understand the idea of border" (Anaya 38). Furthermore, in the scenario depicted by Anaya even the barrios are being threatened: "The developers built clear up to the Sandías. Now they're buying up the downtown barrios" (13).[15] Through his plan Dominic would not only dispossess the Chicanos/as and Indian Pueblos from their remaining water rights (meaning a forced stop to any form of small scale agriculture) and displace the small businesses in the Old Town, despite Dominic's denial (Anaya 110), but he would also enlarge the eco-disparity of an already segregated city.

By recovering the old Spanish spelling in his novel, Anaya shows how history repeats itself, opening a window of opportunity at the same time: the chance to regain what was lost, a recovery of the communal values and environmental understanding that grounded the native communities. By reinserting the dropped 'r' in Alburquerque, which "symbolized the emasculation of the Mexican way of life" (Anaya 112), Anaya shows how the situation in New Mexico, and Albuquerque, has not changed much since that first symbolic act of disempowerment. Native Americans and Chicanos/as in the Southwest keep being disempowered through continuous land and water speculation. Dominic's plan is the ultimate strike to the small local/traditional communities, and Anaya calls the characters, and the readers, to arms: "If you don't fight the problem, you're part of the problem" (131).

In both *Almanac* and *Alburquerque* the authors present what could be regarded as farfetched and absurd: urban plans counting on scarce water resources for frivolous use. Dominic's name for his plan, El Dorado, perfectly symbolizes this quest for a utopian treasure, the gold of the desert, water: "you can build a dream on the agua, the blood of the valley, but you can't buy the blood" (121). The Southwest is a vivid example of how a precious and scarce resource such as water has been put continuously to questionable uses.[16] It is known as a region where cities are built so that water is brought to them,

[14] For more on the topic or urban segregation, and its connections to land and water rights losses cf. Diaz and Camarillo (1984).

[15] In an interview with Javier Benavídez, executive director of SWOP—the Southwest Organizing Project—the topic of the gentrification of the barrios and the city center of Albuquerque was addressed, proving that Anaya's fiction (written in the 90s) mirrors in many ways the 'contemporaneity' of the city.

[16] "Tucson in the 1990s considered refilling the dry bed of the Santa Cruz River to revitalize downtown. Other Arizonans have successfully promoted development of the amazingly named Scottsdale Waterfront where flats, shops, and the Fiesta Bowl Museum will hug the bank of the Arizona Canal as it channels irrigation water through the Valley of the Sun. Denver has turned a stretch of the unprepossessing South Platte River into a whitewater park. An investment of $54 million has remade a seven-mile stretch of the North Canadian River into the "Oklahoma River," where rowing and canoeing events attract Olympic athletes from around the globe" (Abbot 24).

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instead of building the cities by water courses (Reisner 305); in a country where a swimming pool, and specially a green lawn, seem to be a constitutional right, no matter the costs[17]. These examples are good proof of the claims made by Anaya and Silko: water is so valuable that it becomes a symbol of status. Leah Blue, the fictional developer in Almanac argues that "People wanted to have water around them in the desert. People felt more confident and carefree when they could see water spewing out around them" (374). Social and environmental concerns are therefore overlooked in the name of real estate 'development', political power and economic profit. The urban utopian Southwestern oases envisioned by characters like Leah Blue and Frank Dominic are nevertheless likely to turn into dystopian barren counterparts, and this is precisely what Bacigalupi writes about in *The Water Knife*.

Paolo Bacigalupi's novel depicts a near-future Southwest, devastated by the interrelated factor of lack of water and climate change, where acquiring water rights is no longer a way to booster urban development in a water-deprived state, or a game in a mayoral race, but a deadly business. In the same way as Silko in *Almanac*, Bacigalupi uses multiperspectivity[18] to voice the point of view of different characters, presenting the complexity of the situation from a very human standpoint. The novel contains a character similar to Leah Blue: Catherine Case, "the Queen of the Colorado", the person in charge of the SNWA and also a successful developer whose desire for power and wealth determines the future of the urban landscapes and social distribution of Nevada. Moreover, Reisner's *Cadillac Desert* becomes a character in its own right in the story: a book full of agency, capable of influencing the readers' mindset in the present with its apt conclusions and helping (or causing trouble for) the characters in the novel. Bacigalupi's post-apocalyptic scenario does not lack a resemblance to the present; it is rather a quite convincing setting, an urban dystopian future struck by climate change, full of closed borders and refugees, and subsequent bigotry and xenophobia. In this future, Texas has already 'fallen' (that is, become virtually uninhabitable) due to lack of fresh water, and its citizens have migrated in large numbers to the contiguous states. As a consequence, the neighboring states have developed a strong social reaction against the so-called 'Merry Perrys' or Texans. Phoenix (and Arizona), seem to be next in line, with hundreds of subdivisions abandoned also due to lack of water, a polluted atmosphere carrying airborne diseases and being constantly hit by sandstorms, Red Cross relief tents close to pay-for water pumps, and the population using 'Clearsacs' to purify liquids, such as urine, in order to drink them. Nevada and California seem to be doing better, if not much, and with the borders to the north closed to all of them, the battle to control the remaining water in the region is fierce, amoral, and violent. The last resources of Phoenix are the CAP (Central Arizona Project), which proves not to carry

Currently, the Santolina development planned west of Albuquerque resembles the plots of these novels: "the developers do not have water rights secured for total usage estimated to top out at 4.7 billion gallons per year. Owners of senior water rights fear granting new ones to Santolina will contribute to over-allocation and depletion of stressed surface and ground supplies" (Wright).

[17] For more on the American obsession with green lawns cf. Robbins (2012); Steinberg (2007); Robbins et al.; and Scott Jenkins.

[18] Using multiple narrators in order to present different and often contradictory perspectives in a story.

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enough water, and some old documents about some forgotten and obscure prior appropriation rights,[19] together with the new arcologies being built by the Chinese, with the Taiyang already standing and inhabited (but only by a privileged few).

The CAP is a noticeable example of the modern canal, which has been described by Donald Worster in the following terms: "Quite simply, the modern canal, unlike a river, is not an ecosystem. It is simplified, abstracted Water, rigidly separated from the earth and firmly directed to raise food, fill pipes, and make money. […] [T]he contrived world of the irrigation canal is not a place where living things, including humans, are welcome" (Worster 5). The CAP is the lifeline of most of Arizona's water, and especially of Phoenix, and therefore figures prominently in Bacigalupi's story.[20] In the novel, it appears as the last watercourse providing Phoenix with a consistent, albeit scarce, water flow (compared to the nearly empty aquifers and the Verde and Salt Rivers, which had turned seasonal in a time of barely any rain—Bacigalupi 43). Reisner and Ross, however, describe it as a project doomed to fail due precisely to "the impact of climate change on the river flow" (Ross 42; Reisner 303, 296). Bacigalupi's arcologies, on the other hand, are a solution at a time when climate change has turned the region into a nearly uninhabitable place, affected by extreme temperatures and sand storms. Bacigalupi envisions arcologies as becoming the 'ideal' eco-enclaves of a desolated Southwest. Nevertheless, despite their low environmental impact and their potential for improving quality of life, in this narrative arcologies, like the technological advances in the other two novels, end up highlighting prevalent power structures that ultimately foster eco-apartheids. These buildings are not envisioned as contributing to diminishing urban environmental degradation; they merely are the shelters of the wealthiest and most powerful in a world gone astray, coming with clean filtered air and plenty of running water, including fountains and greenery. In an already devastated urban ecology, the rest of the population has to stay in the few houses which still have running water, move to the relief tents, or risk their lives trying to cross the heavily militarized and closed state borders.

Certainly, all the extreme schemes from these novels highly depend on technology: from traditional drills for pumping water from a greatly depleted aquifer to more futuristic technologies for building, maintaining, and launching the Alternative Earth units; for controlling the temperature and people's mood through domes made out of a new synthetic membrane in Dominic's 'El Dorado'; or for creating self-contained buildings, like the Taiyang, in environmentally hostile locations, as in Bacigalupi's story. In all these cases these technologies only help to foster environmental degradation and socio-environmental inequities in dystopian urban scenarios, while the land ethics incarnated by some characters (mostly Native American and Chicano/a) pursue just the opposite, an all-encompassing solution for all humans, the environment, and other-than-human beings. Note, however, that no critique is addressed to technology per se in these

[19] The history behind the prior appropriation system is briefly explained later in this article.

[20] The CAP took long to happen: with plans being proposed already by 1946, it was approved by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968. Its construction, which began at Lake Havasu in 1973, took twenty years and was completed south of Tucson (Reisner; *Central Arizona Project*).

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works but to the logic and the power structure behind it. Extreme examples of urban eco-apartheids appear in all three novels, with economic interests and climate change worsening the situation of 'eco-disparity' between the wealthy and their shelters, and the rest of the population (especially the poor and the people of color) and the remaining urban space. These novels, therefore, do not present feasible future urban plans; they warn again the risks of further degrading urban ecologies while mismanaging resources like water and building eco-apartheids.

Overall, *Almanac* and *The Water Knife*, both set in the near future, convey a feeling of urgency, the former through its complex environmental justice discourse and its apocalyptic undertone and the latter through its post-apocalyptic scenario of extreme weather conditions and desperate peoples. Silko's novel is a tribute to the Mayan almanacs and the ongoing resistance ever since they were conquered by the Europeans (Adamson 136-145), a manifesto and also a warning. In the same line, *The Water Knife* is an admonishment and a cautionary tale, with constant references to what could/should have been done when there was still time. In contrast, *Alburquerque* builds a plausible current scenario, addressing issues of community values, land and water rights, and urban segregation. By referring to past and current events mostly related to urban development, water rights and subsequent environmental degradation, and by hypothesizing about possible (future) unsustainable and unjust schemes, all three fictional narratives are successful in raising awareness of current and pressing environmental justice issues and of different cultural values at stake. Urban environments are at the center of these authors' fictional inquiries of the future of the Southwest, exposing the history of water mismanagement and the roots of urban eco-apartheids.

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Dogmas at war: denialism, conservationism, and the environmentalism of the poor

An analysis of the ethics behind the history of water management and legislation in the Southwest contextualizes the novels analyzed here further and traces the road that has led to the current state of degradation, segregation, and injustice in those urban ecologies.

One could quite safely claim that water in the Southwest is sacred. In my readings I have often come across numerous religious and spiritual references. Reisner, for instance, refers to one of his interviewees, a farmer who backed the CAP project and who claimed that "water is essential", as talking with "religious conviction" (300). Moreover, Reisner says of the CAP that it belongs to a "holy order of inevitability" (305) and claims that [future alien] archeologists … may well conclude that our temples were dams" (104).[21] Ross refers to the "gospel of growth" as a "system of belief" (quoting Dennis Meadows) and to Arizona's CAP as some politicians "Holy Grail" (42). Moreover, he emphasizes the "sanctity of private property rights" existent all over the United

[21] This claim can be seen as echoing Indian first Prime Minister Nehru in his description of mega-dams as the temples of modern India, in 1954.

States (67; 21), something supported by Theodore Steinberg's historical account of water wells in Arizona (Steinberg, chapter 3). On the opposite end of the spectrum from those in the Southwest who regard water privatization and extreme exploitation as most desirable, one finds the Sierra Club equating Grand Canyon to the Sistine Chapel in the campaign that managed to stop its damming (Reisner 286; *Sierra Club*), and Edward Abbey (Silko's ecowarriors clearly resembling Abbey's Monkey Wrench Gang) comparing the drowned Glen Canyon to a buried Taj Mahal or Chartres Cathedral and stressing that no human agency will unfortunately be able to recover what was lost with the damming (189). Furthermore, Chicanos/as (particularly *acequia* advocates) claim that 'El agua es vida/Water is life' in a very different sense than that sponsored by the Bureau of Reclamation or the Sierra Club. This Chicano/a perspective, which is considered to be part of what has been termed the environmentalism of the poor, does not pursue economic profit or outdoors recreation and conservation, rather it seeks cultural and environmental equilibrium.[22]

When it comes to water in the Southwest different ethical systems operate depending on the cultural group. For most Chicanos/as, water management is an issue of equal sharing. Devon Peña devotes some of his work on the *acequia* system to talk about its customary law:

> The customary law of the acequia derives from Roman, Spanish, and Arabic sources. Five basic principles underlie acequia customary law: (1) the communitarian value of water, (2) the non-transferability of water, (3) the right of thirst, (4) shared scarcity, and (5) cooperative labor and mutual aid. (Peña, *Mexican Americans* 82)

With the arrival of the Anglo-Americans, and their Western-shifting frontier, the doctrine of prior appropriation was imposed. This principle implied that whoever got access to the water first had a right over it (Peña, "A Gold Mine" 250)[23]:

> According to the doctrine of appropriation, the first person who came to a string and claimed its water, or a part of it, had priority to exploit it; he acquired, in other words, a vested right to the water, made it a form of personal property. Under the doctrine, it mattered not at all how far from the river he lived or how far he diverted the water from its natural course, mattered not at all if he drained the river bone-dry. There was only one rule in that appropriation: *Qui prior est in tempore, potior est in jure* – he who is first in time is first in right. (Worster 88)

Worster regards this shift as a radical one, reflecting the Anglo European cultural change in perception about the environment: "the adoption of prior appropriation was part of a larger shift in thinking about nature, a shift towards instrumentalism in resource law and property rights" (Worster 89). It affected social and power relations all over the Southwest: those who got access to the water became powerful, and due to the new legal system, the new language and the new social rules imposed by the newcomers, mostly

[22] This distinction aims at differentiating utilitarian and profit-based approaches versus more environmentally conscious attitudes such as the conservationist/preservationist/communitarian, without equating the latter attitudes with each other, for they certainly approach the environment and humans' relation to it in different ways.

[23] See also Pérez Ramos, "Progress and Development."

the Anglos got hold of it. This change, not coincidentally, happened at the time of the gold rush in California, which originated after the discovery of gold in the beginning of 1848, precisely at the time of the end of the Mexican-American war, and attended mostly to economic interests. To complicate things further, in Arizona (where two of the three novels are based) a vast amount of water has been retrieved since the 1920s by farmers and landowners from the underground aquifers. Underground water happened not to be contemplated in the State's constitution, and it was moreover considered in a different category from 'contained' water sources:

> The 1919 code made water in definite underground channels subject to prior appropriation, but water percolating through cracks and holes in the earth escaped unnoticed.
>
> The result was strikingly undemocratic: in Arizona all water was not created equal. By failing to mention percolating water, [George] Smith helped create a legal fiction. Under the law there were two kinds of water: one contained by definite boundaries (a lake or stream, even an underground one), and another that dribbled freely, unrestrained through the ground. (Steinberg 92)

The prevalence of private property of underground water sources lingered in the State until 1980, when the legislation for what became the Groundwater Management Act was drafted as a condition of the federal government, before approving funding for the construction of the CAP (Water Education Foundation et. al). Silko refers to the complexities of this legislation in *Almanac*, published before the CAP was finalized in 1993, through Leah's plans to drill from deep wells. The water management situation in other Southwestern states has not been any simpler, although water is growing short in all, bringing the Chicano/a saying 'El agua es vida/Water is life' once again to mind.

The fictional works under analysis in this paper address the sacred character of water and the conflicting (un)ethical attitudes toward it differently. When dealing with the ethics around water management and socio-environmental interactions, spirituality is a relevant aspect in Silko and Anaya's works. In *Almanac*, Silko presents the socio-environmental crises of the modern world as a result of the imposition of inappropriate environmental ethics, derived in part from the loss of spirituality and religious beliefs. Insatiable greed and craving for power have become the new dogmas of cultures such as the European or the North American ones, the novel claims, where any communal values, environmental ethics, and ideas of the common good seem to have been lost, together with any deep spiritual connection. In contrast, the characters in Silko's story recur to their ancestral deities and beliefs, whether those are Mayan gods or African deities. Silko, though, does not impose a one-size-fits-all belief system as the answer to the world's problems, but the lack of spirituality is at the core of the problem in her argument about environmental ethics. Instead of a lack of spirituality, all of the novels point to a lack of sense of community in the population.[24] In contrast to rural Native American and Chicano/a communities tied by traditional practices such as a communal

[24] Understanding community as a social alliance opposed to the rampant individualism commonly fostered in capitalist cultures. Communities should therefore be understood in this context as groups of citizens who share the same cultural understandings, build alliances and coalitions among members, and work together for a better socio-environmental future.

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irrigation system—like the Pueblo depicted by Anaya—, the cities in these novels lack strong communal ties, particularly across people of different ethnic background. It is the lack of communal unity, together with the utilitarian and individualistic understanding of water management that eventually transforms the cities in the novels into eco-apartheids. These urban ecologies are ultimately shaped and doomed by the ethics that surround water management and urban planning.

Recurring to spirituality as the answer to the socio-environmental crisis might not be the best way to unify all humans into their quest for a socio-environmental ethical future at a time when numerous societies are fostering religious bigotry and a growing number of individuals do not hold any religious beliefs any longer. On the other hand, Silko's advocacy for communication across cultures, albeit a complex endeavor, seems to be the key to a (fairer, more ethical) future in her narrative. Her empowerment of characters belonging to ethnic minorities echoes the shift proposed by Donna Haraway, from representation to articulation, according to which "all the patterns, flows, and intensities of power are most certainly changed" (91). Walter Mignolo historicizes the politics of representation in the Americas since the colonial times in his paper "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference":

> Las Casas defended the Indians, but the Indians did not participate in the discussions about their rights. The emerging capitalists benefiting from the industrial revolution were eager to end slavery that supported plantation owners and slaveholders. Black Africans and American Indians were not taken into account when knowledge and social organization were at stake. They, Africans and American Indians, were considered patient, living organisms to be told, not to be heard. (63)

Ever since colonial times ethnic minorities living in the Americas have been struggling to regain their right of articulation. Some of Silko's characters (e.g., the barefoot Hopi) belong in this struggle and present different routes of action for the future.

Peña also argues for the Chicanas/os' politics of articulation in his work:

> Their position as defenders derives not from a concept of "nature under threat," but rather from a relationship with "the forest as the integument in their own elemental struggle to survive". In other words, **their authority derives *not* from the power to represent from a distance, *nor* from an ontological natural status, but from a constitutive social relationality in which the forest is an integral partner, part of natural/social embodiment.** In their claims for authority over the fate of the forest, the resident peoples are articulating a social collective entity among humans, other organisms, and other kinds of non-human actors. ("The Gold Mine" 85; italics in original, bold added by the author)

Fictional narratives, such as Silko's, Anaya's or Bacigalupi's, contribute to this decolonial thinking, albeit in different ways. Joni Adamson's analysis of the kind of nature presented in American Indian writing matches the 'artefactual nature' of Haraway: a nature constituted by myths, folklore, culture, and the people who produce them, as much as by rock formations, mountains, springs, and caves. Chicana/o narratives also perceive nature as something co-created between humans and their surrounding environments (whether rural or urban), with common references to herbal gathering

practices, cattle grazing, agriculture and irrigation, gardening and forestry management, as well as to river and animal spirits, tortoise mountains, and whispering trees.

Faithful to his way of writing, Anaya argues for a holistic approach in *Alburquerque*. This novel, in line with his other literary works, is framed in terms of a good-versus-evil struggle: with those looking for balance (social and environmental) fighting against those looking for chaos (power and control resulting in socio-environmental destruction). *Acequias* (both in rural and urban contexts) are key elements in this search for balance. Other than Dominic's plan to acquire the water rights, *Alburquerque* is the story of a young man's search for identity after the truth about his biological mother is revealed to him. Same as his Pueblo friend Joe (José Calabasa), a Nam veteran also suffering from identity conflicts, and with the help of his new love Lucinda, Abrán will understand that an environmental equilibrium is a necessity in such a quest: "he had to find his spiritual center, something grounded in the values of Sara, something that came from the earth and the rhythms of the people, something he sensed Lucinda offered" (Anaya 147).[25] Similarly, Joe's (Jose Calabasa's) trauma from the Vietnam War prevents him from reintegrating into his Pueblo community, causing him much pain and frustration, as well as an identity crisis. The communal cleaning of the *acequia* constitutes the first step towards his healing and recovery. The same *acequia* Joe helps to clean also cleanses Joe from his fears and war nightmares (187). *Acequias* are also symbolic of a way of life that is on the verge of extinction due to the economic pressures of the United States cash economy, embodied in the novel in Frank Dominic's master plan of acquiring the Pueblos' water rights in order to channel water through the city of Alburquerque.

The Pueblos, as well as the northern Chicano/a communities who hold the remaining water rights in the novel, all suffer from the disintegration of their impoverished communities. Both Joe and Abrán represent a proactive younger and urban generation willing to learn from their elders and recover the fading values that held these communities together: by combining a law career with the knowledge from the Pueblo council, as in Joe's case, or a medical degree with the knowledge of the *curanderas*, as is the case with Abrán and Lucinda. Joe and Abrán are the epic heroes the world needs, the alter egos of the mythic characters of an epic poem:

> He[26] was writing an epic that explored the Mesoamerican mythic elements Chicanos had incorporated into their heritage. Juan and Al, two plain homeboys from the barrio, took a journey into the Aztec past, and what they found, Ben hoped, would create a new consciousness for the people, a new identity for the downtrodden. (60)

Anaya's perspective, therefore, recurs to the local sphere and knowledge as the tools to achieve (or retrieve) a socio-environmental balance. This perspective is an empowering message to young people belonging in ethnic minorities and links to their ancestral knowledge and traditions, but it can be problematic when aiming at presenting an

[25] Sara is Abrán's adoptive mother.
[26] The writer of the novel, Anaya's *alter ego*.

overarching strategy to cope with the global socio-environmental crisis.[27] Nevertheless, there is an intrinsic value in any message that asks for balance and a deeper relation with our community and our surroundings.

In Paolo Bacigalupi's dystopian fiction *The Water Knife,* the reader finds tent revivals close to the Red Cross (pay-for) water pumps in a context of eco-apocalypse and eco-apartheid, with constant references to the denialism of previous human generations who chose to either ignore or, even worse, refute Reisner's criticism and predictions in his renowned *Cadillac Desert*. Bacigalupi's is a warning, with constant references to *Cadillac Desert*, aimed at fostering socio-environmental restoration in our current time. It is a path that needs to be taken immediately, at the time of the reader's and not of the novel's characters. His references to religion therefore do not seek to inspire any deeper spirituality in the readership. The novel's message is rather the opposite: religion should not become the last hope of a desperate and segregated humanity abandoned to its fate (reminding of Reisner's prediction that "Arizonans from now until eternity will be forced to do what their Hohokam ancestors did: pray for rain" [296]). Therefore, Bacigalupi also asks for pro-activity in the present that will ensure a sustainable future for all, lest we reach a post-apocalyptic future with a crumbling faith as last resource. The tools for such path though seem to be reduced to acting according to the warnings raised in *Cadillac Desert*, while all the socio-environmental knowledge from Native Americans and Chicanas/os is unfortunately overlooked in the plot. In the end a coalition is forged among the novel's main characters—an Anglo-American Woman, a Mexican-American man and young girl, and an Afro-American man—with the aim of getting a better future for themselves, without any grand plans for solving the overall situation of chaos, injustice and climate devastation. In the quest for survival Bacigalupi therefore also presents a multi-ethnic coalition, thus implying the argument already present in the other literary works—that cross-cultural communication is key in the path to a future of inclusive, sustainable, and just urban plans. This is an argument strongly supported by critics like Adamson, and in line with the view of others like Ross:

> Success […] will not be determined primarily by large technological fixes […]. Just as decisive to the outcome is whether our social relationships, cultural beliefs, and political customs will allow for the kind of changes that are necessary. That is why the climate crisis is as much a social as a biophysical challenge, and why the solutions will have to be driven by a fuller quest for global justice […]." (Ross 16)

(Can there be such a thing as an) Eco-Future?: lessons to learn and put in practice

Climate change is difficult to portray and dramatize (Nixon; Ross, 23). On the other hand, one has to be careful not to attempt to turn a slow and complex process into a military campaign with a simplified problem and goal.[28] The current crisis, which has been defined as a "crisis of the imagination" by ecocritic Lawence Buell, needs new

[27] For more on the problematic around Anaya's local perspective, see Pérez Ramos, "Racism, Displacement and Pollution."

[28] For more on the topic of the risks of simplification of environmental crisis, in the context of alien species in South Africa, cf. Lindström et al.

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narratives to help us all understand the magnitude of the problem and visualize alternatives for the future: "problems will never be solved until people begin imagining a new story, speculating about how things could be different. […] Imagination […] is the first step toward solution" (Sherman Alexie qtd. in Adamson 25). Even in the ominous narratives here analyzed some new hopeful stories are imagined such as the coalitions in Silko, the victory of two homeboys in Anaya, and the survival of some doomed Southwestern citizens in Bacigalupi.

Many warnings have been made, calling governments, corporations, and citizens alike to make better and more conscientious use of water (Worster and Reisner being only a couple of examples of 'early' warnings), while novels like the ones discussed here also warn against the adverse effects these disparities have specifically on urban ecologies, and yet the situation keeps getting worse. Anaya's and Silko's novels were already published over twenty years ago. Bacigalupi's, on the other hand, has come out only recently, reflecting all the added current tensions around water in the Southwest and its main cities in a futuristic setting. Fiction can inform the public in different ways that scientific data or political discourses, by creating empathy, by fantasizing about future outcomes, by engaging audiences, and by offering alternative narratives. In the same fashion, it can be considered romantic or alarmist, and therefore dismissed. Recurring to utopian scenarios that closely resemble contemporary real schemes is a useful literary technique to reflect on the problem and imagine possible outcomes: whether complex but hopeful (Silko's international healers' convention), positive and reassuring (Dominic's defeat and Joe and Abrán's newly found identity in Anaya's story), or post-apocalyptic (as in Bacigalupi's narrative).[29] Interestingly enough, the novels that speak for the relevance and the potential of returning to a sense of community in the struggle for socio-environmental justice are those written by ethnic minority writers (Silko and Anaya). This same argument is claimed by decolonial theorists (Mignolo), ecocritics (Adamson) and cultural theorists (Ross). All the works mentioned or analyzed in this paper, though, alert against a future where power disparities have been exacerbated in the form of eco-apartheids in more or less degraded urban ecologies, and the environmental crisis has worsened globally to the extreme, providing a very human narrative to current warnings:

> "if these initiatives do not take shape as remedies for social and geographic inequality, then they are likely to end up reinforcing existing patterns of eco-apartheid. If resources tighten rapidly, a more ominous future beckons in the form of triage crisis management, where populations are explicitly selected out for protection, in eco-enclaves [which could

[29] Dominic's plan resembles the Santolina sprawl development; a Venice in Arizona can be compared to the examples provided by Abbot—see note 15; the Alternative Earth Units and futuristic arcologies are fictional parallels or developments of Biosphere 2 and Arcosanti respectively. Moreover, the five year long drought that California is going through is good proof of how water and status can go hand in hand. Currently, municipal fines and the (subsequent) #droughtshaming campaign in Twitter are certainly changing things in drought-stricken California (Hickman). Still, those who are wealthy enough have been tracking water to keep their states green (Christie) (supporting the Western saying: 'water flows uphill toward money'); while others opt for more affordable solutions, painting their lawns green, in light of the fines for watering it, rather than letting it brown or adapting it to the local environment by xeriscaping it ("Painting the Lawn Green").

> perfectly be called Alternative Earth units], or for abandonment, outside the walls." (Ross 17)

In the quest of critics and academics to deal with the current socio-environmental crisis and work towards a solution, works of fiction like those analyzed in this paper are crucial tools to raise and explore concerns (such as the future of urban ecologies in the Southwest) through powerful narratives.

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Terraforming and the City

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Abstract

Science fictional depictions of cities have explored a variety of utopian and dystopian modes of habitation and control that have fed into popular imagination regarding the shape of future societies. The intersection between terraforming, the adaptation of planetary landscapes, and the interfaces for these interventions into multiple environments (the city) have accrued new resonances in the contemporary context of climate change. This paper considers the relationship between non-human nature and the city in narratives of terraforming from H.G. Wells's *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933), the American pulp sf of the 1950s, Frederick Turner's *Genesis* (1988) and Kim Stanley Robinson's *Red Mars*, *Green Mars* and *Blue Mars* (1992-1996). Exploring how the city relates to non-human nature in the form of the animal, bacteria and plants in these narratives, this paper raises questions about how the city as an interface with nature explores possible modes of habitation. What does this mean for a burgeoning sense of place that has begun to consider how such imagined habitations become spaces that are embedded in nature and thus reflect new conceptions of the human?

Keywords: urbanism, town planning, science fiction, ecology, terraforming, geoengineering,

Resumen

La representación de la ciudad en la ciencia ficción ha sido utilizada para explorar una variedad de modos de morada y control utópicos y distópicos que han alimentado la imaginación popular con respecto al aspecto de las sociedades futuras. La intersección entre la terraformación, la adaptación de paisajes planetarios, y las interfaces para estas intervenciones en múltiples ambientes (la ciudad), han acumulado nuevas resonancias en el contexto contemporáneo del cambio climático. Este artículo considera la relación entre la naturaleza no-humana y la ciudad en narrativas de terraformación desde *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) de H.G. Wells a través de los *pulps* de ciencia ficción americanos de los años 50, *Genesis* (1988) de Frederick Turner, y las novelas *Red Mars*, *Green Mars* y *Blue Mars* (1992-1996) de Kim Stanley Robinson. Mediante la exploración de cómo la ciudad se asocia con la naturaleza no-humana en forma del animal, de bacterias y plantas en estas narrativas, este artículo sugiere preguntas sobre cómo estas interfaces con la naturaleza exploran posibles modos de morada. ¿Qué significa esto para un creciente sentido de lugar que ha comenzado a considerar cómo estas moradas imaginadas se convierten en espacios que se incrustan en la naturaleza y, por lo tanto, reflejan nuevas concepciones de lo humano?

Palabras clave: urbanismo, planificación urbana, ciencia ficción, ecología, terraformación, geoingeniería.

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> 'When it's dark you can see the lights of the cities down there on the night side. New York and London are easy. The prettiest sight, though, is the reflections of the Sun off the sea.' (Clarke 107)

So says an astronomer to science fiction (sf) writer Martin Gibson as they gaze upon the Earth in Arthur C. Clarke's novel of terraforming, *The Sands of Mars* (1951). This perspective is common in sf: similar episodes appear in works such as Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* (1958 [1950]) and Robert A. Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (2001 [1966]). These scenes resonate with the *Apollo 8* 'Earthrise' photograph of 1968 and the *Apollo 17* 'Blue Marble' photograph of 1972, both of which became enduring symbols for the environmental movement. Such images index an association between space exploration and environmental thought that was alluded to by Buckminster Fuller's notion of Spaceship Earth in the 1960s. These compressed images capture important aspects of the sf narrative of terraforming: that the colonial planet's cities are built according to the model of Earth's future megacities. The second sentence highlights how, from the vantage of Mars, Earth's landscapes surpass for beauty those of its cities, yet those cities still exercise a capacity to generate wonder in those who gaze upon it from a distance. Nevertheless, the wonder generated by the spectacle of the illuminated city as seen from space is overshadowed by the beauty of the non-urban spaces of Earth.

Sf depictions of cities have explored a variety of utopian and dystopian modes of habitation and control that have fed into popular imagination regarding the shape of future societies. The intersection between the adaptation of planets, or terraforming, and the interfaces for these interventions into multiple environments (the city) have accrued new resonances in the contemporary context of climate change. Terraforming refers to the transformation of a planet other than Earth so that it can support earthbound life. The term was coined by Jack Williamson in his 1942 sf short story "Collision Orbit" before it was adopted in scientific discourse by such scientists as Carl Sagan (1973), James Oberg (1981) and Martyn J. Fogg (1995). Terraforming encompasses a range of technologies and approaches tailored to different planets that can be broadly classified as industrial engineering solutions[1] and what Robert H. Haynes terms an 'ecopoietic' approach that involves the fabrication of an ecosystem on another planet (1990). Ecopoiesis often relies on an initial engineering approach to create the conditions for pioneer species of bacteria and plants (algae and then lichen) to establish themselves on other planets so as to create and transform that planet's ecosystem sufficiently for successor species to be established. Terraforming can also be extended to include other engineering projects—such as dam construction, agriculture and urbanism—that have transformed Earth's environmental parameters. Indeed,

[1] Examples of such solutions include the creation of a runaway greenhouse effect on other planets, the injection of particles into the stratosphere or the construction of orbiting mirrors in space to manage a planet's albedo (surface reflectivity) and thus heat or cool the planet (solar radiation management), and various methods for carbon capture and sequestration. Oberg (1981) and Fogg (1995) assess a range of such hard engineering approaches to terraforming.

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anthropogenic climate change—the human-driven transformation of Earth's climate—can be considered an instance of terraforming Earth, or what Fogg describes as 'geoengineering.' Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer's term, the 'Anthropocene,' refers to a geologic period which they date from the industrial revolution, from which the global effects of humankind's transformation of the Earth begin to become noticeable (2000). Terraforming narratives engage with the Anthropocene in the sense that they explore precisely such transformations at the geologic and ecologic level.

Cities in terraforming narratives are interfaces through which humanity transforms its relationship to nature by adapting the external world for their own ends. An overriding motive for this transformation is a feeling of Promethean fear, a fundamental sense of humankind's asymmetric relationship to a nature that constrains possibilities for human survival and flourishing. As Yi-Fu Tuan explains, it is this sense of asymmetry that informs the urge to escape from nature into culture: "[t]he familiar story of people altering nature can thus be understood as their effort to distance themselves from it by establishing a mediating, more constant world of their own making" (10). James Rodger Fleming has examined how contemporary interest in geoengineering recapitulates the history of cloud seeding to control rainfall in the Western states of America throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially when cloud seeding was seen as a technological solution to the effects of drought in the nineteenth century and the dust bowl in the early twentieth. Fleming describes this history as "[a] tragicomedy of overreaching, hubris and self-delusion" (2), explaining that "[t]he trinity of understanding, prediction, and control undergirds the dominant fantasies of both science and science fiction" (9). Technology promises to overcome the asymmetry between humankind and nature by placing humankind in control of forces that were formerly beyond their capacity to harness. As a literature of landscaping, terraforming narratives scrutinise the structure and implications of this dynamic of escapism for thinking about cities in our contemporary economic world system, itself a technological matrix designed, as Tuan argues, to facilitate an escape from the dangers and uncertainties of existence.

This paper argues that images of animals, plants and bacteria are fundamental to the way terraforming narratives conceive of cities as centres for the technological transformation of worlds and as spaces where reflection on the human relationship to non-human nature can be reconceived. This exploration is dialogic as later writers respond to their predecessors' depictions of cities and terraforming so as to refigure the relationship between human and non-human nature. They do this by examining the ways planetary adaptation encourages reflection on appropriate modes of habitation and the changes to the urban experience that such modifications entail. To highlight how a focus on animals and plants transforms the way the city is conceived in terraforming narratives, this paper begins by analysing H.G. Wells's *The Shape of Things to Come* (2013 [1933], hereafter *Shape*) before moving on to explore how non-human nature is incorporated into images of the city in the American pulp sf of the 1950s, the ecological sf of the 1970s-1980s and in Kim Stanley Robinson's *Red Mars*, *Green Mars* and *Blue Mars* (1993 [1992], 1993 [1994] and 1996).

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Scholars of urbanism have turned to sf as a tool for teaching and for engaging the imagination when it comes to exploring the social, political and economic ramifications of urban change. Carl Abbott identifies a heuristic function of sf that invites reflection about the nature of urban change ("Cyberpunk Cities" 129). Natalie Collie points out that sf's speculative aspect makes it more fully able to realise abstract, metaphorical or subjective orientations toward the future that are embedded in "our culture's ideas, dreams, fetishes and fears" (424–25). Myers and Kitsuse suggest that another consequence of using sf to think about issues in urban planning is that it may help to "demystify the future by reducing complexity while bringing multiple perspectives into consideration" (227), and thus it can help address profound uncertainties brought about by rapid technological change—what Alvin Toffler describes as 'future shock' (1971). Myers and Kitsuse see sf's capacity for storytelling as an important mode of communication that offers an alternative to the polarising tendency of debates grounded in analytical argument (229). Lynda H. Schneekloth describes urban planning, design and architecture as "*unredeemably utopian*" because it is driven by a utopian vision of an "'ought-to-be'" (23)—the same utopian impulse that narratives of terraforming interrogate. Much of the interest in sf amongst scholars of urbanism centres on the 1980s sub-genre of cyberpunk, namely for its portrayal of a future dominated by global cities, communication technologies and the corporate influence on society, politics and economics. As this paper will show, sf about terraforming is centrally concerned with many of the same themes and, especially after the 1960s, has incorporated an ecological perspective into its structure—one that was already implicit in earlier narratives.

As a literature that explores the Anthropocene, terraforming narratives are fundamentally concerned with change. The environmental philosophical concept of landscaping captures the sense of space as a hybrid of both culture and nature, and thus it draws attention to the ways humankind projects meaning onto the external world and transforms it for their own anthropocentric purposes. Simon Hailwood defines "landscape" as "nature insofar as it is modified and interpreted for *human oriented ends*, moulded and used, or viewed as malleable and useful, for human interests and needs" ("Landscape, Nature, and Neopragmatism" 132–33; emphasis in the original). Hailwood extends Holmes Rolston III's definition of landscaping to include intellectual processes, explaining that "landscaping [is] the ongoing historical process through which humanity physically shapes its environment[,] fills it with symbolic meaning, historical and aesthetic significance, and so makes itself at home" (Hailwood, "Landscape, Nature, and Neopragmatism" 133). Landscaping, when extended to encapsulate the intellectual, usefully coheres with a range of models for analysing space, from the Bakhtinian chronotope (2002) to Edward W. Soja's notion of the urban imaginary (2000). Ideas of a utopian space that "ought-to-be" and which underlies urbanism are themselves intellectual landscapes. Fundamental to Hailwood's notion of landscaping is the concept of nature's otherness, which refers to the relatedness of aspects of non-human nature to humankind. Hailwood argues that nature's otherness is present "'from the streetcorner to the stratosphere'" and that it is an inescapable element of all human environments (*How to Be a Green Liberal* 35). In that sense, nature is an ever present element of our

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cities. Narratives of terraforming use this crucial notion of a blending of nature and culture to explore the ways in which nature is expelled, obscured or integrated into cities to examine the repercussions of these responses to nature's otherness.

While the technological adaptation of Earth has been referred to as geoengineering since the 1990s, sf has often collapsed the distinction between adapting extra-terrestrial planets and adapting or terraforming Earth. Scientific romances of the fin-de-siècle often depicted the destruction of cities through future wars, which highlighted civilisation's fragility with respect to the growing technological capability of nations to exert control over their neighbours. The future war subgenre of the scientific romance reflected anxieties surrounding the social and demographic changes that technology and urbanism were bringing to cities and agricultural space in Europe. Both H.G. Wells and Olaf Stapledon wrote sweeping future histories involving episodes of terraforming or geoengineering that incorporated the future war sub-genre into their structure. The vast temporal perspectives of these works allow Wells and Stapledon to present and reflect upon cities in the changing contexts that arise over long periods of time. They show the growth and decline of civilisations to be a consequence of natural crises, access to resources or political and socio-cultural harmony and conflict. Wells and Stapledon influenced the development of pulp sf in America and provided images of cities that would inform the public imagination of urbanism and architecture. Examining Wells's *Shape* to explore the ways in which the relationship between cities and non-human nature—in the form of metaphorical and literal depictions of animals and plants—are portrayed will illuminate the tradition of scientific progress, global unification and control over the external world that later sf would inherit and write against.

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H.G. Wells's *The Shape of Things to Come*

Wells's *Shape* invites reflection on the relationship between civilisation and a non-human nature (bacteria, plants, animals and natural forces) that spurs the growth of urbanism. While terraforming does not occur in this work, geoengineering does: geogonic planning is the narrative's term. Inspired by Stapledon's *Last and First Men* (1966 [1930]), Wells depicts the growth and decline of Earth's civilisations according to a dynamic involving increasing sophistication and technological control over the environment, which eventually culminates in geoengineering. Throughout *Shape* the narrator reflects on the dirt and grime of industrial London, on its slums and on plagues that take their toll on the population. London is depicted as a war city early in the narrative, thus recalling the First World War and anticipating the blitzes of the Second World War, but toward the end of the work we see a London divorced from the underground tunnels and chambers used to shield Londoners from bombings or the dilapidated cities and ruins that are left after the numerous conflicts recounted in the narrative. This London of the past is compared to a future London of ease, with its expansive and hygienic streets and its scientifically managed pastoral spaces. *Shape*

portrays a city undergoing transformation, an example of how cities 'live and breathe,' as the common metaphor for the city as organism intimates.

In much sf including Wells's future histories and Stapledon's "essay[s] in myth creation" (*Last and First Men* 12),[2] cities such as London appear as political and economic agents, global cities that act in an international arena. Major cities are incorporated into a catalogue of urban environments that are grouped together because of their political, economic and historical significance. This abstraction is important for how terraforming narratives would later establish a contrast between terrestrial and alien cities. The cities that are of particular interest to the narrator are those that grow to become global megacities in a world system of economic exchange and expansion.

One effect of Wells's survey is that a series of contrasts are established that show how contingency and desire interact to shape the city. The desire for stability and an improvement in living conditions ultimately leads humankind to modify their environment and so overcome the disasters that have devastated the population in the past. This approach to progress is subject to events at the international and ecological level, such as war, pestilence, environmental destruction and the contrary desires of others. That it is with populations rather than individuals that these future histories are primarily concerned underscores how centrally involved these narratives are with issues of urbanism and town planning. Hope Tisdale defines urbanism as "a process of population concentration" (311) and argues that "technology is the sine qua non of urbanization" (315). The industrial revolution is Wells's starting point for reflection on the process of urbanisation, thus positioning *Shape* as a meditation on the Anthropocene. *Shape*'s treatment of the city reflects concerns about the migration of peoples from agricultural to urban environments throughout Europe and centrally in England. Wells's narrative portrays the result of these technologically driven migrations as the formation of a world system of megacities. The narrator approvingly describes "this world system as a vast business octopus, with the Air and Sea Control as its head and the other Controls as its tentacles" (Wells, *Shape*). This network ultimately offers a system of control that addresses Promethean fears toward an unpredictable nature. It explores the relationship between technology, population concentration and the image of the capital megacity, using the form of the future history to dramatise their development over time; later terraforming narratives establish such contrasts spatially.

Imaging this world system as an octopus is an instance of landscaping that goes some way to naturalising the global network by aligning it with non-human nature. The image of the octopus is itself landscaped with human-centred meaning that emphasises its radial structure, multiplicity of action and centralised control. This network is a blueprint to which the rest of the global population is incorporated and brought into alignment with the ideological underpinnings of the Air and Sea Control. Although animals are often backgrounded in terraforming narratives and in much sf, their relationship to the city is raised in *Shape* and can clarify how the text imagines nature's integration into the world system of cities. Just as the rest of the global population is

[2] Brian Stableford explains that these essays in myth creation "construct imaginary worlds to embody metaphysical theses" (138).

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brought under the sway of the Air and Sea Control, animals and plants are integrated into a world system of cultivation and husbandry, which is eventually supported by extensive biological research. During a period of global warfare during the Age of Frustration earlier in the text, the narrator records how pets and synanthropes—wild animals that have adapted to benefit from their proximity to human inhabited environments such as cities, gardens, and parks—are exposed to a "Permanent Death Gas" that renders large regions uninhabitable. Not only humans, dogs and livestock, but "millions of mice, rats, birds and suchlike small creatures" are exterminated as a result of the application of this weapon of mass destruction. That these biological weapons of war indiscriminately affect synanthropes and other wild populations of animals and not just pets and livestock—which are already incorporated into the spaces of the city and the country—underscores the far-reaching and unanticipated influence of technology on biology. A secondary effect of this Permanent Death Gas is a "Sterilising Inhalation" that renders all non-avian animals, including humans, infertile (Wells, *Shape*).

This episode anticipates the connection that Rachel Carson makes in *Silent Spring* between chemical pesticides and military research into biochemical weapons. Carson writes that the chemical pesticide industry of the 1950s is "a child of the Second World War" and that "insects were widely used to test chemicals as agents of death for man" (16). Later in *Shape*, one researcher discovers that gases derived from the Permanent Death Gas can be used to affect, "abundantly and controllably," mutagenic changes in the chromosomal structure of animals, thus making possible the "[t]he artificial evolution of new creatures." This leads to an important intervention into genetics that shows how animals and the natural world is to be integrated into the world system of cities. Fifteen "Major Parks" are created to ensure the undisturbed flourishing of flora and fauna (except by "qualified observers"). Their purpose is to provide a reservoir of genetic material for research into the genetic modification of captive animals and the restoration of extinct species. As the narrator reports, "[m]ost of the 'wild beasts' of our ancestors are now under control in their special enclosures and reservations" (Wells, *Shape*). This pastoral image of a highly ordered and clearly demarcated world made possible by technological innovation and an expanding urbanism highlights the centrality of the image of the city as an engine of destruction, transformation and creation, an interface that expresses society's values with regard to the function of cities and the ways in which non-human nature is integrated into its structure.

Nature in *Shape* is malleable and subordinate to the will of the elite responsible for managing the world system. Their managerial efforts flatten the heterogeneity of cities, making them homogenous and bringing them into alignment with a blueprint devised by a scientifically-minded elite. Other works of this period explore the same themes in the context of terraforming, notably the British pulp sf writer John Russell Fearn in "Earth's Mausoleum" and, as has already been mentioned, Olaf Stapledon. Space does not permit a detailed discussion of the latter's *Last and First Men* and *Star Maker* (2004 [1937]), but it is worth pausing to consider how Stapledon's works contrast with Wells's vision of a march of progress and conquest of nature.

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Stapledon's essays in myth creation take the logic of evolution to its extreme. In *Star Maker*, the narrator observes a vast array of alien civilisations evolved from a variety of species with urbanising tendencies appropriate to each. The reader is given a sense of the contingency and the sheer scope of possibility associated with urbanism. A similar dynamic between fending off nature and conquering nature appears in these works, yet Stapledon refuses to portray humankind's inevitable triumph. In contrast to Wells's optimism with regard to a given society's capacity to wield technology to recover from a catastrophe and to facilitate urban expansion, the reader is instead encouraged to reflect on the limitations and contingency of human life and urban existence. Catastrophe, for Wells, is thus an opportunity for urban and social renewal. In *Last and First Men*, the eighth iteration of humanity begins the terraformation of Venus so as to escape Earth's destruction by asteroid strike. The processes of urbanisation brought to Venus first overlays, then erases pre-existing ecologies and the undersea Venusian civilisation. There is no attempt to integrate these two systems.

These scientific romances background non-human nature and their relationship to the city insofar as the autonomy of non-human life is overlooked when integrating nature into plans for urban expansion. The city is the node from which technological change expands outward to transform nature and mitigate Promethean fears toward its asymmetric and seemingly implacable relationship to humankind. A struggle over taming nature and harmonising urban life is central to these stories. In Stapledon's case the dramatisation of multiple alien civilisations works to emphasise the vast array of permutations available to expanding societies. Pastoral structures and images are used to frame this conflict between expanding urban centres (and a corresponding expansion of power and control over nature) and an expansion that seeks to integrate nature into urban space. In *Shape*, this is in the form of designated spaces, parks that reinforce urban power. In Stapledon's work, the various iterations of humankind adapt themselves to their new environments and experiment with different modes of integrating nature into urban space. The Seventh Men in *Last and First Men*, for instance, fascinated with the utopian symbolism of flight, modify themselves and their cities for a pastoral existence as winged creatures. This utopian vision of a communal avian city dominated by megastructures upon which these humans alight illustrates how these works depict urban space as representative of a civilisation's system of value. Ultimately, they portray the process of urbanisation as an inevitable expansion from small townships and cities to vast megacities. This growth, however, is dependent on the wise use of technology to incorporate and control non-human nature in order to guard against natural catastrophes or a human-driven destruction of the environment that would precipitate urban collapse.

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Arthur C. Clarke's *The Sands of Mars*

The first novels devoted to terraforming appeared in the 1950s. Robert Heinlein's *Farmer in the Sky* (1967 [1950]), Arthur C. Clarke's *The Sands of Mars* (1976 [1951]) and Ray Bradbury's collection of short stories, *The Martian Chronicles* (1958 [1951]), explore

the ways in which the colonisation of other planets focusses attention on the potential integration of cities and an alien, non-human nature. Abbott calls these homesteading stories, "for they draw on the rich experience and mythology of the American farm-making frontier." These narratives represent interplanetary colonisation in terms of the American pastoral, a central mode in sf for engaging with issues surrounding technological change. "[T]reatments of homesteading in sf, with their emphasis on rugged individualism," Abbott argues, "seem to stand in clear contrast to large-scale terraforming novels that retell the 'modern' story of big science and state action" ("Homesteading on the Extraterrestrial Frontier" 242). These narratives emphasise individualism and small, tight-knit communities in contrast to Wells's vision of an urban centre of control managed by a scientific elite. This libertarian strand would gain increasing currency throughout the 1960s-1970s and is explored in such works as Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (2001 [1966]), Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (2000 [1974]) and Michael Allaby and James Lovelock's *The Greening of Mars* (1984).

Relationships with animals are certainly backgrounded in these narratives and can be accounted for by the knowledge of the scarcity of life on other planets at the time, but in these stories we see how the absence of animal life sharpens our awareness of a lack in our contemporary urban experience. While animals in the form of pets or livestock are excluded from the colonising outposts of the first interplanetary cities, synanthropes are not completely absent and are valued because they are fundamental to the success of the terraforming project. Furthermore, in *Farmer in the Sky*, *The Sands of Mars* and *The Martian Chronicles*, the appearance of alien life or evidence of such life speaks of a desire to connect with the other. How far this theme allows us to explore the potential integration of nature into interplanetary urban systems is dependent on how these aliens are presented in the narrative—whether as members of an alien civilisation and thus comparable to human societies or as non-sentient animals comparable to terrestrial non-human fauna. The discovery of evidence of an alien culture at the end of *Farmer in the Sky* and the haunting of the Martian colonists by Mars's former inhabitants in *The Martian Chronicles* clearly align aliens with civilisation. In *The Sands of Mars* the aliens that are discovered are apparently non-sentient, non-human animals.

Contrasting the interplanetary colonial city to terrestrial global cities such as London, New York and Paris often raises a criticism of the colony's frontier status which, the colonists hope, will only be transitory. In *The Sands of Mars*, Gibson's first view of the capital, Port Lowell,[3] is of a small frontier town, most of which is underground. Port Lowell's various functions—food-production, biological and engineering research and energy—are distributed in domes that are separated from the residential sectors of the city. "I'm used to the standards of London and New York," Gibson tells the mayor: "[a]fter all, two thousand people would only make a large village back on Earth" (Clarke

[3] Port Lowell alludes to Percival Lowell, the author and astronomer who popularised Schiaparelli's identification of canali on the surface of Mars as signs of a vast irrigation project designed to stave off civilisation's collapse by managing water scarcity on the planet (Lowell 128). Terraforming has thus been embedded in scientific speculation about Mars since 1895.

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162–3). The opening of a new dome the following week, the mayor tells Gibson, promises to give the colonists the space to expand and eventually rival Earth's cities. These domes are transitory stages in the eventual terraforming of Mars which promise the colonists the freedom to build cities according to the model of Earth. Another character later tells Irene, the mayor's daughter, that "[i]t's not right that you should stick here on Mars and never see anything of Earth. Paris—New York—London—why, you haven't lived until you've visited them" (Clarke 312–3). The small, bare cities on planets undergoing terraformation cannot compete with the wealth of history and sheer physical presence of the cities of Earth.

After the novel establishes the colony as a regenerative space where time unfolds as a process of personal healing and socio-political reconstruction and self-determination, the narrative turns its attention to resolving anxieties over colonial relationships with indigenous cultures by invoking the theme of the discovery of alien civilisations. The colony's only interaction with the aliens is through a young representative who, unlike the adults of its group, appears unusually curious and follows Gibson back to the colony. Gibson feels no qualms over making use of the aliens to cultivate Mars by training them to plant genetically engineered 'airweeds' native to Mars across the planet in order to make the atmosphere breathable. Port Lowell is dependent upon the integration of flora and fauna in order to make survival viable and to facilitate the growth of further cities across Mars. The aliens represent the promise that humankind is not alone—that other intelligences capable of communication exist throughout the universe:

> However he might shape it for his own purposes, it would be his duty always to safeguard the interests of its rightful owners. No one could tell what part they might have to play in the history of the universe. And when, as was one day inevitable, Man himself came to the notice of yet higher races, he might well be judged by his behaviour here on Mars. (Clarke 200)

The ideal of contact with "higher" alien civilisations and the external evaluative role that they might play function as a check to the colony's ethical standards. Hadfield reminds the colonists that they are "making history," creating the foundations for a future of terraformation to which other generations of humankind will be indebted (Clarke 188). The first experiments with terraforming therefore involve attempts to formulate sound ethical relationships within and between species. These ethical considerations underpin a colonial project extending beyond the solar system that struggles to escape a repetition of the record of oppressions observable in Earth's own history.

Terraforming stories emphasise the fundamental dependence on non-human nature for transforming alien planets into habitable environments. In many homesteading stories, soil construction is a key terraforming technology that depends for its success on the action of fungi, bacteria and worms, thus making these synanthropes essential to the survival and flourishing of interplanetary colonies. By portraying the difficulties involved in creating, maintaining and expanding cities on other planets, these narratives underline the impossibility of escaping from a dependency on non-human nature, thus preserving a sense of humankind's asymmetric relationship to that nature. Speaking of Heinlein's *Farmer in the Sky* as a homesteading story, Abbott explains that,

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> Like much Golden Age sf, the fun comes from imagining technical details, as the problems of earthside soil conservation, a major issue of the middle decades of the twentieth century, are inverted into moonside soil creation. (Abbott, "Homesteading on the Extraterrestrial Frontier" 247)

These narratives respond to the environmental and agricultural degradation of the 1930s American and Canadian experience of the dust bowl. Terraforming narratives transpose and refigure environmental concerns onto the spaces of other planets, re-situating them in the context of an accelerating urbanism that threatens to erase an alien, non-human nature. In *Farmer in the Sky* and Kim Stanley Robinson's 1990s *Mars* trilogy, the difficulty of constructing soil on Mars is partially overcome by importing it from Earth. The cities of other planets are thus dependent on Earth's support even as they attempt to achieve independence and self-sufficiency. Interplanetary colonies are doubly fragile, reliant as they are on their ability to adapt to an alien environment and the possibility of weaning themselves from Earth's influence.

Frederick Turner's *Genesis: An Epic Poem*

In his 1988 *Genesis*, Frederick Turner explains the provenance of his epic poem with reference to Arizona's Biosphere-II, still under construction at the time of publication. It was eventually opened in 1991 and hosted the first of its occupants to widespread public attention and controversy. Biosphere-II is an experiment in sustainable, closed environments that attempts to duplicate Earth's ecosystemic processes to better understand the operations of its biosphere and, secondarily, to function as a prototype for space colonies. The eight subjects of the first experiment maintained self-sufficiency for the length of the two year trial, which involved the production of their total food supply and the management of oxygen, water and nutrient cycles. In "A Note on the Science of *Genesis*," Turner explains that architects such as Paolo Soleri, who designed contained arcologies, have long imagined structures such as the biosphere, and he connects Biosphere-II to the insights posited by Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis (*Genesis*). Buckminster Fuller's geodesic and the long tradition of imagining domes in sf fed into the conceptualisation of Biosphere-II. The experiment was informed by the search for solutions to environmental problems through innovative ecological thinking and design, the appropriate use of technologies and environmental advocacy. This approach was pragmatic and optimistic in orientation and promoted conscientious use of environmental research and science to explore alternatives to contemporary practices and to affect wide-ranging change through the mobilisation of individuals who would take the shaping of their destiny into their own hands.

Stuart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog* was the voice of this tradition and its popularity inspired many to explore ways to engage with environmental issues. *The Whole Earth Catalog* collects a range of articles from reviews of books and technologies, surveys of the work of various thinkers on a range of disciplines, historical primers and other items, all of which are subordinated to the subtitle of the text, "access to tools." Among articles on Buckminster Fuller and tensile structures, the first issue reviewed

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Steve Baer's *Dome Cookbook* (1967) and the geoengineering text *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth* (1956), along with Frank Herbert's terraforming novel, *Dune* (1963). In the 1970s-1980s writers such as William S. Burroughs, Ursula K. Le Guin, Ernest Callenbach and William Gibson contributed to the *Whole Earth Catalog*, its successors and revivals, along with the scientists James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis. Brand controversially explored the issue of space colonisation and produced a collection on the theme entitled *Space Colonies* (1977), which was influenced by the ideas of Gerard O'Neill and which emphasised the link between sf and the pragmatic, technologically oriented environmentalism of the *Whole Earth Catalog*. Although Andrew G. Kirk notes that the *Whole Earth Catalog* is informed by an environmental utopianism that was especially clear in the debate over space colonies, he argues that "[t]rends that were initially utopian often get tempered by time, evolving into more practical versions of the revolutionary thinking that spawned a period of great creativity" (10). Sf influenced the revolutionary thinking Kirk describes; the dialogism of the mode can be seen as a feedback system that refigures tropes and narratives in response to the needs and desires of society. Like the *Whole Earth Catalog*, the terraforming tradition can be read as a catalogue of tools for adaptation and as responses to landscaping and technologically driven societal change.

Frederick Turner's *Genesis* inherits this ecological tradition and reflects on the possibility of creating a new city on Mars that would incorporate nature and culture in ways that would respect the heterogeneity of both domains. *Genesis* recounts the struggle between Earth's Gaean Theocracy and Martian colonists led by Chase 'Chance' Van Riebeck. Earth in this narrative has locked itself into a technological infrastructure that rejects innovation in the name of conservation, thus preventing genuinely sustainable urban systems and technologies from emerging. Mars colonisation represents an escape from the confining strictures of Earth's flawed environmental paradigm and an escape to a utopian future that synthesises technology and nature. Essential to the Mars project is the complete genetic record of extant animals on Earth, the Lima Codex, which would allow the colonists to populate their terraformed world with non-human animals. The Gaean Theocracy forbids any intervention into nature, human or otherwise, which makes Chase's bid for terraforming and genetic engineering anathema. During Chase's trial the prosecution questions Beatrice on the prehistoric animals that she has cloned and offers evidence of further crimes conducted on Mars:

> These samples here of deformed animals
> And prodigies with leaves and mouths and lungs;
> These photographs of what was done on Mars,
> Showing the ancient landscape now convulsed
> And slobbered over with a noxious slime. (Turner, *Genesis*)

The "prodigies with leaves and mouths and lungs" certainly resonate with dystopic images of animals tortured into new forms, images that can be traced back to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (2008 [1818]) and H.G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (2008 [1896]). The first stages of terraforming transform the world into a landscape that reflects the worst visions of the future. Significantly, the prosecution carefully avoids

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any reference of Earth's evolutionary history for fear that such an admission would naturalise the introduction of life to Mars and thus justify the colonists' endeavour. Since terraforming other planets could then be framed as recapitulating Earth's own evolutionary history, terraforming could conceivably be integrated with Gaean doctrine. Wells's utopian vision of a world system of cities and "new aberrant animal types in our experimental gardens" (*Shape*) is refigured in *Genesis* as an oppositional vision of the future relationships to nature that humankind might create in their struggle to realise their utopian visions.

The colonists' first cities are claustrophobic and stifling, recapitulating images of the dystopian city; the narrator notes how "[t]his little cave-hole on the tortured planet / Can be a place of terror" (Turner, *Genesis*) and records how

> Beatrice yearns after animals
> Upon this world of silent growing plants;
> Perhaps they miss the fleshmeat in their meals –
> Such petty changes can engender turns
> Of the spirit as lonely, dark, and cruel
> As any struggle over principle,
> Standing in tears amid the alien corn. (Turner, *Genesis*)

Although the colonists have successfully managed to establish an agricultural infrastructure, their crops are as alien as the world they now occupy. A sense of place, of Mars as a home, eludes them, and they turn to the establishment of animals on the planet as an answer to the loneliness of existence on Mars. This loneliness chimes with Clarke's notion in *The Sands of Mars* that "life called to life" and that "[e]verything that grew or moved upon the face of any planet was a portent, a promise that Man was not alone in this Universe of blazing suns and swirling nebulae" (67). The escape from nature that the city and terraforming offer only highlights an emotional and cognitive dependency on non-human animal others for creating a sense of belonging. The absence of a wider ecology that would add complexity to the urban infrastructures established on Mars and which would supply the colonists with animal others that would encourage them to cultivate a sense of the city as a home makes their terraforming project a hollow achievement. The narrator's half-hearted explanation for this yearning as attributable to a lack of meat is unsatisfying because it cannot account for the scope of the colonists' alienation from an alien nature.

In response to this ecological deprivation the colonists in Act V Scene ii, "Evolution and the City," begin to re-imagine the possibilities for urban experiences on Mars: "Charlie and Ganesh have broached the Ark / And let forth all the curious animals" (Turner, *Genesis*). Allusions to Biblical, Greek, and epic traditions from around the world frame Mars as a space for the convergence of multiple human histories and traditions. What follows is an epic catalogue of animals that emphasise their aesthetic, physical and anthropomorphised qualities and values:

> But Charlie and Ganesh had more in mind
> Than filling out the plenum of a zoo;
> They were composing a community,
> A new branch of natural history. (Turner, *Genesis*)

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Animals are incorporated into the Martian community as essential companions with interests and behaviours that are not dependent on humankind or their cities, though they are dependent on terraforming technologies. They are not simply animals to be observed by curious and alienated humans *pace* Wells, but are members of a community that includes humans. The implications of this re-writing of the relationship between humans and animals for the nature of the city is dramatic and it encourages the colonists to view the creation of a new civilisation in terms of establishing cities as participants in ecological networks. Although animals on Earth are not dependent upon humans for their existence and flourishing, on Mars their existence is ultimately dependent upon humankind's creation of a viable biosphere, which in turn is dependent upon the robustness of the ecologies they are able to establish. This structure is a closed feedback system that emphasises the initial dependence of life on the creation of this "new branch of natural history." Reflecting on how the swan "owes its being to a hierarchy / Of other organisms," the narrator insists that "We must learn / To find the beauty in this web of lives, / This seething texture of dependency" (Turner, *Genesis*). Evolution and ecology are aligned with an aesthetic sensibility that is central to the creation of a utopian civilisation on Mars.

The importance of animals for the city is encapsulated in the utopian image of an "avian city, avian economics, and avian ethics," which echoes Stapledon's treatment of the Seventh Men and their avian cities in *Last and First Men*. This metaphorical application of the avian to the citizens of Mars functions as an intellectual landscape that familiarises the Martian city by aligning it with a history of utopian imagery. The image of flight appears in Turner's earlier novel of terraforming, *A Double Shadow*, in Stapledon's *Last and First Men* and in Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy. Turner notes that "For Aristophanes the avian city / Was orgiastic as the land of dreams." Later, the narrator attributes to Socrates the notion that "we must construct an airy city / If we would so articulate the good / As to make justice worth the defining." Not only must the beauty of evolution and ecology be recognised but the Martian colonists "must learn to fly" (Turner, *Genesis*). It is the new generations who first take to the skies to claim their inheritance:

> nature
> Makes us dream of being mighty birds,
> Coasting the buttresses of mountain chains,
> Lifting away upon a breeze of power,
> Escaping monsters, terrors, to the air. (Turner, *Genesis*)

The motif of flight represents both an escape from the monsters and terrors of the imagination and civilisation and a recognition that it is the beauty of nature's otherness that encourages this flight. It is both an escape from earthbound nature—which is representative of destructive stasis—and an escape to a better life. But it is also a way to step back and view the city and the Martian landscape from a radically non-human perspective: that of a utopian, avian citizen who is part of a larger community that includes non-human others. Mars's gravity—which is one-third of Earth's—means that this element of nature can be framed as a powerful figure for the possibilities offered to

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the Martian colonists for creating a better civilisation on Mars: "Here some of you can leap to twice your height" (Turner, *Genesis*).

Flight offers an escape from nightmare and a connection to nature. The Martian Sibyl relates wings to our phenomenological experience of time and asserts that "underneath the surface structure / We knew the time of animals and plants, / The time of stones and atoms, and of fire." This sense of non-human nature as offering a fundamental connection that would help the colonists to construct a viable alternative to Earth's destructive stasis is ratified by the Martian constitution and plans for a city grounded in this image of flight: "Imagine then a city made for birds. / First, this cloudcuckooland is made not found" (Turner, *Genesis*). This utopian city is not a given and does not automatically follow from the establishment of colonies and cities on Mars. Rather, it is a place that must be built. By connecting the foundations of this city to the motif of the bird, radical changes of orientation to the future of law and ethics are made.

Consider, for example, the notion of property, the figure for which is the wall. Because, as the narrator tells us, flight means that "No property on Mars can be fenced off, / And no one be fenced out," the notion of private and public space must undergo a radical revision. Instead of property rights established by the law, "property, possession, change their meaning. / They are the sign of neighborhood and trust, / The gratitude of the community" (Turner, *Genesis*). The economy, too, undergoes a revision as the significance of property for this Martian city is re-valued:

> Consider then a new oeconomy
> Of spirit and the making of the spirit.
> It is a floating world, where wealth is what
> Accrues about the things we give away. (Turner, *Genesis*)

Property accrues value according to how far it enhances education, storytelling, scholarship, athleticism, philosophy or the bonds of human affection. The notion of value as embodied by material objects thus undergoes a revision in this proposed gift economy. The Martian city, then, is an interface between humankind and their wider environment. The values embedded in the expanding city are an expression of new relationships to each other and to nature. Flight across the Martian landscape—most notably around Olympus Mons, the largest volcanic structure in the solar system—has the capacity to orient new generations toward the epic task of constructing a new society on Mars. Indeed, flight itself embodies an important lesson that discloses the final escape from nature that immortality promises: "Death in the air is but a part of life, / For who'd forgo the ecstasy of flying?" (Turner, *Genesis*).

Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* Trilogy

In Kim Stanley Robinson's acclaimed *Mars* trilogy, Martian colonists establish cities that become objects of struggle between Earth's various multinationals and those colonists who reject the notion that Mars is simply a resource for Earth's industry. The domed cities in this trilogy underscore civilisation's fragility as, during the first war for independence in *Red Mars*, the strategic destruction of oppositional domes successfully

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counters the revolution at great cost to the lives of the colonists. The fragility of the domes and their status as containers that set physical, political and socio-cultural limitations on the colonists illustrate the correspondence between physical and metaphorical space while figuring an anxiety at the heart of civilisation's technological capacity to shape new worlds through an application of politically directed science.

There are other perspectives on Mars and throughout the trilogy they are discussed, argued against, modelled, experimented with and subverted in various ways and from a variety of subject positions. As the narrative progresses the Martian cities are increasingly associated with different stances regarding the appropriate approach for colonising Mars. For example, the second Martian city, Burroughs,[4] is located near a space elevator that connects Earth and Mars. It is the centre from which Earth's multinationals expand their operations to exploit Mars' natural resources. Concentrated in this city are the business elite and Earth's security forces, who are used to exert control over the other cities of Mars. In contrast, Tharsis Tholus stands in opposition to the values associated with Burroughs. This city is populated by Bogdanovists[5] who oppose the strip mining of Mars and who provide support to the Martian Underground, a loose affiliation of groups who attempt to create new forms of habitation that reject the multinationals' instrumental view of Mars. Each section of the trilogy is narrated from the perspective of a different character while each instalment extends the political and ethical debates regarding the colonisation of Mars and its secession from Earth as an independent, revolutionary nation. Environmental philosophy is incorporated into the debates of the text as is reflection on extreme environmental positions such as deep ecology and the economic philosophy of business-as-usual. Ultimately, this work is ecotopian in its exploration of society and the environment and is encyclopaedic in the utopian sense of surveying multiple levels of the construction of a new society. The colonists' discovery of a life extending treatment allows Robinson to work with a larger temporal canvas for this exploration of urbanism, nature, science and society.

Central to the *Mars* trilogy's exploration of humankind's relationship to non-human nature is the Red / Green debate, a philosophical dispute over the merits of terraforming Mars. Strong Greens believe that providing life to the planet is a duty, and that any means should be considered in drawing up plans for terraforming Mars. Strong Reds, on the other hand, believe in complete non-interference with Mars' non-human, abiotic nature, and some use violence as a means of protecting the planet. These positions exist at the poles of a spectrum that all the colonists populate. The first colonists to Mars are a group of one hundred scientists, two of whom become the symbols for these movements: Sax is a physicist turned biotechnologist, a supporter of a heavy industrial model for terraforming Mars who modifies his position after he is captured and tortured by Earth's security forces for his role as one of the legendary

[4] Burroughs alludes to Edgar Rice Burroughs and his seminal John Carter of Mars series, which began with the serialisation in *All-Story* of "Under the Moons of Mars" in 1912, later novelised as *A Princess of Mars* in 1917.

[5] Taking their name from Arkady Bogdanov, an influential member of the First Hundred, this movement is also an allusion to Alexander Bogdanov, an sf writer who wrote the Martian Bolshevik utopia, *Red Star*, first published in Russian in 1908 and translated into English in 1982.

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generals of the first war of independence. Ann, his rival, is a geologist and a Red who adheres to her strong position until after Sax's change of view and her exposure to the violence of some of the radical Red movements (who see her as their legendary figure). Her turn towards compromise is precipitated by her encounter with the genetically modified life on Mars, a life that she had been ignoring in favour of the original Martian landscape. She realises that whatever nature existed on Mars is no longer there. The Red / Green debate drives the philosophic speculation of the text; this opposition allows Robinson to scrutinise the relationship between non-human nature and the human, represented by the polyphonic range of cities on Mars.

Genetic engineering features in the trilogy in several ways: through the life extending treatments already mentioned and through body modifications on Earth, but primarily through a series of modifications to organisms on Mars that both facilitates the ecopoietic transformation of the planet and equips lifeforms for habitation of a partially terraformed Mars. The first intervention involves distributing modified lichens that would bootstrap a process of modification to the atmosphere. This process is modelled against theories of the advent of life on Earth popularised by James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis which replicates a model for the origin of Earthbound life on Mars. What this says about nature is intriguing: this is a technological intervention, a second nature that obliterates the 'authentic' nature of Mars in accordance with what Bill McKibben has described as the end of nature (1990). The idea that there is no nature is one of the perspectives voiced throughout the text and it runs directly into issues of politics: this first intervention was secretly conducted by Sax so as to bypass the Red / Green debate and questions over the most appropriate way to terraform the planet. Sax's intervention is also a harbinger of the failure of democratic processes for deciding if, and how best, to terraform Mars: as corporations and immigrants arrive, mining begins in earnest. The economic relationship between Mars and Earth threatens to bypass further debate over the appropriate mode of habitation of the planet. Nature, in the sense of an extraterrestrial wilderness untouched by humankind, is completely elided as these new forces extend the idea that Mars is simply a blank slate for the imposition of economic and political relationships developed on Earth.

In *Blue Mars*, increasing numbers of plant and animal species are modified as the now independent planet has been transformed into a functioning system economically and culturally tied to Earth. Polar animals, modified for the Martian environment, begin to establish the first diverse ecology on Mars. Ann's confrontation with a polar bear forces her to acknowledge the vitality and transience of nature. Even though she recognises the second nature of these organisms she begins to view the separation between nature and culture in less oppositional ways. Nature has never been an unproblematic concept; Ann's strong Red position is based on the ability to make a distinction between culture and nature but, once Mars has become inhabited, this distinction rapidly breaks down. As some of the colonists, including Sax, begin to engineer their own bodies with genes from various animals for both survival and for pleasure, the separation between a coherent human image and one that blends with non-human animals further compounds this issue.

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The terraforming narrative, with its attention to life-support systems and domes, brings into focus the precarious nature of the terrestrial city as life-support system. The recognition that interplanetary colonies can reject the models that Earth offers for shaping the tenor of urbanism on Mars invites speculation on new modes of habitation. Arkady Bogdanov explores this utopian impulse with great enthusiasm when he argues, "'I've already lived too long in a country that thought only of utility. We must show that we value more than that here, yes?'" His vision of possibility helps to inspire the multitude of alternative designs for cities that arise on Mars. Important to Arkady's vision is that these cities blend with the original Martian landscape. In response to one criticism that establishing a viable living space will necessarily damage the land, Bogdanov argues otherwise, claiming that "'[i]t is a matter of spirit! And that's not to say it could have been done earlier, the infrastructure had to be installed, that's always messy, but now we are ready for the art of architecture, the spirit of it'" (Robinson, *Red Mars* 161).

Conclusion

Bogdanov's appeal to an "art" or "spirit" of architecture echoes similar appeals that run throughout the terraforming narrative's exploration of the aesthetics of the city and its dual image as utopian and dystopian. Terraforming, as a process of landscaping, creates new worlds from the destruction and erasure of the old. Terraforming narratives structure their enquiry into the relationship between humanity and non-human nature around this act of world building, which resonates with the utopian impulse to remake sociopolitical worlds. Schneekloth writes that "[e]ach act of material restructuring of the world makes the world, adds to it. Designers are engaged in the ongoing activity of making the present. And the making of the present constructs the field from which tomorrow is made, and next year – the future" (12). The terraforming narratives surveyed in this article situate non-human nature in the form of animals, plants and bacteria at the heart of this enquiry into the shape of future cities.

This article has considered the role of the city in structuring the relationship between humankind and nature in the terraforming narrative. The theme of the conquest of nature that underlies many works of sf and which is exemplified by Wells's *Shape* is an expression of a desire to escape from a feeling of insignificance and vulnerability in the face of an overwhelmingly hostile nature. As humankind's technological mastery increases the capacity to shape non-human nature for human oriented ends, a void becomes apparent. The image of the interplanetary city as humankind's life-support system fails to provide a space for incorporating non-human others that would allow their inhabitants to embed themselves in a community that does not simply reflect human desires. The image of a utopian future becomes ever more firmly associated with ecology after the ecological turn of the 1960s-1980s. As Turner and Robinson show, the terraforming narrative's call to re-vision the city as an expression of a new system of value increasingly sees non-human nature as central to the utopian cities that the colonists struggle to create on other worlds.

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Where the Twin Oceans of Beauty and Horror Meet: An Aesthetic Analysis of Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

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Abstract

Although Annie Dillard's masterpiece *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974) has conventionally been analyzed as a piece of nature writing embedded in the Thoreauvian tradition and it has extensively been studied, little attention has been paid to the *aesthetic* concepts that underlie the text and that may serve to better comprehend Dillard's take on nature. Therefore, this research applies the concepts of Baumgarten's "science of sensible knowledge" to the narrator's perceptions in order to demonstrate that Dillard's ultimate message is the acceptance of the whole nature, even in its seemingly inhuman places. The study begins with the analysis of the structure of the book, which outlines two types of experience of nature related to mystical paths that lead to God in Neoplatonic theology. The *via positiva* is associated to the aesthetic concept of beauty and to the subject's active participation in the experience of seeing, which is defined as a verbalization. On the other hand, the *via negativa* is linked to the concept of the sublime and the experience of seeing as a letting go. Furthermore, the analysis employs and develops Linda Smith's valid conclusions (1991) to show how these two paths join in a third mystical and aesthetic path, the *via creativa*. By leaving the interpretation of natural signs open-ended, Dillard's modern vision enables the author's total acceptance of nature's freedom, which fosters its beautiful intricacy as well as its horrible fecundity. Thus, nature's creativity becomes the basis for an aesthetics of the totality of nature, which can be defined as nature's wholeness and which leads human beings to accept and respect nature for what it truly is, freed from any prejudices.

Keywords: Annie Dillard; *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*; aesthetic experience; beauty and sublime; *via creativa*; nature's wholeness

Resumen

A pesar de que *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974), obra maestra de Annie Dillard, ha sido analizada convencionalmente como una pieza de literatura y medio ambiente incrustada en la corriente Thoreauviana y ha sido estudiada extensivamente, poco atención se le ha prestado a los conceptos *estéticos* que subyacen la obra y que pueden servir para comprender mejor la opinión de Dillard sobre la naturaleza. Por lo tanto, esta investigación aplica los conceptos de "ciencia del conocimiento sensible" de Baumgarten a la percepción del narrador con el fin de demostrar que el mensaje final de Dillard es la aceptación de la naturaleza, incluso en sus lugares aparentemente inhumanos. El estudio comienza con el análisis de la estructura del libro, que describe dos tipos de experiencia de la naturaleza relacionados con caminos místicos que llevan a Dios, dentro de la teología Neoplatónica. La *vía positiva* está asociada al concepto estético de la belleza y a la participación activa del sujeto en la experiencia estética de ver, la cual es definida como una verbalización. Por otra parte, la *vía negativa* está vinculada con el concepto de lo sublime y la experiencia de ver como un dejar ir. Además, el análisis emplea y desarrolla las válidas conclusiones de Linda Smith (1991) para mostrar cómo estos dos caminos se unen en un tercer camino místico y estético, la *vía creativa*. Al dejar la interpretación de signos naturales abierta, la visión moderna de Dillard permite al autor la total aceptación de la libertad de la naturaleza, lo que fomenta su hermosa intrincación, así como su horrible fecundidad. Así, la creatividad de la naturaleza se convierte en la base

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para la estética de la naturaleza en su totalidad, lo que lleva a los seres humanos a aceptar y respetar la verdadera esencia de la naturaleza, libre de cualquier prejuicio.

Palabras clave: Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, experiencia estética, belleza y sublime, *vía creativa*, integridad de la naturaleza.

Annie Dillard (Pittsburgh, 1945) has been defined as a mystic, a scientist and an artist. However, her name is conventionally linked to the genre of nature writing because her masterpiece *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974), winner of the 1975 Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction, draws direct inspiration from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (1854), one of the founding works of nature writing. In Dillard's multi-layered book, which includes spiritual, scientific, and mystical elements, the prose is triggered by the nature of Tinker Creek, in the Virginia Blue Ridge Mountains. The writer's purpose is to write "what Thoreau called 'a meteorological journal of the mind'" (Dillard 13), analyzing both the natural environment and one's inner ecstatic experience in nature. While Dillard acknowledges the distinction between a spiritualized Nature and scientific nature, as nature is both the physical environment and the spirit that enlivens every natural element (Phillips 189), her scientific references demonstrate the intrinsic harmony of both (McClintock 78). However, the environment becomes the means to discover God's traces in the world and to solve the scandalous question about God's possible evil disposition and his sheer creation *in jest* of the world.

Despite the centrality of Dillard's quest for God, her experience in nature, as Thoreau's, is not only *ecstatic* but also *aesthetic*, because of the ways in which the narrator conceives and engages with the natural environment. The term aesthetic, in spite of its frequent use, poses a number of questions because of its blurred boundaries. Aesthetics has been defined a branch of philosophy, a science, a critique of the arts, and even a word now empty of meaning. Although any definition may not capture its true meaning, in the present analysis aesthetics will be considered the science of sensible knowledge, which is the definition introduced by the German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. According to Baumgarten, aesthetics enables human beings to draw near to a symbolic and unfathomable dimension that concerns the "totality of representations that remain below the threshold of distinctness" (Baumgarten 21) and cannot be explained by reason. Therefore, aesthetics allows gaining and examining those confused and yet clear perceptions that the philosopher Gottfried Leibniz (1646 – 1716) identified as the source for sensible knowledge. This type of knowledge is not distinct, because the properties that distinguish one thing from others cannot be enumerated, but it can develop clarity in ways not explored by logic, making it possible "to recognize the thing represented" (Leibniz 291). These confused perceptions are the objects of aesthetics, which provides the experiencer with perceptual knowledge, thus becoming an analogue of rational cognition (Baumgarten 3). Rather than logical articulation, aesthetic knowledge aims at perceiving perfectly by means of the senses.

As Dillard's book focuses on her sensual experience of and first-hand relationship with nature, aesthetics represents a suitable interpretative path that may offer innovative contributions to the study of nature writing. By applying the most fertile concepts of aesthetics—such as beauty and sublime—to the analysis of the narrator's perceptions of the surroundings and to the *via positiva* and the *via negativa*, the two mystical paths outlined by

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Dillard to reach God, the study will highlight the narrator's various aesthetic attitudes toward the environment at Tinker Creek. The primary aim is not knowing the ultimate meaning of nature, which may be identified with the Kantian *noumena*, the things in themselves that cannot be investigated through experience (*Pure Reason* 338-9); however, Dillard manages to read the book of nature with understanding, gaining some knowledge of it (Lavery 261). Therefore, her sensible representations, as Baumgarten's, lead to a form of knowledge that is not as distinct as that of logical reasoning, but whose teaching is the acceptance of God and nature, even in its most obscure places. The convoluted contrasts that characterize Tinker Creek are interpreted by the narrator as tangible proofs of God's existence. However, diverging from her master Thoreau, whose description of *Walden*'s environment was multifaceted yet always positive, Dillard underlines the unsolved and unsolvable contrasts in nature while she reunites beauty and horror in a dialectical vision identified with the *ultima Thule*, the pole of relative inaccessibility where "the twin oceans of beauty and horror meet" (Dillard 70). The last knowable land may philosophically be thought of as the Kantian *noumena* and Leibniz's "something, I know not what" (291), which refers to the apprehension of qualities that cannot be adequately expressed by means of concept and that are the object of aesthetics.

After a brief analysis of the structure of the book, the study takes into consideration the narrator's ways of relating with the environment. By applying the concepts of aesthetics to the two opposite paths that comprise *Pilgrim*, two types of experience are outlined; both will be linked to aesthetics, since the the *via positiva* represents the experience of beauty that is related to nature's intricacy (Dillard 16), while the *via negativa* represents the sublime that is related to nature's apparent appalling fecundity (Dillard 16). However, it will be demonstrated that Dillard's dialectical vision manages to interweave intricacy and fecundity, both of which result from nature's creativity. By further advancing Smith's analysis (1991), a third mystical and aesthetic path will be analyzed, the *via creativa*. Creativity becomes the basis for an aesthetics of nature's wholeness, which is thought of as integrity, harmony, and beauty.

The Structure of *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

Pilgrim's narrator is interested in the environment and in the artistic shaping of the prose because it allows God's revelation in nature to be described as the highest form of beauty. By carefully translating her moments of vision into words, Dillard's prose induces epiphanic moments in the reader, shaping "illuminated moments" (Johnson 7), which are intense, fleeting and irrational mystical experiences that bring an intuitive insight into the divine and the self. As Reimer notices (183), Dillard is overwhelmed by natural details, thus partially embodying the model of the inspired bard in the wake of Ralph Waldo Emerson and other Transcendentalists. Nonetheless, Dillard also remarks on the utter importance of facts; thus, exploring the neighborhoods becomes a prominent means of knowing nature, involving focusing not only on transcendental meanings but also on factual nature (Brøgger 31). Douglass further underlines (256) that the basic unity of the book is given by epiphany that organically molds the prose not imposing order on disorder, but making the given world intelligible. Therefore, the complex structure of the book is conceived as a pathway toward epiphany; it draws inspiration from different sources, from the Bible to the Jewish cabala, from Heraclitus to scientific treaties on ethology. These variegated approaches bestow new meanings on natural facts, which are constantly interpreted from different perspectives.

As Thoreau did in *Walden*, Dillard organizes her narration of the nine years she spent in the Roanoke Valley by following the cycle of the solar year. However, instead of starting with

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summer and ending with spring, Dillard's narration begins in January and concludes with the winter solstice, which becomes the symbol of nature's regenerative power. The basic structure of the book is provided by the division into organized essay-like chapters according to the dualism between the *via positiva* and the *via negativa*, the mystical paths that lead to God in Neoplatonic theology. For the philosophers of the *via positiva*, God is omniscient and his qualities are always positive, while for the seasonal travelers of the *via negativa* God is described by what he is not, hoping that what is left is "the divine dark" (Dillard, "Afterword" 160). The opening chapter, "Heaven and Earth in Jest," presents this division and the themes further discussed: "the uncertainty of vision, the horror of the fixed, the dissolution of the present, the intricacy of beauty, the pressure of fecundity, the elusiveness of the free, and the flawed nature of perfection" (Dillard 16). These mysteries are shaped by nature's perpetual creation, symbolized by the constant flowing of Tinker Creek and Carvin's Creek. The book's first half, developing the *via positiva*, deals with the world's and God's goodness and it culminates in "Intricacy;" the chapter "Flood" marks a change in tone and clears the path for the *via negativa* of "Fecundity," the dark side of intricacy. The concluding chapter, "The Waters of Separation," keeps the book's bilateral symmetry by conjoining nature's contrasts in the last mystical experience: the narrator's transformation into a maple key.

Despite this structural division, Buell notices (240) that the same images are reiterated, so that they can be interpreted either following the *via positiva*, the symbol of God's presence, or the perilous *via negativa*, where evil in the world is perceived. Both ways of seeing are strictly necessary for a better comprehension of nature and God. Yet, this peregrination toward knowledge, as the journey toward the *ultima Thule*, is a *sub-limen* journey to the border between the perceivable and the super-sensible world. Furthermore, Smith reveals the presence of a third way, the *via creativa*, another mystical path that ideally reunites the cycles of "rising and falling, filling and emptying, living and dying" (Smith 48). This is not a synthesis of thesis and antithesis, but it invites us to give space to exuberance, plunging into Tinker Creek, the mediator of the dualisms that are constantly active throughout the narration. Nonetheless, the imagery of the *via negativa* acquires an intrinsically positive meaning in the *via creativa*, because every natural fact is accepted as an unexpected surprise from God, who is in the world, yet always transcendent to it. This analysis will further demonstrate that the *via creativa* is not only as an ecstatic but also an aesthetic journey, since it provides the experiencer with sensible knowledge acquired through the senses. Moreover, it enables humans to gain new insights into nature by endorsing a more intuitive interpretation of the world.

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The Aesthetic Experience as Seeing

Since Dillard's journey into nature is both mystical and aesthetic, the narrator's main purpose is not to achieve a pure aesthetic experience, but to look for the spirit hidden beyond natural facts. Thus, the aesthetic experience of nature is not totally disinterested, as hoped by Kant, because beautiful nature is immediately related to a good Creator; on the other hand, horrific and immoral facts cast doubt on the Creator's morality and existence. However, Papa observes (71) that in *Pilgrim* natural facts are not a symbol of deeper universal truths, as in *Walden*, but they are regarded as valuable in themselves. Therefore, Dillard gives primary importance to a non-mediated experience of nature, as in Kant's pure aesthetic experience (*Judgment* 160). The narrator's aesthetic attitudes are influenced by the passing of the seasons and their effects on the landscape; her perceptions, reasonings, and conclusions are triggered by natural phenomena and apparitions of the spirit. Analysis of Dillard's responses to nature

demonstrates how sensual experience is the starting point for her mystical experience, because the spirit reveals itself in the environment that is known through the senses and studied by aesthetics, the science of what is sensed.

Aesthetic experience and mystical vision are primarily linked by the possibility of seeing. Sight is part of Dillard's empirical methodology and it is the first sense involved in her experiences of nature. However, it is also used as a universal metaphor for the vision of the spirit. Actively seeing is the first means of approaching and experiencing nature. Awakening and readiness are necessary to catch the spirit and beauty of nature that reveal themselves, "whether or not we will or sense them. The least we can do is try to be there" (Dillard 21). The first step to take is diving into nature and exploring the neighborhoods, trying to see as much as possible, despite the difficulties entailed in seeing. Therefore, training sight is essential to see new and known things in a refreshed way. The narrator's advice is to try to change perspective, and take a wider view at the whole landscape, a process that prompts "seeing as a verbalization," the first type of seeing: "Unless I call my attention to what passes before my eyes, I simply won't see it […] I have to say the words, describe what I'm seeing" (Dillard 39-40). This active seeing demands the observer's utmost attention, to grasp the tiniest details that can alter one's perception of the environment. The observer must actively *stalk* the vision, as if it were a moving prey, as the narrator does during hot summer evenings, when she wants to see muskrats or fish in the creek. Stalking is conceived as a discipline, because "[…] the muskrat comes, or stays, or goes, depending on my skill" (Dillard 178). The disappearing muskrat is clearly a living symbol of the spirit, vanishing under water. Since stalking is a skill, it is linked to the *via positiva*, because the observer actively searches God's traces in the world.

Although nature tends to hide, it is often the observer's fault if he is not able to seize the vision, because sight is influenced by prejudices. Nonetheless, beauty is in nature, which suddenly offers free gifts to those willing to pay attention, as in the exemplary vision of blackbirds coming out of an Osage orange:

> I walked up to a tree, an Osage orange, and a hundred birds flew away. They simply materialized out of the tree. I saw a tree, then a whisk of color, then a tree again. I walked closer and another hundred blackbirds took flight. Not a branch, not a twig budged: the birds were apparently weightless as well as invisible. Or, it was as if the leaves of the Osage orange had been freed from a spell in the form of red-winged blackbirds; they flew from the tree, caught my eye in the sky, and vanished. When I looked again at the tree the leaves had reassembled as if nothing had happened. Finally I walked directly to the trunk of the tree and a final hundred, the real diehards, appeared, spread, and vanished. (27-28)

The blackbird vision represents the gift hidden in nature, which is seen only by the lover and the knowledgeable (Dillard 29), because they develop an enthusiastic and unbiased approach to nature. Lovers do not see in a conventional way—the "naturally obvious" defined by Stewart Edward White[1][1] (123)—but they build their own "artificial obvious" (Dillard 17), which is what challenges human preconceived expectations acquired through scientific knowledge. Like Thoreau's "Sympathy with Intelligence" (Walking 283), the artificial obvious is a way of seeing freed from preconceptions that does not aim at obtaining naturalistic knowledge, but at a holy communion with other intelligences, looking for the unexpected in contact with nature.

[1] Stewart Edward White (1873 – 1946) was an American writer, conservationist and spiritualist. He wrote fiction and non-fiction about outdoor living. His fictional book *The Mountains* (1904) is based upon his mountain experiences in the Sierra Nevada. Here White devotes a chapter to the subject of observing deer and distinguishes the naturally obvious from the artificial obvious.

The Aesthetic Experience as a Letting Go

Despite the need for an alert consciousness, the continuous awareness caused by seeing as a verbalization can hinder vision, because it produces a buzz inside the brain. After having tried to show muskrats to other people, Dillard admits that "Maybe they sense the tense hum of consciousness, the buzz from two human beings who in the silence cannot help but be aware of each other, and so of themselves" (176). Therefore, Dillard develops a second approach to the world that resembles the attitude of Arthur Schopenhauer's pure subject of knowledge. According to Schopenhauer (19), the subject needs to acquire a perception of the world in which things are seen in their most intimate essence. In this perception the subject's consciousness is filled with contemplation of the object, until absorption in it is complete. Freed from his individuality, the pure subject turns into the perfect mirror of the object and gets a glimpse of the eternal Platonic idea, the objective condition of the aesthetic experience. Abandoning any self-centered interests, the experiencer becomes the pure subject of cognition. Any clear-cut boundaries between the self and the world disappear, allowing the subject to merge with the object.

This second way of seeing is defined as "a letting go" (Dillard 40), because it is necessary to let go one's individuality and sway, emptied and transfixed by vision. Dillard likens seeing as a verbalization to walking with a camera, while seeing as a letting go is likened to walking without a camera, when one's shutter opens and "the moment's light prints on my own silver gut" (40). Through this simile, the narrator physically expresses the opening up of the self, which makes the observer an integrated part of the surroundings. The simile is used again in the chapter "Stalking," where the narrator compares her mind to a photographic plate, and emphasizes: "I received impressions, but I did not print out captions. My own self-awareness had disappeared; it seems now almost as though, had I been wired with electrodes, my EEG would have been flat" (176). The observer becomes totally unconscious, receiving impressions from the outer world. This passive attitude marks the stalking of the *via negativa*, since "I cannot cause light; the most I can do is try to put myself in the path of its beam" (Dillard 41). Instead of chasing light (or muskrats), the observer must be in its path, patiently waiting. Furthermore, through the camera simile, the author proposes the theme of the Emersonian transparent eye-ball (Emerson 6), interpreted as the self-forgetfulness necessary to address energies toward the outer world. Instead of wasting energy by talking to oneself, the experiencer should lose their self-awareness, emptying and filling their conscience with nature, a movement further symbolized by Tinker Creek's ebbing and flowing. This type of seeing requires a life devoted to self-discipline, recalling Schopenhauer's theory (407), which links aesthetics to mystical ascesis, as both can suppress the will. In *Pilgrim* this ascetic status is represented by the "mind's muddy river" (Dillard 41), the river full of trivia and trash that the experiencer should let flow freely through the channels of consciousness.

Seeing as a letting go allows the individual to see nature as a "presence without interest" (Dillard 41), a phrase that echoes the Kantian experience of beauty (*Judgment* 75-76). In fact, the subject experiences a pure pleasure aimed at simple apprehension of the object, neither at its possession nor at its conceptual knowledge. This attitude can be accomplished through innocence, considered as unself-conscious devotion of the subject, which is at once receptiveness and total concentration. In perfect communion subject and object merge, but the presence of the Other is always indispensable to experience nature. Therefore, the subject is an active stalker as well as a passive tool in the hunt for the vision. Moving between seeing and being seen, chasing and being chased, the subject of vision becomes its object, and vice-versa.

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This experience leads to mystical vision, when the shape of the object is apprehended as completely untied from its concept, although "Form is condemned to an eternal danse macabre with meaning" (Dillard 38). To demonstrate the practicability of this experience, in the chapter "Seeing" the author quotes the book *Space and Sight* (1932) by Marius von Senden, who dealt with 66 cases of cataract surgery in blind patients. After acquiring sight, these patients did not have any sense of height, distance and measure; they felt blinded by light, seeing just "a dazzle of color-patches" (Dillard 36). Therefore, what is seen is essentially influenced by how the observer sees. In an extreme act of identification, Dillard has tried to see in a non-conceptualized way, but the color-patches swelled, irremediably filled by meaning, thus losing the illusion of the absence of depth. However, final vision in nature is prompted by the letting go of self-consciousness. Despite being a total negation of the self, it sharpens the senses and enables a sensual experience of the environment: "I breathed an air like light; I saw a light like water. I was the lip of a fountain the creek filled forever; I was ether, the leaf in the zephyr; I was flesh-flake, feather, bone" (Dillard 40-41). Through the synesthesia, the narrator returns to her senses, to quote Thoreau ("Walking" 264). By simultaneously losing oneself and renewing one's acquaintance with the body, the experiencer focuses on the here-and-now that is being experienced through the senses.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to continuously hush one's awareness without going mad. Vision is always temporary and the main revelation of the book, the tree with the lights, is presented as a glowing instant that vanishes in a second. The narrator had been searching for that tree for ages, through the orchards of summer, in the forests of fall, down winter and spring. Suddenly, the vision arrived, when she was thinking of nothing at all:

> I saw the backyard cedar where the mourning doves roost charged and transfigured, each cell buzzing with flame. I stood on the grass with the lights in it, grass that was wholly fire, utterly focused and utterly dreamed. It was less like seeing than like being for the first time seen, knocked breathless by a powerful glance. [...] Gradually the lights went out in the cedar, the colors died, the cells unflamed and disappeared. I was still ringing. I had been my whole life a bell, and never knew it until at that moment I was lifted and struck. (42)

The mystical vision can spring from a sense of communion with nature and from a disinterest in one's existence as a single and particular individual. The vision of the vibrating cedar allows the observer to penetrate the surface of things, blending matter and energy. Belief that nature can freely grant a mystical-aesthetical experience makes the barriers between subjective human consciousness and the objective world fall (Elder 172), because perception is no longer mediated by concepts. Not only can the observer see the world as it really is for the first time: she is simultaneously seen by the entire cosmos and by the spirit.

Beauty and Intricacy

The *via positiva* allows the experiencer to actively engage with the world and to embrace its intrinsic beauty. Like Schopenhauer's experience of beauty (227-28), this attitude leads to *unio mystica*, communion with God in nature. As there is not a clear-cut line between the *via positiva* and the *via negativa*, the experiencer has to pay attention to all natural forms to grasp beauty. For instance, the first images depicted in "Heaven and Earth in Jest" are the old tom cat that covers the woman with blood stains and the vision of a giant water bug that swallows up a frog and haunts the narrator like a nagging nightmare. Despite these hyperbolic and disturbing

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events, Dillard momentarily bypasses the presence of pain in the world by showing aesthetically beautiful images that are linked to the apprehension of nature's harmony and beauty, "a grace wholly gratuitous" (Dillard 20). Instances of beauty, such as the tree with the lights in it and the gift of the Osage orange tree, are marks of God's revelation in the world. Furthermore, the narration starts and ends in winter when the senses, sharpened by cold, enable the observer to perceive beauty and goodness in a season that has traditionally been associated with death, but that is actually nature's rest before spring's awakening.

Birds are another instance of beauty, because their melodious chirping poses a question not about its meaning, but about why it is so beautiful. The answer is Dillard's definition of beauty, something which is "objectively performed—the tree that falls in the forest—[…] as real and present as both sides of the moon." "Beauty itself is the language to which we have no key; it is the mute cipher, the cryptogram, the uncracked, unbroken code" (Dillard 101). While Kant (*Judgment* 167) asserts beauty's subjectiveness because it needs the perceiver's presence to be grasped, Dillard's beauty is objective because it is caused by God's objective presence in the world of the *via positiva*. In addition, Dillard makes a reference to a pressing metaphysical question that was paraphrased by Mann and Twiss: "When a tree falls in a lonely forest, and no animal is nearby to hear it, does it make a sound?" (235). It inquires whether phenomena exist independently from the presence of a perceiver. Dillard declares that beauty exists as part of the world and it does not need any subject to be validated. Comparing an interior feeling aroused in the subject to the emission of a sound—a physical phenomenon caused by air compression—may seem a controversial issue in the author's aesthetics. However, the idea of objective beauty in nature makes beauty truly universal because it is universally appreciated without a concept (Kant, *Judgment* 99). It presupposes a common sense that makes human beings perceive beauty, despite not being able to decipher it. This innate sense is identified with the unawareness aroused by seeing as a letting go, which allows the perceiver to catch a glimpse of God.

God's other visible aspect is the world's intricacy, which is the symbol of a Creator who creates increasingly complex shapes that cannot be attached to any concept. As in Kant's aesthetics, the beautiful is prompted by the apprehension of the shape of an object as purposiveness without purpose (*Judgment* 105). Intricacy is evolution's driving force and includes behaviors and designs, such as the 228 muscles in the caterpillar's head, the six million leaves on a big elm, and the two million Henle's loops in the human nephron. Following Dillard's scientific examination of nature, even air and light are intricate because the world's weft is tangled and interconnected. With its unifying force, complexity allows humans to perceive how everything in nature is deeply interrelated with everything else. For instance, observing the tiny capillaries in the caudal fin of her goldfish Ellery Channing, Dillard comprehends the intrinsic complexity of the world because the blood flow inside the fish is the same mechanism at work in the human body and in plants. In fact, by changing the atom of iron in the hemoglobin molecule to an atom of magnesium, green chlorophyll is obtained. Therefore, as in Carlson's aesthetic theory (85), aesthetic appreciation of nature is heightened by scientific knowledge, because understanding biological and chemical processes intensifies the feeling of the beautiful caused by intricacy. Science shows how the whole landscape "consists in the multiple, overlapping intricacies and forms that exist in a given space at a moment in time. Landscape is the texture of intricacy […] Wherever there is life, there is twist and mess" (Dillard 126). This intricate beauty is a complex texture with imperfections and indented edges that resembles the concept of the sublime, thought of as exuberance without shapes. It is the mark of nature's fringed mystery, which could demonstrate the existence of a mysterious divine design that underlies the world. Intricacy is then the answer given by the *via positiva* to the sense of the actual world.

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The Sublime and Fecundity

The second part of *Pilgrim* develops the *via negativa*, or apophatic theology, according to which it is impossible to truly know God, since he transcends the limits of human comprehension. What apparently goes against morality and is characterized as pain, loss, and death, outlines a Creator who is totally other than human and who does not provide solace but terror. Even light, a conventional sign of God's presence, may blind the observer: "Darkness appalls and light dazzles; the scrap of visible light that doesn't hurt my eyes hurts my brain" (Dillard 33). Difficulties in seeing, caused by an excess or a lack of light, make the narrator perceive an invisible, unseen, and appalling presence. Another symbol of darkness is Shadow Creek, the cold subterranean stream that flows under Tinker Creek. By hindering a perfect vision, the reign of shadows becomes the reign of the sublime, which is a feeling higher than reason that represents the mystery of the Creator's presence (or absence). Instead of the sublime, Dillard resorts to the term 'horror' to qualify the grotesque and irrational side of nature. What is most terrifying in the environment is its fixity, its fecundity, and its violence, whose most significant exponents are insects. They constitute an unlimited, terrifying world of shapes and behaviors, as the author points out: "Fish gotta swim and bird gotta fly; insects, it seems, gotta do one horrible thing after another. I never ask why of a vulture or shark, but I ask why of almost every insect I see" (Dillard 65). The entire scheme of creation is apparently based on death, blind instinct, and parasitic nibbling. The most disturbing fact is that no veil covers these horrors. Therefore, training sight can carry negative implications as it enables the observer to notice previously ignored details. From the chapter "The Fixed" onward, the narrator becomes increasingly aware of the enormous number of insects that live at Tinker Creek, noticing oothecae (egg mass surrounded by froth) everywhere.

Nature's fixity is conceived as a terrifying stage between life and death that "assails us with the tremendous force of its mindlessness" (Dillard 69). It is represented by the enormous quantity of eggs and pulsing cocoons produced by insects' salivary glands. This unchanged and unchanging situation is even amplified by the irrational reproduction of individuals. During the regeneration of spores and the hatching of eggs in June, a living hell spreads out, because the fertile reproduction of insects is felt as an assault on human values. It is seen as a death anthem composed by a Creator who does not care for their own creatures' fate, allowing their endless multiplication and struggle for survival just for the sheer amusement of watching them die. The whole world is felt as an egg incubator, whose driving force is "the pressure of birth and growth […] that hungers and lusts and drives the creature relentlessly toward its own death" (Dillard 146). Death too is a symbol of the sublime, because it is a limit human knowledge cannot objectively overreach. Moreover, this conception of the world triggers the Kantian mathematical sublime (*Judgment* 131-34) because the intellect is incapable of conceiving an almost infinite number of creatures; even the narrator perceives herself as multi-layered and composed of legions of individuals. In front of this multitude of beings the experiencer comprehends both the infinite smallness of each individual and the common fate that links all creatures. Death casts doubt on human beings' supposed privileged status in creation, as Dillard rhetorically asks: "What if God has the same affectionate disregard for us that we have for barnacles?" (156). In a world ruled by chaos there is no difference between humans and barnacles, because everyone is going to die.

The reproductive pressure is also performed through the act of eating. Parasites are particularly feared because they carry out an attack on human health by silently devouring people from the inside. The chapter "The Horns of the Altar" presents a world nibbled by the

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universal chomp of parasites, the devil's *summa theologica* (Dillard 201): black leeches, flat worms infesting four hosts, cockroaches living on human skin, parasitic insects carrying parasites inside themselves, up to a parasitism of the fifth order. What is even more appalling is that ten percent of animal species are parasitic insects. This fact calls into question God's nature, as the narrator wonders: "What if you were an inventor, and you made ten percent of your inventions in such a way that they could only work by harassing, disfiguring, or totally destroying the other ninety percent?" (202). Fecundity and parasitism make God appear like a sadistic inventor of creatures destined to kill each other, in a world led by violence, terror, and hunger.

While the deadly threat involved in fecundity resembles the Kantian dynamic sublime (*Judgment* 143-48) because it expresses nature's power of destroying creatures, the overall sense of the sublime expressed in *Pilgrim* puts humans and nature in contact. Firstly, death links humans to all other creatures, as no one can escape from it: "We are escapees. We wake in terror, eat in hunger, sleep with a mouthful of blood" (Dillard 156). Furthermore, the feeling of being constituted by an infinity of organisms recalls the negation of one's individuality in the concept of the sublime outlined by Schopenhauer (226). Through the sublime, human beings remember themselves not as individuals but as a whole species, because they, now reduced to nothingness, merge with the environment. Thus, the sublime does not instill fear for one's destruction but it makes one lose individuality in nature. According to Hitt (611), a feeling of sublimity that does not elevate human reason over nature but that makes the experiencer an integrated part of the environment prepares the ground for an ecological sublime that raises awareness of nature's otherness. Thanks to the ecological sublime, nature is no longer considered *immoral*, but *moral-less* because the human concepts of right and wrong cannot be applied to it: "Although it is true that we are moral creatures in an amoral world, the world's amorality does not make it a monster," underlines Dillard (158). Nature is neither a mother nor a step-mother, as human moral concepts cannot be applied to nature, which is totally other from morality. Nature finally appears aesthetically beautiful, sublime, fascinating, and even grotesque, without contradicting human ethics.

The *Via Creativa* in Nature

Given the seemingly irreconcilable contrasts presented in the *via positiva* and the *via negativa*, Dillard proposes a third mystical and aesthetic path, which she implicitly takes, although she does not outline it explicitly. In "Nightwatch" she chooses neither the stony path nor the field, but she walks down a third route that leads to a new world. Smith (31) defines the meeting point of the apparent contradictions of the book the *via creativa*. As a spiritual and artistic journey, this was outlined by the theologian Matthew Fox (1983), taking his cue from Judeo-Christian tradition, Buddhism, Taoism, Native American religions and Wiccan movements. According to Fox, human beings can experience God through creative acts that enable them to be more receptive toward the outer world and discover their intrinsic connections with Mother Nature. Since God, nature, and the artist are linked by the same creative act, the third *via* can be found through the creation of new relationships with nature and the reiteration of its creative and organic processes by rearranging raw material under the operation of unknown powers (Edwards 4). Therefore, the final result cannot be predicted, as natural signs cannot be interpreted in an univocal way.

The images of the *via positiva*, such as nature's intricacy and beauty, and of the *via negativa*, such as the fixed and fecundity, are interpreted by the narrator as two sides of the

same coin, both being part of nature's wholeness. The most negative aspects have positive effects because "shadows define the real […] They give the light distance; they put it in its place" (64). Even the dark night, so disturbing in the *via negativa*, is understood as an awakening in "Northing." The dualisms outlined in *Pilgrim* are eventually perceived as the product of nature's creative activity. Thus, fecundity and pressure toward growth are just the dark side of intricacy; they compose the same picture, only with deeper shadows. Nature's freedom fosters beauty as well as horror; thus, the seemingly incompatible opposites are now engaged in a dialectical dialogue. A significant symbol of union is the green grasshopper from "Nightwatch," because this insect turns into the notorious locust—the symbol of the Biblical plague—during its migratory phase, unifying two dispositions in one body. Furthermore, several symbolical associations used in nature writing are subverted: spring, no longer the season of renewal, causes irritation after winter's stillness, while winter, no longer the season of death, represents the sacred beginning and end of Dillard's journey.

The conventional dualism between life and death acquires new tones. A single death must not be mourned because it is necessary for the perpetration of life. In fact, every creature has signed "a covenant to which every thing, even every hydrogen atom, is bound. The terms are clear: if you want to live, you have to die" (Dillard 161). Despite the bluntness of this statement, accepting death as part of nature's regeneration is the price to pay to enter the circle of life. Therefore, death, "the monster evolution loves" (Dillard 157), becomes the tool of creation, and fecundity is the tangible proof that nature's free creation cannot be stopped. Furthermore, the theme of eating and being eaten acquires a completely different meaning in the *via creativa*; it turns into an act of union with nature. Quoting an entry in Emerson's *Journal* about his dream of eating an apple-like world, Dillard declares that "The giant water bug ate the world" (237). No longer a nagging nightmare, the bug is now a metaphor for inclusiveness and acceptance. Beauty is no longer marked by perfection, but rather speckled and mutilated.

Because of nature's freedom, its interpretations are always multi-layered. Meanings become open-ended and even the primary symbol of mystical vision—the tree with the lights in it—must be called into question: "were the twigs of the cedar I saw really bloated with galls?" (Dillard 212), wonders the narrator, hypothesizing that the lights may just have been parasitic malformations. Freed from any conceptual constraint, nature changes and flows wild like Tinker Creek. Nature's freedom is then regarded as "the world's water and weather, the world's nourishment freely given, its soil and sap" (Dillard 125); it is the basis of evolution because everything can actually be created. Like its creation, the Creator is a free artist who never stops creating shapes and individuals. Therefore, the world is felt as "the fruit of the creator's exuberance that grew such a tangle, and the grotesques and horrors bloom from that same free growth" (Dillard 133). As beauty and horror sprout from the same creative act, they are equally necessary to the world and ever-changing.

Because of nature's intricate fecundity, *Pilgrim*'s nature is ruled by a "spendthrift economy; though nothing is lost, all is spent" (Dillard 67). Such fertile prodigality expresses nature's extravagant economy, the same economy that characterizes Thoreau's conception of nature (Grusin 45). Dillard too celebrates nature's exuberance, where no form is too grim and no behavior too grotesque; every organic compound is used to create new forms. Although in "Fecundity" the haunting shadow of death makes this system irrational, in the *via creativa* nature is again the free giver of gifts, aiming at spending all its energy. Hers is an extravagant fecundity, based on the intricacy of shapes. What was considered *too much* in "Fecundity" becomes *just right* in the *via creativa*. Therefore, beauty is wild, organic and unpredictable. Dillard's version of the *via creativa* represents a perfect instance of ecological aesthetics;

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therefore, the authentic and tangible beauty of the world is comprehended and experienced in nature, where "Waste and extravagance go together up and down the banks, all along the intricate fringe of spirit's free incursions into time" (Dillard 233). As a consequence, Dillard's aesthetic experience becomes her organic modality to shape a contact with nature and with its Creator. Discovering beauty and the sublime in the world, getting rid of human prejudices and morality, and giving up every individual drive enable human beings to experience mystical union with nature. At the end of the book the narrator turns into a maple key, gently pushed by the wind, totally included in the process of natural regeneration. The final union with the surrounding environment is allowed by the narrator's acquired ability to grasp nature's unity as well as its multiplicity. The horror of fecundity, the grotesque transformations of insects, shadows, and death become essential elements of the world's beauty. Thus, the human observer can understand the necessity of embracing nature's wholeness, although its multiplicity must always be acknowledged. By widening one's gaze and opening one's arms, it is possible to grasp the essence of nature, which is the place of differences, as well as the unified, beautiful, and whole place where all creatures, including human beings, live.

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El espíritu de Namsetoura y colonialidad de la naturaleza en Kamau Brathwaite

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Resumen

Las concepciones y prácticas culturales de la naturaleza que se observan en la representación del entorno geográfico y social del Caribe en la obra poética de Kamau Brathwaite (Barbados, 1930-) configuran un modelo local de naturaleza que responde a la pretensión de imponer un modelo único de modernidad promovido por la globalización contemporánea. En sus poemas, el lugar se configura mediante la oralidad de herencia africana que caracteriza las lenguas caribeñas, que depende de una fuerte conciencia espacial y le permite plasmar la presencia de las huellas culturales africanas en el territorio. En este artículo, proponemos ahondar en la importancia que la perspectiva ecológica cobra en su obra a la hora de construir la diferencia, destacando la manera en la que esa perspectiva medioambiental pone de manifiesto el valor político y epistemológico de Barbados, entendido como unas prácticas y relaciones implicadas en la producción de un complejo entramado global-local que opera en el sistema mundializado de poder. Para ello, abordaremos la perspectiva ecológica en la construcción de la isla caribeña que realiza en la segunda etapa de su obra desde los presupuestos planteados por el programa decolonial del grupo de Modernidad/Colonialidad, apoyándonos en las nociones de diferencia colonial y colonialidad de la naturaleza.

Palabras clave: Kamau Brathwaite, literatura caribeña, pensamiento caribeño, perspectiva decolonial, colonialidad de la naturaleza.

Abstract

Kamau Brathwaite's (Barbados, 1930-) depiction of the Caribbean geographical and social environment encompasses conceptions and cultural practices of nature that shape a local model of nature as a way to respond to the imposition by contemporary globalization of a single model of modernity. In his poems, place is reconfigured through the African-derived orality that characterizes Caribbean languages, which is dependent upon a spatial awareness, allowing him to capture the presence of the African cultural traces in the region. This article addresses the relevance the ecological perspective has in constructing difference in his work and the ways in which the environmental perspective highlights the political and epistemological value of Barbados, which is conceived as a set of practices and relations involved in the production of a complex global/local pattern operating in the world system of power. In order to do so, we will explore the ecological perspective in his depiction of the Caribbean island in the second stage of his work within the framework of the decolonial project promoted by the Modernity/Coloniality group of scholars, relying on the notions of colonial difference and coloniality of nature.

Keywords: Kamau Brathwaite, Caribbean literature, Caribbean thinking, decolonial perspective, coloniality of nature.

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Dialéctica de la marea y cartografía performativa del Caribe

La obra de Kamau Brathwaite (Barbados, 1930-) puede considerarse una cartografía performativa del Caribe que se produce mediante una forma de asignar espacialidad a la voz (Hitchcock 68), articulando un lenguaje con un fuerte sentido de oralidad mediante el cual poder plasmar la memoria de las huellas africanas de la región. Una de sus preocupaciones fundamentales es explorar y desarrollar un lenguaje, que ha denominado "lenguaje-nación", que dé expresión a la experiencia del paisaje y a las manifestaciones del acriollamiento característico de las historias humanas complejas del Caribe (DeLoughrey 270). El lenguaje-nación, como memoria creativa que recopila las huellas africanas del Caribe, posee un potencial subversivo que determina de manera significativa el sentido del lugar que emana de su poesía y contribuye a incorporar la inmediatez del entorno a la textura de los poemas (Hitchcock 66, 67). La oralidad que caracteriza el lenguaje-nación emana de lo que Brathwaite denomina *tidalectics*, resumido como "tidal dialectic" o "dialéctica de la marea" (Viala 99), el movimiento incesante de las mareas que, debido a que no regresan siempre al mismo punto de origen, describen espacialmente un movimiento en espiral permanente y siempre cambiante (Llenín-Figueroa 7). Al transformar el término *dialectics* en *tidalectics*, Brathwaite se distancia de la imaginación espacial que caracteriza a la conciencia colonizadora y racista de la dialéctica europea, particularmente la de la dialéctica Hegeliana, lo que le sirve para romper con la linealidad temporal y destacar los aspectos dinámicos, sónicos y performativos de la espacialidad (Reckin 1). Este concepto da lugar a una metáfora recurrente en su obra mediante la cual imagina un proceso de conexión e identificación entre África y el Caribe que le permite retomar, a nivel psíquico, la distancia entre el pasado y el presente, África y el Caribe, raíz y rizoma (Hitchcock 64).

Se pueden distinguir dos etapas o cosmologías en la obra poética de Brathwaite. En la primera etapa, el interés se centra en ahondar en el proceso de acriollamiento en el Caribe en el marco de la diáspora africana. Los poemas y ensayos de esta etapa se centran en el entorno geográfico y socio-cultural de Barbados y el Caribe insular para imaginar y reflexionar sobre un territorio cultural que se configura dentro del marco de las trayectorias de la diáspora africana. En la segunda etapa, que él denomina "creole cosmos", se observa un mayor interés por ubicar la región y el proceso de acriollamiento que la caracteriza en un marco más amplio e interconectado, adoptando una dimensión global. En su exploración de la identidad caribeña como parte del proceso de acriollamiento en esta segunda etapa, se incorporan elementos amerindios y europeos, además de africanos, lo que ayuda a relacionar y ahondar en los vínculos entre los procesos de acriollamiento y globalización (Otto 19-20) y en la manera en la que concibe la producción de la diferencia. Como intentaremos reflejar más adelante, la importancia que cobran la naturaleza y los ecosistemas de Barbados en su obra, se convierte, en esta segunda etapa, en una vía para poner de manifiesto los vínculos entre la diferencia ecológica, la diferencia económica y la diferencia cultural para la isla en el marco del sistema mundial de poder. Estas dos etapas presentan diferencias estilísticas a la hora

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de plasmar en el papel el lenguaje-nación que emana del sentido del lugar. La segunda etapa o cosmología se caracteriza por el uso y el desarrollo más extenso de un estilo visual que Brathwaite denomina *Sycorax video-style* (Otto 40-41), que puede entenderse como un experimento formal y temático que recoge una visión del mundo en la que el legado del colonialismo y el fenómeno de la esclavitud trasatlántica suponen una catástrofe o "dislocación del cosmos" con repercusiones de dimensiones cósmicas. La expresión de esa visión del cosmos dislocado y la representación en papel del lenguaje-nación pueden entenderse como una especie de reterritorialización del lenguaje, ya que conlleva rearticular el sonido y la visualidad de la lengua inglesa. Por ello, en el *Sycorax video-style*, los versos aparecen casi siempre fracturados por la puntuación, las divisiones y la manera espontánea o súbita de emplear las mayúsculas, y por los cambios del tipo de fuente empleada, lo que evidencia la relación que se establece entre el lugar, la poética del lugar que emana de él, y el espacio que ésta ocupa, de manera literal, en la hoja impresa (Hitchcock 65).

La segunda etapa de su obra incorpora una dimensión más personal e individual, al introducir unas trayectorias más vinculadas a lo privado y lo íntimo, derivadas de tres acontecimientos traumáticos en la vida del poeta que producen una "dislocación del cosmos a nivel individual" (Brathwaite, *MR* 235-236): la muerte de su primera mujer, la destrucción de su casa y archivo bibliográfico en Jamaica debido al huracán Gilbert de 1988, y el asalto y robo en su apartamento de Jamaica, donde casi muere a mano de los atracadores. Estas trayectorias vinculadas a lo privado y lo íntimo, sin embargo, continúan mostrando una especial sensibilidad al producto y la producción de la diferencia desde una perspectiva que pone en evidencia la subalternidad de seres, lugares y conocimientos. El desmoronamiento del cosmos colectivo debido al trauma histórico del colonialismo y del neocolonialismo presente desde el principio en su obra, encuentra, en esta segunda etapa, su reflejo en el desmoronamiento de un cosmos personal producido por el trauma de los tres acontecimientos mencionados anteriormente. De esta manera, el *video-style* se convierte en el vehículo de expresión más apropiado para una voz interior que nos relata el desbaratamiento de un cosmos personal pero que, al mismo tiempo, continúa siendo una voz colectiva (Collet 104).

Aunque la presencia del entorno natural siempre ha sido importante en la obra de Brathwaite, ésta cobra aún mayor relevancia en su segunda etapa, en los volúmenes de poesía de *Words Need Love Too* (2000) y *Born to Slow Horses* (2005), al comprar, a mediados de la década de los noventa, unos terrenos en una zona rural del sudeste de Barbados cercana al aeropuerto, que llamará CowPastor (Otto 216). La intención de Brathwaite para esos terrenos era abrir un instituto cultural para apoyar a jóvenes artistas locales y contribuir a la formación de comunidades autosuficientes en el plano económico e independientes en el plano cultural, y así hacer crecer las economías e instituciones culturales locales (Otto 7). Su concepción de la comunidad se corresponde con una comunidad de artistas caribeños que él mismo define como "my nation here–my maroon town, resistance palenque" ("Kamau Brathwaite and CowPastor", ctd. en Otto 217), por lo que consecuentemente, esos terrenos se convierten en algo más que simplemente un lugar para escribir. En los agradecimientos para *Words Need Love Too,*

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explica que la obra es resultado de la inspiración que le proporcionan los espíritus de CowPastor, lo que incluye su gente, sus presencias espirituales, la flora, la fauna y el mar, de manera similar a lo que había hecho en las primeras ediciones de sus obras anteriores, *Mother Poem*, *Sun Poem* y *X/Self*, y *Barabajan Poems*: "Acknowledgement & Thanks/ to the spirits of this pasture–birds, man/woman/ walking; in their Thyme Bottom homes;/ two tail bulls, cows, blackbelly sheep, insects/ & angels–sky, rain, dewdrops, dawn deep sunsets/ of the harmattan, the dunks; the sea/ always there" (n.p.).

La preocupación medioambiental en torno a CowPastor es una constante en *Words Need Love Too*, en donde el desarrollo turístico de la región del Caribe se convierte en símbolo de su dependencia neocolonial de occidente y en el principal causante de la destrucción de sus ecosistemas locales, medioambientales y culturales (Otto 221). Frente a estos acontecimientos, los poemas pueden concebirse como una forma de volver a dotar de vida aquellos lugares en los que el turismo ha tenido repercusiones destructivas, vinculando la sostenibilidad de la producción cultural a los imperativos ambientales y económicos (Carrigan 95), o en otras palabras, poniendo de relieve la estrecha relación existente entre las esferas de la producción cultural, el desarrollo económico y la protección ambiental. Para Brathwaite, la relación entre la literatura/escritura y el referente medioambiental que representa en el entorno natural es tan estrecha, que se puede considerar co-constitutiva: si uno de los elementos es destruido en la vida real, ambos se ven afectados y reducidos. En la entrevista que concede a McSweeney (2005), explica que aquellos lugares de Barbados que habían sido fuente de inspiración para los poetas locales, como él mismo, han sufrido una transformación profunda debido a la edificación excesiva que ha acarreado el turismo, y como consecuencia, los hoteles han pasado a ocupar "ilegalmente" el lugar que anteriormente ocupaban las metáforas en sus poemas.[1] Sin embargo, lo que resulta más significativo de la visión medioambiental en Brathwaite es que vincula la sostenibilidad de los planos económico, ecológico y cultural con la cuestión de la diferencia de una manera que nos ayuda a entender mejor su visión de la agencia subalterna frente a las políticas gubernamentales. En *The Namstoura Papers* (2005, 27), explica que, para las comunidades locales afrocaribeñas de Barbados, el desarrollo sostenible se basa en la creación de un sentido de comunidad que permita interrelacionarse y convivir con los demás. Para estas comunidades, el papel del gobierno de la isla en la producción y distribución de los recursos económicos, culturales y ecológicos para el país debe asegurar la creación de una sensación de comunidad:

> [They] want the Govt –like small black people all about–to develop the traditional community of Bdos in a coherent way …So that this community, this society, can benefit from order ly development based upon strong community in which people have a sense

[1] "In other words, Barbados as an island itself, it was such a beautiful place, not only CowPastor, I'm just a small example, but the entire island is being overrun by building, you know there's hardly any grass left. We don't feed ourselves anymore. We import everything—all our food, all our fuel, everything—and we're selling large chunks of land to wealthy foreigners, as well… For the native poet like myself, that is where the nostalgia comes from. All the places where my poetry came from have been taken over by hotels. And they now squat upon my metaphors" (McSweeney).

> of intimacy & a sense of inter-relationship with each other. (27; ortografía en el original)

La relación entre la sostenibilidad cultural, económica y medioambiental que se vislumbra a lo largo de la obra de Brathwaite, especialmente en esta segunda etapa, contribuye a ubicar esta región del Caribe en el marco del sistema mundial de poder y pone de relieve las cuestiones de diversidad, interculturalidad y convivialidad. En el poema "Esplanade Poem", se relata el encuentro entre dos turistas blancos que pasean por una playa de Barbados con cuatro trabajadores negros que se encuentran limpiando la playa. Esta imagen presenta el acto de limpiar la playa como una forma de seguir el movimiento constante de la marea, estableciendo un vínculo entre el paisaje y el proceso histórico, África, el Caribe, el presente y el pasado en forma de ritual:

> It might seem that the sand-sweepers's labour/ always is here. on this Sahara strip/ of the holiday Indies/ whe they must work every morning's worth/ (...) coming down from the BayLand (...)/ to this clear azure glitter of promise & salt liquid lips of/their wages speaking to them from spirits/ they don't even hear/ (Brathwaite, *Words Need Love Too* 44)

Brathwaite presenta a menudo el acto de barrer la arena acumulada en jardines o patios en diferentes poemas y ensayos en la imagen de una mujer anciana que, cada mañana, de manera ritual, barre la arena del jardín de su casa, y lo describe como "the movement of the ocean she's walking on, coming from one continent /continuum, touching another, and then receading ('reading') from the island(s) into the perhaps creative chaos of the(ir) future…" (Brathwaite, *Conversations* 34). En "Esplanade Poem", las trayectorias de los dos turistas blancos que caminan por la playa convergen, finalmente, con las trayectorias de los cuatro trabajadores que barren la playa, produciendo un lugar con un trasfondo histórico que evidencia el vínculo entre el colonialismo y la estructura de poder globalizado que continúa hoy en día ejerciendo su control sobre la isla. A través del movimiento de la dialéctica de la marea, como manifestación poética de la relación que mantienen los habitantes de Barbados con su entorno, vinculando paisaje, conciencia espacial y lenguaje, el poeta configura el paisaje y el entorno de la isla como escenario de vivencias cotidianas relacionadas con contextos mundiales. Al ubicar esta región del Caribe en el marco del sistema mundial de poder, se introduce la perspectiva epistémica alterna que la ubica como localización geopolítica y corpo-política del sujeto afro-barbadense en el marco del sistema mundial de poder y nos hace reflexionar sobre el reto de implicarnos en la vida de los otros:

> But in their different ways. different part-/ners of ways out here on this beach/ of the ages/ all two. four. six. teem of them. here & not here home/ & not home . criss-/crossing these ports & these tossed pages/ of history/ are walking their walk or sweeping the sand/ of the morning . re-/reading their childhood's last howl. their lost/ tropical passages/ hiding their hopes where their homes/ are. (Brathwaite, *Words Need Love Too* 4; ortografía en el original)

El espíritu de Namsetoura y la construcción de un modelo local de naturaleza

Al poco tiempo de haber comprado los terrenos, Brathwaite recibió la noticia de que el gobierno de Barbados planeaba remodelar la zona, incluyendo la construcción de una carretera que ofreciera un mejor acceso al aeropuerto, unos planes que calificó de

innecesarios y poco éticos. Su visión y rechazo al proyecto del gobierno se recoge en una carta abierta que se puede consultar desde la página de Internet que se abrió para reflejar su lucha por salvar los terrenos, y que incluye noticias, artículos, sugerencias y apoyo a CowPastor, llamada "Save CowPastor"[2] (Carrigan 79):

> the road here is unethical because of this and because it is an offence not only to the people who choose to live here, who are/were so fortunate to live here to love here–and dispossessed of pristine coral; thru no fault of their own, but via a willful remote control decision by Authorities too arrogant & high & mighty to discuss plans that involve all our futures fortunes w/us 'out here', who are still seen–MENTAL PLANTATION MENTAL SLAVERY–as chattel anti-heroes have no voice–cannot afford to be admitted to out voice. ("Kamau Brathwaite and CowPastor" N.P; énfasis en el original)

La objeción de Brathwaite a la construcción de una carretera nueva se centra en las repercusiones ecológicas, ya que el proyecto conlleva la transformación del paisaje y la destrucción de la fauna y la flora, debido a la desaparición de los pastos (Carrigan 79). Sin embargo, lo que en principio se puede concebir como una protesta en contra de las repercusiones ecológicas del desarrollo turístico para Barbados, denota una crisis generalizada más amplia, vinculando crisis cultural, económica y ecológica de forma que quedan indisolublemente entrelazadas, ya que parte de la relevancia del paisaje de CowPastor reside en su valor histórico: según Brathwaite, la arboleda que crece en ellos hubiera sido considerada sagrada en África en el pasado (Otto 221). En *The Namsetoura Papers* (38), publicado por primera vez en en *Hambone* 17 (2004) y accesible también en la página de Internet de "Save CowPastor" (2005), Brathwaite explica, además, que existen investigaciones arqueológicas que han identificado la plantación de Newton, próxima a CowPastor, como un cementerio de esclavos, por lo que para él, los pastos de CowPastor también habrían albergado un cementerio de esclavos en el pasado (Otto 225). En definitiva, la destrucción ecológica tiene unas repercusiones éticas, ya que inciden directamente sobre el modo de vida y la visión del mundo de las comunidades locales que residen en esa zona rural de Barbados. Ello enmarca la lucha de Brathwaite por CowPastor dentro de lo que se ha denominado la ecología política de la diferencia, ya que se identifica con un compromiso por la defensa del lugar en nombre de aquellas comunidades que habitan esta región del Caribe y que se sitúan:

> en contra de los aspectos destructivos de la globalización desde la perspectiva de lo que ellos han sido y de lo que son en el presente: sujetos históricos de culturas, economías y ecologías particulares; productores particulares de conocimiento; individuos y colectividades comprometidos con el juego de vivir en paisajes con los otros de manera específica. (Escobar, *Territorios* 23)

En este sentido, mediante la manifestación de una sensibilidad particular hacia los espíritus del pasado, la poesía de Brathwaite logra dotar de vida aquellos lugares del Caribe afectados por los planes de desarrollo turístico que priorizan el capital, transmitiendo historias e historicidad al paisaje (Carrigan 80). *The Namsetoura Papers* nos ayuda a completar la visión de la naturaleza de Brathwaite que se vislumbra en *Words Need Love Too*, ofreciéndonos una detallada descripción de los pastos de

[2] http://www.tomraworth.com/wordpress, ctd. en Carrigan 79.

CowPastor, que aparece como lugar espiritual en el que la fauna y la flora poseen una energía numinosa (Otto 222). Para ello, Brathwaite se vale de la figura de Nansetoura (posteriormente, Namsetoura), el espíritu de una esclava que habría residido en CowPastor, que aparece también en el poema "The Nansetoura of CowPastor" de *Words Need Love Too* y en su siguiente volumen de poesía, *Born to Slow Horses*. Cuando Brathwaite y su segunda mujer descubren los planes para construir la carretera que iba a atravesar CowPastor, en un principio se resignan a perder esos terrenos, por lo que el poeta comienza a crear un archivo fotográfico (Carrigan 80) como forma de preservar un entorno en peligro de desaparecer:

> we be-gin making an inventory of everything in our hearts as I had done those 100 years before when i know i would be leaving this same said eyeland for the first time & not knowing then that it wd be my last then I walk all the roads & beaches. thirsting up all our images in-to flute into metaphorical harp into what wd become the last will & testament. My hinterland. MotherPoem. SunPoem. BarabajanPoems. X/Self. (Brathwaite, *The Namsetoura Papers* 43; ortografía y puntuación en el original)

Cuando se disponía a sacar fotografías de CowPastor, Brathwaite descubre de manera fortuita la tumba de Namsetoura. En la escena que nos describe en *The Namsetoura Papers* (44-45), primero vislumbra una araña en su tela, a la que intenta fotografiar, pero no puede verla a través del visor de la cámara. Al intentarlo con dos cámaras más, éstas se estropean antes de poder sacar la foto y cuando finalmente lo consigue, no obtiene una foto de la araña, sino de la cara de la difunta esclava, que Brathwaite denomina Namsetoura[3], adaptando el nombre de Ananse (Otto 223), un espíritu de la cultura Akan de Ghana que ha pervivido en la cultura afrocaribeña y que continúa teniendo un significado numinoso:

> From what far coast of Africa to this brown strip/of pasture on this coral limestone ridge/cast up some three miles from the burning sea/the grave/hidden within the clump of prickly man/-peaba & red cordea trees & countless clammacherry/the spider warned me of her entry/tried to prevent my photograph/ruin three lenses brek down the hi-tec pentax/cameraderie/ i click the picture with a simple borrowed kodax/it burrowed through the dark & brought us this / past midnights with yr silent humming (Brathwaite, "The Nansetoura of CowPastor", *Words Need Love Too* 55; ortografía y puntuación en el original)

Brathwaite se vale de la figura de Namsetoura como forma de indagar en la manera en la que la esfera de lo visible interactúa con las corrientes invisibles de la memoria cultural y las circunstancias históricas. Ante la amenaza que supone la construcción de la carretera para CowPastor, el relato del descubrimiento imaginario de la tumba y del espíritu de Namsetoura le permite reconstruir un modelo de naturaleza en el que se incluye una puerta a una realidad mágica a través de la cual se puede acceder al

[3] El nombre de Nansetoura es una adaptación de Ananse, y Brathwaite lo emplea en el título del poema "The Nansetoura of CowPastor" en *Words Need Love Too*. Posteriormente, sustituirá la "n" por la "m", dando lugar a Namsetoura, que hace énfasis en el concepto de *nam* propuesto por él. Para Brathwaite, la herencia cultural africana proveniente de los esclavos en el período de la sociedad esclavista puede entenderse como una esencia y como un disfraz: "the mind maroons: the neo-mask: disguise of man" (Brathwaite, "Caribbean Culture" 36), refiriéndose a ella con el término de nam, que ha sido redefinido en varias ocasiones (Pollard 111): "DISGUISE OF MAN IS NAM: MAN BACKWARDS. Etymologically it is a root word (African and Oceanian and Amerindian and IndoEuropean) meaning root or core or spirit." (Brathwaite, "Caribbean Culture" 36-7; énfasis en el original).

imaginario caribeño (Otto 223). Esta visión del paisaje de Barbados, influida directamente por el pensamiento y la cultura afrocaribeña, se basa en una construcción particular del mundo que contrasta con aquella que realiza la modernidad capitalista dominante, y se asemeja a la que realizan muchas comunidades rurales del Tercer Mundo, que "'construyen' la naturaleza de formas impresionantemente diferentes a la formas modernas dominantes" (Escobar, "El lugar de la naturaleza" 71; comillas en el original). La concepción de la naturaleza de estas comunidades no se basa en la separación estricta entre naturaleza y cultura, por lo que suponen una forma de desafiar el binario naturaleza/cultura que ha sido, de hecho, formativo de la modernidad, del mismo modo que el binario "civilizado/otro" o "nosotros /ellos" (Escobar, *Más allá* 87). La noción esencialista de la naturaleza como salvaje y por fuera del dominio humano que se ha extendido con la modernidad la ha convertido en un objeto de dominación (Martínez 74, ctd. en Escobar *Territorios* 141), lo que ha propiciado una ofensiva del capital para apropiarse de los recursos naturales de todo el planeta y mercantilizarlos. Los modelos locales de naturaleza, como el que presenta Brathwaite en el caso de CowPastor, se construyen sobre los mapas nativos (no modernos) de lo social y lo biológico, que no pueden concebirse en términos de nuestros conceptos de la naturaleza, la cultura y la sociedad. Para muchos grupos indígenas y rurales, la cultura no pone a su disposición una cantidad particular de objetos con los que poder manipular la naturaleza, es decir, la naturaleza no se manipula (Strathern, ctd. en Escobar "El lugar de la naturaleza" 71). Estos modelos locales, en definitiva, conllevan unas prácticas locales de la naturaleza que se oponen a la separación entre los mundos naturales, humanos y supernaturales (71), configurando una compleja gramática del entorno imbuida en rituales, lenguajes y formas de clasificación de los seres naturales (Escobar, *Territorios* 25). Esta gramática del entorno constituye un código cultural para la apropiación del territorio, una apropiación que implica elaboradas formas de conocimiento y representaciones culturales de "un universo cognoscitivo original" (140).

La presencia de la esfera sobrenatural en esta segunda etapa de la obra de Brathwaite, que se manifiesta, principalmente, a través del espíritu de la esclava Namsetoura, no solo nos advierte de las consecuencias ecológicas de la destrucción de CowPastor, sino de la erosión de la memoria de la cultura afrocaribeña que ello conlleva. Como consecuencia, el plano de lo sobrenatural empuja al poeta a concebir el paisaje más allá de lo visible y a acudir a los archivos y materiales históricos, junto a las reconstrucciones imaginarias, para rearticular una concepción de CowPastor de forma estética (Carrigan 85). La continuidad entre las esferas del mundo biofísico, humano y sobrenatural en el modelo local de naturaleza de Brathwaite está culturalmente arraigada a través de símbolos, rituales y prácticas, como el movimiento de barrer la arena que refleja la dialéctica de la marea o el encuentro con Namsetoura, y se plasma en relaciones sociales que se diferencian del tipo moderno y capitalista y que abarcan más que a los humanos. De esta forma, los seres vivos, no vivos, y supernaturales no son vistos como entes que pertenecen a dominios distintos y separados y, por lo tanto, no responden a la división moderna de la naturaleza y la cultura (Escobar, "El lugar de la

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naturaleza" 71). Esta continuidad de los mundos biofísico, humano y sobrenatural debe entenderse como una forma de rechazar la separación entre naturaleza y cultura, teoría y práctica, o conocimiento y experiencia. Las concepciones modernas de la naturaleza dejan fuera el plano sobrenatural, separando tajantemente la teoría y la práctica, es decir, el conocimiento y la experiencia, por lo que no incluyen las manifestaciones de seres sobrenaturales (74), entendidas como construcción cultural. En "The Nansetoura of CowPastor", el espíritu de Namsetoura se convierte en el vínculo entre el conocimiento afrocaribeño de la naturaleza y la experiencia de la misma, recordándonos la continuidad de la mente, el cuerpo y el mundo. En el poema, Namsetoura pide que la experiencia del lugar de CowPastor se escriba "en el cuerpo" y nos recuerda la necesidad de preservar dicho lugar más allá de su biodiversidad, como lugar que alberga unas presencias que mantienen vivo el recuerdo de las huellas africanas: "You think they dispossesing you? (…)/(…)You say you writin poem about/slave (…)/ But looka yu dough nuh! (…)/Write this in flesh before the next red season brunn/(…)/Write it in my body berry burnin coal/" (Brathwaite, *Words Need Love Too* 56). La figura de Namsetoura transmite un mensaje acerca del valor epistemólogico y político de CowPastor, al vincular la perspectiva ecológica y la diferencia cultural para Barbados con el fenómeno de la colonialidad presente en las prácticas coloniales y neocoloniales de expansión capitalista. La manera en la que el desarrollo turístico en la isla incide en sus esferas económica, cultural y ecológica, impone una dependencia de las potencias occidentales que conlleva la imposición de un modelo único de modernidad. Frente a estos procesos de modernización hegemónica, la presencia del espíritu de Namsetoura o los rituales y relaciones con el entorno que nos presentan los limpiadores de la playa en "Esplanade Poem", reflejan una concepción del lugar que constituye una forma de cuestionar la visión de la isla como territorio que puede ser explotado en favor de la expansión del capital. La perspectiva ecológica que nos presenta Brathwaite se acerca a aquellas formas de ecología política que, al poner el énfasis en la producción de la diferencia, nos llevan a adoptar una posición ética, debido, principalmente, a que:

> implican un cuestionamiento epistémico de la modernidad y el desarrollo que apuntan a las definiciones básicas de vida. Al privilegiar los conocimientos subalternos de lo natural, estas ecologías políticas articulan cuestionamientos únicos de la diversidad, la diferencia y la interculturalidad con la naturaleza como agente central. (…) La "sustentabilidad" puede convertirse, entonces, en un proyecto descolonial: pensando desde las formas existentes de alteridad hacia mundos y conocimientos de otro modo. (Escobar, *Territorios* 172)

Colonialidad de la naturaleza en *Words Need Love Too* y *Born to Slow Horses*

La perspectiva ecológica en la visión de Barbados que nos presenta Brathwaite, en definitiva, pone en evidencia su "diferencia colonial", un concepto que incorpora tres rúbricas interrelacionadas: la diferencia económica, cultural y ecológica (Escobar, *Territorios* 29). Los conceptos de colonialidad y diferencia colonial surgen en el seno del "proyecto decolonial" y del grupo de investigadores latinoamericanos denominado Modernidad/Colonialidad (M/C). Recientemente, han surgido voces en el seno de este grupo que han propuesto ahondar más en aquellos ámbitos que no han sido

suficientemente desarrollados por su programa de investigación, como son la perspectiva de género, las economías alternativas y la perspectiva de la ecología política. Es el caso de Arturo Escobar, que considera que se debe ahondar en la manera en la que el patrón de poder colonial actúa sobre la naturaleza (Cajigas-Rotundo 169). Estas nuevas aportaciones pueden ayudarnos a entender mejor la manera en la que la perspectiva de la ecología política se relaciona con la diversidad, al hacer énfasis en el concepto de diferencia colonial.

Para el grupo M/C, el colonialismo puede concebirse como "una relación política y económica, en la cual la soberanía de un pueblo reside en el poder de otro pueblo o nación" (Maldonado-Torres 131), mientras que la colonialidad consistiría en:

> un patrón de poder que emergió como resultado del colonialismo moderno, pero que en vez de estar limitado a una relación formal de poder entre dos pueblos o naciones, más bien se refiere a la forma como el trabajo, el conocimiento, la autoridad y las relaciones intersubjetivas se articulan entre sí, a través del mercado capitalista mundial y de la idea de raza. (131)

En otras palabras, el fin del colonialismo en sus aspectos formales, explícitos y políticos no significa que la estructura colonial del poder haya desaparecido. Al contrario, la colonialidad continúa vigente hoy en día como un marco estructural de poder dentro del cual operan las relaciones sociales, a manera de construcciones intersubjetivas de dominación, produciendo una serie de discriminaciones sociales que han sido codificadas como raciales, étnicas, antropológicas o nacionales por la hegemonía eurocentrada y explicadas como fenómenos naturales y, por lo tanto, como algo dado y no susceptible de ser cuestionado, en vez de productos de la historia del poder (Quijano 94). Para entender mejor la manera en la que opera la colonialidad, el grupo M/C introduce otra categoría de análisis clave para el proyecto decolonial, la de "colonialidad del poder", entendida como "un patrón de poder global de relaciones de dominación/explotación/confrontación en torno al trabajo, la naturaleza, el sexo, la subjetividad y la autoridad" (Restrepo y Rojas 131). La colonialidad del poder produce, en distintas épocas, un diferencial de poder, denominado "diferencia colonial", que marca "la falta y los excesos de las poblaciones no europeas" (Mignolo, "Un paradigma otro" 27), y que se enmascaran y venden como "diferencias culturales" para, precisamente, ocultar ese diferencial de poder (27). La diferencia colonial nos ayuda a entender que el poder que se ha ejercido sobre los espacios físico-geográficos, los suelos, los recursos naturales, flora y fauna en el marco del proyecto de la modernidad, también abarca los cuerpos humanos subalternizados por la dominación, que puede considerarse un biopoder (Alimonda 52). La relación entre diferencia colonial y colonialidad de la naturaleza se establece mediante la concepción de este biopoder que localiza ciertas naturalezas (naturalezas coloniales/tercermundistas, cuerpos de las mujeres, cuerpos oscuros) en la exterioridad de la Totalidad del mundo eurocéntrico masculino (Escobar, *Más allá* 87-88). En definitiva, la colonialidad de la naturaleza en una región particular se concibe como la manera en la que el pensamiento hegemónico global y las élites de dicha región producen un espacio subalterno que puede ser explotado, arrasado y reconfigurado en cuanto a su realidad biofísica, lo que por un lado incluye la flora,

fauna, los habitantes humanos y la biodiversidad de los ecosistemas, y por otro, su configuración territorial, es decir, "la dinámica sociocultural que articula significativamente esos ecosistemas y paisajes" (Alimonda 22). Si la diferencia colonial "resalta las diferencias culturales en las estructuras globales de poder" (Escobar, *Más allá* 35), la perspectiva de la colonialidad de la naturaleza pone en evidencia la manera en la que las diferencias ecológicas en esas estructuras globales de poder están imbricadas con las diferencias culturales (Alimonda 22).

En *Born to Slow Horses*, Brathwaite continúa desarrollando los vínculos entre los procesos naturales y culturales, convirtiendo la meteorología y la geografía, como componentes de la naturaleza, en metáforas de los procesos históricos (Otto 233). En el tercer poema de la primera sección del volumen, titulado "Guanahani", en referencia al nombre de una de las islas Bahamas, la voz poética se ubica en el contexto de la colonización colombina del Caribe, a la vez que se nos describe la geografía mundial posterior a los acontecimientos del once de septiembre de 2001, como recoge el subtítulo del poema: "flying over the Bahamas 12 oct 1492 on AS 016 over the US Easter Seaboard of Gauguin of Afghanistan 11:19am/w/the pilot beaming us the news that the cold front from the North we are leaving is following us South bringing this kind of history" (Brathwaite, *Born to Slow Horses* 7). El poema continúa describiendo el mapa de la política mundial que se desarrolla bajo sus pies, reflexionando sobre la manera en la que los eventos mundiales, como los atentados del once de septiembre de 2001, trazan trayectorias que vinculan la historia de las Américas con Asia central (Otto 233):

> Now we are somewhere over Central Turkey/(…)thinking of Central Asia. Ozzajistan. Tajikstan. Afghanistan. The mos/beautiful cruel landscapes in the World. (…)/and now their bearded warriors. drugged. handcuffed. shaved. blind-/folded over the Caspian over Mt Blanc over the white cell blocks of the Alps/the Atlantic where we are now flying/& be landed at Guantánamo Américano of all places/unplacated in cages/their heads & faces. their full souls & bodies. xpose to the weather. not/even like horses or cattle w/out rights against torture (Brathwaite, *Born to Slow Horses* 10-11; ortografía y puntuación en el original)

El vuelo que describe la voz poética cartografía un mapa de la situación política mundial que revela las conexiones existentes entre diferentes experiencias históricas y lugares subalternos de enunciación. Esta forma de solapar presente y pasado resalta la manera en la que la matriz colonial de poder ha recurrido, en diferentes momentos del transcurso de la modernidad occidental, a etiquetas para designar a aquellos que cuestionan la retórica del desarrollo y actúan sobre él, a modo de respuesta frente a los diseños globales (Mignolo, *Darker Side* 282), ya sea como bárbaros, primitivos, comunistas en una etapa posterior de cosmopolitismo secular o terroristas en una etapa actual de globalismo económico (278). En el poema, la imagen de Estados Unidos como una de las principales potencias globales imperiales, se presenta como un "frente frío" que se desplaza hacia al sur, hasta Guantánamo, descrito como un lugar expuesto a un clima imprevisible y a legislación aleatoria, y que llega a envolver todo el planeta (Otto 233). Para Brathwaite, la violencia terrorista proveniente de Asia emerge en un contexto de respuesta al patrón de poder colonial que, al igual que en la colonización de las Américas, ejerce su control mediante lo que Maldonado Torres denomina la "no-ética de

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la guerra". Durante la conquista de las Américas, los cristianos no aplicaron el código ético que regulaba su comportamiento en sus reinados (Todorov 144-5, ctd. en Maldonado-Torres 137), sino un conjunto de prácticas destinadas a perpetuar la conquista que se van transformando y adaptando con el transcurso de la modernidad durante los siglos posteriores hasta hoy en día. En esta visión de la modernidad como conquista perpetua que nos presenta Maldonado-Torres:

> cualquier acecho o amenaza, en la forma de guerras de descolonización, flujos migratorios acelerados o ataques "terroristas," entre otros acechos al orden geo-político y social engendrado por la modernidad europea (y continuado hoy por el proyecto "americano" de los Estados Unidos), hace movilizar, expandir y poner en función el imaginario racial moderno, para neutralizar las percibidas amenazas o aniquilarlas. (Maldonado-Torres 140; comillas en el original)

Abordar la visión del entorno geográfico y social de Barbados que nos presenta Brathwaite mediante las categorías analíticas del proyecto decolonial requiere acudir a una genealogía que se remonta a la diversidad del pensamiento planetario decolonial y no solo a la teoría posestructuralista a la que recurren los estudios poscoloniales anglosajones. El análisis decolonial nos ayuda a entender que la conexión entre el imperialismo de los siglos anteriores con los procesos actuales de globalización y colonialismo que se señalan, por ejemplo, en "Guanahani", forman parte del proceso mediante el cual la diferencia colonial, que se remonta a la colonización de América Latina y el Caribe por las primeras potencias europeas (España y Portugal) entre los siglos XVI y XIX en el contexto de la primera modernidad, se ha transformado en colonialidad global (Mignolo, "Un paradigma otro" 24). Su visión de Barbados va más allá de la reflexión sobre la herencia colonial que supuso la esclavitud atlántica en la isla, ya que establece vínculos entre diferentes etapas de la modernidad, como la colonización de las Américas y el Caribe hispano en el siglo XVI o Afganistán en el siglo XXI, ofreciendo una perspectiva global de la racialización de los lugares, seres y conocimientos que ha acontecido bajo el dominio de la matriz colonial de poder. Desde esta perspectiva, su construcción de la subjetividad negra y del espacio de la isla no apela a "unas atávicas puridades indígenas y afrodescendientes desde una especie de nativismo epistémico y culturalista" (Restrepo y Rojas 221), sino más bien a la necesidad de acoger una diversidad epistémica, ubicando la isla en el entramado global y sumándose a la densa historia del pensamiento planetario decolonial. La conciencia espacial que conlleva el lenguaje-nación le permite cartografiar la colonialidad global del presente, respondiendo a la espacialización de la colonialidad del ser y del saber que ha acontecido a Barbados y la región del Caribe, trazando nuevos mapas en los que se trazan nuevos vínculos. "Guanahani" constituye un ejemplo de cómo se configura un nuevo mapa del presente en el que las islas del archipiélago caribeño constituyen un nuevo principio en la construcción de modelos alternativos al impuesto por la modernidad hegemónica:

> Lucaya Abacos Andros & now Eleuthera comes into view/coral necklaces writing on the water/(...)/and now it begins to get very green/like the first ever light which will be Guanahani. a light / you have nvr seen before (...)/and soon is Jamaica/the crinkle of Bogle of Marcus of Marley of Cockpits/the great heavy Bloom/of the mountains. the anvil

> awaiting its sunlight. the singing/ (Brathwaite, *Born to Slow Horses* 12, 14; ortografía y puntuación en el original)

Conclusiones

En esta segunda etapa de su obra, Brathwaite articula de manera significativa los ecosistemas y paisajes de Barbados como forma de construir un modelo local de naturaleza, y recurre a la carta protesta en contra de la construcción de la carretera que destruirá CowPastor, o a la presencia de espíritus de esclavos africanos que habitan el paisaje de esos pastos para poner de relevancia la historia de la isla desde las perspectivas de las relaciones sociedad-naturaleza. Ello le permite reconstruir un mundo local y regional de una forma más sostenible, en donde la biodiversidad ya no es vista solo desde la perspectiva de la conservación, sino como un asunto cultural, y no como algo descontextualizado del medio. Esta visión de la isla caribeña incluye, por lo tanto, una definición de biodiversidad entendida como "territorio más cultura", cuyas coordenadas quedan enmarcadas en una unidad ecológica y cultural que constituye "un espacio laboriosamente construido a través de prácticas cotidianas culturales, ecológicas y económicas" que apunta hacia la construcción de modelos alternativos de vida y sociedad (Escobar, "El lugar de la naturaleza" 78). La perspectiva ecológica en su obra pone de manifiesto un posicionamiento ético sobre la naturaleza, la vida y el planeta que cuestiona y reescribe la modernidad y el desarrollo "desde otro lugar", impulsando una visión de la diversidad cultural que conduce a un proyecto basado en la convivialidad y la hospitalidad, lo que contribuye a desplazar el universalismo abstracto que se esconde detrás de la imposición de una única historia local a partir de la cual se crea e imagina el sistema mundial moderno/colonial (Mignolo, "Un paradigma otro" 92). Al privilegiar los conocimientos subalternos afrocaribeños de lo natural, la obra de Brathwaite nos presenta una forma de abordar las cuestiones de diversidad cultural, diferencia e interculturalidad en el marco del sistema mundial moderno/colonial que pone en evidencia la diferencia colonial para Barbados, constituida por la diferencia económica, la diferencia cultural, y la diferencia ecológica, en donde la naturaleza ocupa un lugar fundamental, de actor y agente. En otras palabras, la reconfiguración del espacio de la isla en su obra mediante la rearticulación de paisajes y ecosistemas incide especialmente en la importancia de promover dinámicas socioculturales que impulsen la convivencia y la colaboración, como una forma de asumir e integrar las diferencias coloniales. Lo que destaca de esa idea de convivencia es que no se limita a los vínculos territoriales, ya que la espacialidad que se plasma en su mapa de Barbados y que se extiende al resto del Caribe insular, se configura mediante unas trayectorias en un sistema mundializado de poder que señalan unos posicionamientos éticos, emociones y lealtades que no se pueden explicar únicamente mediante los vínculos exclusivamente territoriales, sino más bien recurriendo a la idea de conectividad que nos presenta Massey (187-188), es decir, prestando atención al papel que juega la conexión a la hora de negociar la diferencia en el marco de un mundo interconectado.

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On the Death of Plants: John Kinsella's Radical Pastoralism and the Weight of Botanical Melancholia

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Abstract

Through the poetry of Australian writer and activist John Kinsella (b. 1963), this article emphasizes the actual, embodied—rather than metaphorical—dimensions of the death of plants vis-à-vis the pressing international context of accelerating botanical diversity loss (Hopper) and the anthropogenic disruption of floristic communities globally (Pandolfi and Lovelock). On many levels—scientific, ecological, social, metaphysical—a fuller appreciation of plant life necessitates an understanding of their decline, decay, and demise. Toward a more nuanced appreciation of plant lives, the discussion draws a distinction—but aims to avoid a binary—between *biogenic* and *anthropogenic* instances of plant-death. Considering the correlation between vegetal existence, human well-being, and our co-constituted lives and deaths, I assert that a more encompassing and ecoculturally transformative outlook on plants involves not only an acknowledgement of their qualities of percipient aliveness but also a recognition of their senescence and perishing. Kinsella's poetry reflects such themes. His *botanical melancholia* derives from the gravely fragmented locus of his ecological consciousness: the ancient, native plantscape existing as small, disconnected remnants within the agro-pastoral wheatbelt district of Western Australia. Consequently, rather than a marginal occurrence in his work, plant-death is essential to Kinsella's enunciation of a form of Australian radical pastoralism. His poetry provides a counterforce to the idyllic textualization of botanical nature as existing in an unimpacted Arcadian state of harmony, balance, and equitable exchange with the built environment (Kinsella, *Disclosed* 1–46).

Keywords: Australian poetry, John Kinsella, critical plant studies, radical pastoralism

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Resumen

A través de la poesía del escritor y activista australiano John Kinsella (1963), este artículo hace hincapié en las dimensiones reales, en vez de metafóricas, de la muerte de las plantas frente al apremiante contexto internacional de acelerar la pérdida de diversidad botánica (Hopper) y la alteración antropogénica de las comunidades florísticas a nivel mundial (Pandolfi y Lovelock). En muchos niveles, científico, ecológico, social-metafísico, una apreciación más completa de la vida vegetal requiere una comprensión de su declive, decadencia y desaparición. Hacia una apreciación más matizada de las vidas de las planta, el debate suscita una distinción, pero tiene como objetivo evitar un dualismo, entre ejemplos *biogénicos* y *antropogénicos* de muertes de plantas. Teniendo en cuenta la correlación entre la existencia vegetal, el bienestar humano, y nuestras vidas y muertes co-constituidas, afirmo que una perspectiva más abarcadora y transformadora eco-culturalmente sobre las plantas implica no sólo un reconocimiento de sus cualidades de vitalidad perspicaz sino también un reconocimiento de su senectud y ruina. La poesía de Kinsella refleja este tipo de temas. Su *melancolía botánica* deriva del locus seriamente fragmentado de su conciencia ecológica: el paisajismo vegetal antiguo y nativo que existe como restos pequeños, desconectados dentro del distrito agropastoral del cinturón-de-trigo de Australia Occidental. En

consecuencia, en lugar de un mínimo hecho en su obra, la muerte de la planta es esencial para la enunciación de Kinsella del pastoreo radical australiano. Su poesía proporciona un como un contrapeso a una textualización idílica de la naturaleza botánica que existe en un estado arcádico e inmaculado de armonía, equilibrio, e intercambio equitativo con el entorno construido (Kinsella, *Disclosed* 1–46).

Palabras clave: poesía australiana, John Kinsella, estudios críticos de la planta, pastoreo radical.

Where the almond tree died, so died the wattle.
That parabola can take no life for long. If borers
are below the surface,
they will move on. They have killed the already dead.
When the last leaves fell they flagged independence:
thin acacia leaf became the hearted leaf
of the almond: it all added up in going.

-John Kinsella
"Where the Almond Tree" (*Armour* 29, ll. 1–7)

Introduction: Shades of Plant Life and Death

Without a doubt, many of us as children or adults have formed potent bonds to the botanical world and have mourned the passing of cherished plants. Nonetheless, few of us—except for perspicacious botanical writers like Henry David Thoreau, Richard Mabey, and others—have substantively engaged with the intricacies of vegetal lives and deaths apart from their emotional, decorative, scientific, or utilitarian importance. Why does a tree, shrub, or herbaceous plant die? And when should the death of a plant matter to us? These questions embody divergent—though not mutually exclusive—aspects of mortality in the vegetal kingdom. To begin with, it is necessary to disentangle the knottiness of plant-death. Let me refer to one form as *biogenic* death. This entails the material decay and demise of plants: the withering of leaves, rotting of roots, shedding of bark, and falling of limbs as ecological occurrences implicated in the regeneration of biospheric systems and the proliferation of obligate species (Van der Valk). The second form could be called *anthropogenic* death: the felling of trunks, poisoning of rhizomes, and destruction of floristic enclaves as acts of botanical negligence or "ecocide" promulgated by humans (White and Heckenberg 115). Whether anthropogenic or biogenic, plant-death signifies the end of a single vegetal life, the demise of a floristic collective, or the farther-reaching cessation of a botanical species as the genetic matrix making possible the generation of plants. In the harrowing context of the Anthropocene (Steffen, Crutzen and McNeill), the Sixth Extinction (also known as the Holocene Extinction) (Kolbert), and anthropogenic climate change (Parmesan and Hanley), both forms of plant-death take on an eerie significance.

According to *The State of the World's Plants Report*, one in five (or approximately twenty-one percent of), plant species on earth is presently regarded by scientists as

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nearing extinction (Kew 3). Yet, only five percent of plants across the globe have been assessed for extinction, suggesting a potentially much higher actual percentage of species facing a complete end. The tragic irony is that, despite increasing threats to botanical taxa and communities the world over, researchers continue to identify previously unclassified plants on an annual basis. For instance, in 2015, two-thousand-and-thirty-four new vascular plant species were registered in the International Plant Names Index (Kew 10), leaving us to speculate about the species already lost to the scientific record, and those that will be. Moreover, whether biogenic or anthropogenic, vegetal death can spur resonances within human subjects in the wake of plants ceasing to live. Emotive responses of grief, mourning, and melancholia intertwine with symbolic nodes of attachment to the natural world. One possibility of the metaphorization of nature is plant-death standing in for something other than itself: the ultimate finitude of the human condition or the entropic decay of society, relations, love, knowledge, idealism, potentiality, or the future itself.

Regarding the poetic history of death in the plant kingdom, consider, for instance, the rhetorical timbres of Walt Whitman's meditation on death, "Scented Herbage of My Breast," a poem in which he addresses the rhizomatous sweet flag (*Acorus calamus*) as a plant persona: "You are often more bitter than I can bear, you burn and sting me, / Yet you are beautiful to me you faint tinged roots, you make me / think of death, / Death is beautiful from you, (what indeed is finally beautiful / except death and love?)" (Whitman, ll. 14–18). Notwithstanding gestures of empathic identification with the calamus, the poem obscures the real life and death of the plant through the rhetorical appropriation of its vegetality for sentimental reflection. Also suggestive of the metaphorization of plant-death is American Romantic poet William Cullen Bryant's "The Death of the Flowers" (Bryant 101–102). The poem opens with the line "The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year" (Bryant 101, l. 1), enumerating in the third stanza the violets, roses, orchids, golden rods, asters, sunflowers, and other flowers that are "in their graves" during the saddest season (l. 14). Through the contemporary example of Kinsella's botanical imagination, I emphasize plant-death absent of metaphoric totalization and in its manifold sensory and ecological impact—with passing reference to plant-death, in contrast, as an object of melancholic identification or as a rhetorical device deployed by poets, such as Whitman, through the ages.

To be sure, the questions of when and why a plant dies are rendered complex by the biological capacity of plants for adaptation through plurality—their innate predisposition toward "being singular plural" (Nancy). A salient example is the gargantuan trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) colony known as Pando—adopted from the Latin term for "I spread"— identified in 1968 by forest ecologist Burton Barnes and later characterized by geneticists as the world's largest organism (DeWoody et al.; Rogers). *P. tremuloides* is notable for reproducing vegetatively through root sprouting, or suckering, enabling the formation of genetically identical stems, known as ramets, constitutive of one ancient, sprawling, but living (not fossilized) plant. The forty-seven-thousand stems of the Pando clonal colony register at approximately thirteen million pounds. What's more, the organism encompasses one-hundred acres in the western U.S.

state of Utah; and scientific estimates of its age range wildly from eighty-thousand to one million years old. In this instantiation of vegetal longevity and resilience, the death of a single aspen tree—as we recognize it visually—need not signify the demise of the entire clonal system. As a result of its persistence for millennia by virtue of a tenacious root system, Pando seems at once inconceivable, limitless, and immortal from a narrow human temporal perspective. Nonetheless, empirical studies indicate that the intensive grazing of domestic and wild herbivores in conjunction with prolonged drought conditions have led to a pronounced absence of young ramets and the senescence of the Pando colony (Rogers).

The clonal propagation of *P. tremuloides* ensures that the loss of an individual aspen's life is not likely to precipitate the demise of the colony. Whereas the Pando epitomizes this systemic capacity, in other instances plants display the uncanny aptitude to return from the brink of ordinarily death-dealing conditions, specifically drought and dehydration. This is acutely so for *resurrection plants*—a small grouping of species that occur globally and can survive complete desiccation, resuming normal physiological function when rehydrated. Although the exact mechanism of their reverting metabolic arrest has not been fully identified, a subset of resurrection plants, characterized as *poikilochlorophyllous*, make use of protein-mediated biochemical pathways to disassemble their chloroplasts and degrade their chlorophyll, which are then resynthesized during rewetting (Challabathula, Puthur and Bartels). A well-known example, the rose of Jericho (*Selaginella lepidophylla*), a species native to the Chihuahua Desert of the United States and Mexico, returns to green approximately twenty-four hours after rehydration as photosynthesis and respiration recommence normal levels (Lambers, Chapin and Pons 213). In biodiverse Western Australia, the pincushion lily (*Borya nitida*)—the subject of Kinsella's poem "Resurrection Plants at Nookaminnie Rock" (*Armour* 53)—withstands dehydration to below five percent of its typical leaf moisture content, as signaled by the orange color of the leaves that revert to green within a day of receiving rain (Hopper, Brown and Marchant). Resurrection plants exemplify the courting death by paring down—then resuscitating—physiological processes in correspondence to fluctuating ecological circumstances.

In contradistinction to these plants and the Pando, other expressions of plant mortality entail the cessation of vegetal lives deprived of their intrinsic right to exist and flourish independently of human directives. Anthropogenic in origin, such deaths derive less from environmental circumstances and more from human negligence, the absence of an ethics of care, distorted modernist visions of progress, myopic anti-environmentalist attitudes, and pervasive misconceptions about the ways flora adapts to stress over time. A story from a Perth, Australia, newspaper captures the harsh finality of careless human-spurred plant death as well as the response of outrage that can ensue once botanophilic ("plant loving") members of the community become aware of local plant-related injustices. The government agency, Main Roads WA, which manages the implementation of policies on road access in Western Australia, chainsawed a healthy jarrah tree (*Eucalyptus marginata*) showing faint indications of decay. Estimated at between five-hundred and one-thousand years in age, the specimen's final transgression

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was its harboring of a supposedly dangerous beehive. As a result, Main Roads deemed the jarrah a public hazard and furtively targeted the tree for removal. A prominent botanist, Hans Lambers, interviewed about the travesty likened the felling of the jarrah to "ecological vandalism" and "burning the Mona Lisa" (qtd. in Young).

Indeed, the massive eucalypt was one of only thirteen remaining in the Swan Coastal Plain of Perth—an area noted for biodiversity but which has lost approximately seventy percent of its native plants since European colonization in the early nineteenth century (Seddon). This is the broader biogeographical and biopolitical context in which Kinsella's radical pastoralism is situated and provoked. The impetus of the government agency could have been to incite—through the indiscretely public and brashly cruel gesture of the tree's felling—the removal of native vegetation to open the way for the controversial Roe 8 highway development project (Rethink the Link). In this instance, the death of the jarrah mattered, on the one hand, to a government bureaucracy because the colossal specimen posed a physical and symbolic impediment to the capitalistic drive and, on the other hand, to local conservationists who recognized the age, size, stature, rarity, endemism, and ecological function of the tree. For the latter group, the decaying appearance of the jarrah signified its potential to nourish the well-being of other species, as Lambers relates, but within the definitiveness of its death echoes the stark absence of an irreplaceable ecological presence: "half-dead trees and trees with dead branches with hollows provide important nesting space for our parrots and cockatoos" (qtd. in Young). In addition to provoking ethical deliberation on plant-death, the story of the jarrah underscores the question of temporality: given the peculiar ontological modes of the vegetal—its uncanny capacity to integrate death into its being—when does life in the the botanical kingdom actually cease? For Michael Marder, the consideration of plant-death is reflective of the "decentralized and nonorganismic" nature of vegetable existence. The event of death does not consolidate the decentralized plant subject into a perceptibly dying organism (like an animal in the throes of death, eyes rolling back and breath sputtering) nor does it bring about the end of life for plants with comparable finality as death rendered for the animal (Marder, *The Philosopher's Plant* 187).

> […] Diggings
> around termite scaffolding at the foot
> of died-and-reborn York gums. Roots.
>
> The dead have been gathering.
> And, to be frank, accruing.
> They are phenomenally heavy,
> like self-doubt or self-belief. (Kinsella, "Harsh Hakea [or Elements of the Subject's Will]" 132, ll. 9–15)

Toward a Philosophy of Plant-Death: Modularity, Desire, Dignity

Whereas the death of animals has been debated in the field of *critical animal studies* (CAS) (Taylor and Twine), the death of plants has been treated as a tangential

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event in posthumanist and ecocritical studies. After all, if a plant is construed as lacking percipient sentience—and is, thus, inferior to animals and humans in the great chain of being—then its death should matter to us neither personally, socially, nor intellectually. On a functional level, plants are the nuisances we eradicate (weeds) or the nutriment we consume (fruits, vegetables, herbs) on a regular basis: their deaths make life (and the pleasure of living) possible. In contrast to this utilitarian perspective, my intention in this article is to invigorate a consideration of these nuances through the poetry of John Kinsella; and to position poetry as a vital medium for enunciating the lives of silent, sessile non-humans beyond the use-value of their deaths. Not merely a symbol of human mortality or social decline, plant-death is the immanent, embodied expression of vegetative ensoulment. To understand plant-death is to acknowledge its intricate ecological manifestations. Although from widely ranging corners of the globe, the Pando colony, resurrection plant, and jarrah eucalypt emblematize three permutations of plant-death essential to locating Kinsella's radical pastoralism vis-à-vis native Western Australian flora.

The example of Pando conveys the inherent capacity—or *dunamis*, to adopt a term from Aristotle (Marder, *Plant-Thinking* 36)—of plants for decay, as the poietic correlate of growth, but also the ways in which vegetal being uniquely conscripts death and its mechanisms of senescence and decay for survival. The *dunamis* of Pando for vegetative multiplicity and anatomical repetition perpetuates the arboreal collective regardless of the death of an individual plant or loss of a body part (leaf, stem, root, flower). One of the defining features of vegetal life of particular interest to thinkers historically has been its pronounced *modularity*: the recurrence within the corpus of a plant of basic units—or functionally analogous structures—of growth (Trewavas 50). In relation to a plant's "body plan" (Baluška et al.), the principle of modularity describes the repetition of growth units. In fact, modularity is the reason why plants can survive intensive grazing by herbivores by sacrificing parts—leaves, flowers, stems—without dying. In contrast, the loss of an anatomical segment for most animals is typically catastrophic. For seed-producing flowering plants, known as angiosperms, repeated patterns of leaves, branches, nodes, buds, flowers, fruits, and root meristems constitute their modularity. The *metamer*—the structural subunit replicated over the lifetime of a plant—comprises an internode and a node with associated leaves and meristems as the basis for larger modules, including branches and stems (Herrera 2). Considering this unique evolutionary mechanism, physiologist Anthony Trewavas asserts that plants are "intensely modular" (Trewavas 42). In classical antiquity, Aristotle's pupil, Theophrastus (circa 371–287 BCE), noted plant modularity in his treatise *De Causis Plantarum* (*On the Causes of Plants*)—one of the most important early botanical texts in Western philosophy. He commented that "every tree has many starting-points for sprouting and fruiting. This […] is of the essence of a plant, that it also lives from a multitude of parts, which is why it can also sprout from them" (Theophrastus 85). Much later reflecting Theophrastus' observations, the polymath and early plant morphologist, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), in his long poem *The Metamorphosis of Plants* (1790), conceptualized plant foliage as the homologous basis—the repeated structural

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unit—of flowers and fruits: "Like unto each the form, yet non alike; / And so the choir hints a secret law, / A sacred mystery" (Goethe 1, ll. 5–7).

Unlike the clonal reproduction of the long-lived aspen, the resurrection plant returns from a provisional state of metabolic arrest that would spell the end for less hardy plant species. This unusual example lays bare the particular vegetal dynamic of life (and living) within their deaths (and dying) as integrated ecological processes involving minimal human intervention. In Aristotelian entelechy, the vegetative soul is characterized by the dual movement of the plant toward liveliness, nourishment, and growth, and toward decline, decay, and death. The latent potential for aliveness inheres within the potential for death, and the reverse is true. In Aristotle's triadic hierarchy, plant ensoulment constituted "an originative power through which they increase or decrease in all spatial directions" and live out their lives through the continuous absorption of nutriment (Aristotle 700). Moreover, the nutritive soul of the plant—"possessed by everything that is alive" (Aristotle 732)—conferred the basis for the birth, existence, and death of the higher-order lives of the sensitive and intellective souls. Without the corporeal surrendering of the plant to other organisms (being grazed, harvested, pruned), life on earth as we know it could not exist. According to Aristotle, like animals and human beings, plants grow, mature, and decay in correspondence to sustenance received from the environment, including photosynthetically from the sun. In his treatise "On Youth, Old Age, Life and Death, and Respiration," the philosopher recognizes that plants vegetatively circumvent the finality of death and, in doing so, ingeniously proliferate through their own process of dismemberment: "plants when cut into sections continue to live, and a number of trees can be derived from one single source" (Aristotle 791). The ability of some plants to propagate profusely through vegetative division signified, for Aristotle, the corresponding entelechy of the vegetative soul in its heterogeneity: "It is true that the nutritive soul, in beings possessing it, while actually single must be potentially plural" (Aristotle 791).

The Aristotelian theory of ensoulment privileges the sensitive (animal) and intellective (human) over the nutritive (plant). In a similar vein, contemporary philosophy of death reinscribes the pernicious presumption that plants bear neither mental life nor sentience worth considering and that, hence, their ceasing to live should matter less than animal and human deaths. Reflecting the conceptual conventions and terminologies of Western philosophy of death, Christopher Belshaw invokes the Aristotelian order in discerning between a *desire view* (as true) and a *life view* (as false) approaches to ascertaining whether death is a "good" or "bad" outcome for a living thing. For Belshaw, the desire view reflects categorical desires—those unconditional desires that arise independently of our living long enough to see them eventuate or materialize. A desire view depends on a being's capacity to desire: life is something a subject wants to live. In contrast, a life view suggests that death can be bad even when such desires are absent or (in the case of plants) cannot readily be identified—but when life, health, and pleasurable experience are present—because death prevents more life regardless of the desires a being has. Belshaw concludes that having "future-directed categorical desires is a necessary condition of my death's being bad for me [or for other beings]" (278).

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A glaring presupposition within the desire view is that plants lack mentation, sentience, and categorical desires: a plant desiring sunlight, nutrition, water, comfort, or to proliferate is superficial metaphor. An activity, such as felling an ancient jarrah with bravado, understood as compromising vegetal well-being, for Belshaw, reflects a life view of plant-death, which is false. Even if one were to adopt a life view, "from conceding that death is bad for the plant it doesn't at all follow that we should be exercised about plant death, regret its occurrence, or make any sacrifices to prevent it" (Belshaw 290). Yet, as the field of plant signaling and behavior indicates through empirical outcomes (for example, Trewavas), plants have a kind of inner life—the exact nature of which we are not yet completely sure—affirmed by their ability to learn and remember. In light of this burgeoning science and hastened by the expontential loss of plant species across the globe, a more nuanced consideration of plant-death and, more generally, human-plant relations has been has been put forward (Hall; Heyd; Marder, "Is It Ethical"; Pouteau; Koechlin). If plants have a mental life and can experience pain (which we cannot and should not rule out), then death is bad for them, as it is for us; and while we must nonetheless eat, drink, and otherwise use plants for our benefit, their deaths can matter to them and us, and their living and dying can have dignity. As a contentious example of plant ethics in the public domain, the Swiss government's Federal Ethics Committee on Non-Human Biotechnology report *The Dignity of Living Beings with Regard to Plants* (Swiss Confederation) was inspired by emerging scientific studies of plant sensitivities. For the authors of the report, that plant roots distinguish between self and non-self implies their subjectivity and cognition, notwithstanding the general socio-political "refusal to understand plants as something other than living automatons" (Koechlin 79).

Kinsella's Radical (Vegetal) Pastoralism: Plant-Death and Melancholia

Having considered the manifestations of death in the plant kingdom—biogenic, anthropogenic, and the interplay of both—as well as the dignity of plants, it is appropriate to ask: How have plant-death and its ethical consideration impacted the landscape poetry of Western Australian writer John Kinsella and his practice of radical pastoralism? The possibility of plant ethics brings us closer to the consideration of our lives and deaths, including the embodied, emotional, and spiritual effects on humans of plant life ceasing to exist. Regardless of the myriad forms the responses and effects take (desperation, withdrawal, indifference, anger, impoverishment, malaise, disease), there remains at the center of plant-death the demise of an actual non-human entity—the termination of a vegetal life, the cessation of the possibility for more life and experience—as definitive and final as the toppling of the five-hundred-year-old jarrah. Let's remain a while longer with the idea of our own deaths inhering within vegetal otherness. In comparison to the Pando and resurrection plant (which I conceptualized—albeit crudely—as exemplifying biogenic modalities of death and life-within-death), the jarrah instantiates the direct, injurious interference with plant being that, at once, reduces the capacity of companion species—including ourselves and our kith and kin—to actualize the full potential of ecological interrelatedness. More simply put, as plants

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die, so do we, though our deaths might not necessarily be physical and can, instead, manifest as an obdurate sense of loss and malaise. As the comments of Lambers intimate, the anthropogenic death of plants can often lack ethical grounding (Young). This kind of wanton plant-death can incite outrage over the despoliation of vegetal nature, followed with the weight of botanical melancholia involving lingering feelings of personal helplessness and community violation.

An ethics of botanical life figures conspicuously into Kinsella's ecopoetic corpus—which combines acute sensory awareness of habitats and meticulous ecological knowledge of native flora (Ryan 254–56). While pictured in reference to the beautiful and sublime, Kinsella's wheatbelt plantscape reflects intense rupture and stark polarization between human and other-than-human actants in the Western Australian context. Kinsella's sense of ecological ethics enciphers a poetics of fragments in which his fracturing of the whole (of the poem, of the landscape representation) calls the writerly self into question. In Kinsella's understanding, "language contains all possible meanings in the fragment as much as entirely" (*Disclosed Poetics* 237). Hence, his radical pastoralism—pivoting, to a significant extent, on the poeticization of plant-death—often makes use of fragmentary sequences that upend narrative lyricism while maintaining a sense of movement within the text (*Disclosed Poetics* 133). Notwithstanding the tenor of ecological despondency echoed in his fragments, Kinsella also revels introspectively, at times, in the complexities of vegetal living and dying, revealing a multifaceted perspective on plant death and dying as a wellspring of hope and change. An illustrative case is *Jam Tree Gully*, titled after the raspberry jam tree*, Acacia acuminata*, for the fragrant odor of the cut timber. Jam Tree Gully is also the name of Kinsella's residence near the Avon Valley of Western Australia in "York gum and jam tree country" (Kinsella, *Spatial Relations* 66). The collection expresses an acute attachment to place and an ethics grounded in kinship and empathy with local vegetation. Through epigraphs and other allusions, the poetry also strikes a temporally distributed intertextual dialogue with the nineteenth-century American botanophile, Henry David Thoreau, whose intellectual-experiential investigations of plant life feature in his posthumous books *Faith in a Seed* and *Wild Fruits* . In the poem "First Lines Typed at Jam Tree Gully," Kinsella notes with haptic resonances the "rampage / of dead and living trees, / entire collapsed structures, / signs of fire as jam-tree bark / blackened crumbles with touch" (Kinsella, "First Lines Typed at Jam Tree Gully" 79, ll. 15–19), but the reader is left to contemplate the probable causes of the burning.

I situate Kinsella's botanical poetics within the context of a radical pastoralism that recognizes the demise of the vegetal as a source of *botanical melancholia*: the poet's intersubjective response to plant-death not as an externalized phenomenon in the environment out there but as one with internal, personal repercussions for human welfare. Rather than a trivial consideration or insignificant event, plant-death—as expressed in Kinsella's oeuvre—is implicated in the fragmentation and despoilment of the once remarkably plant diverse and sustainably managed 140,000-square-kilometer wheatbelt region (for historical background, see Beresford et al.). At the onset of European colonization, the wheatbelt consisted principally of an intricate mosaic of

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salmon gum (*E. salmonophloia*), York gum (*E. loxophleba*), and wandoo (*E. wandoo*) woodlands. Since the mid-1800s, the ecological devastation of the wheatbelt and surrounding areas has been precipitated by the removal of native woodland vegetation for the production of wheat, barley, canola, and sheep. As portrayed poignantly in the documentary *A Million Acres a Year* (2002), by 1968, over 130,000 square kilometers had been cleared through a relentless campaign that continued into the late 1980s (Rijavec, Harrison and Bradby). In the central part, known as the Avon Botanical District, more than ninety-three percent of the native flora has been removed, and up to ninety-seven percent of the eucalpypt woodlands erased (Bradshaw 112–113). Apparent in the preternatural glow of salt ponds, the eradication of well-adapted floristic communities—particularly endemic gums that held salt levels in check underground—triggered the salinization of the topsoil, or what analysts call "the salinity crisis" (Beresford). Other factors impinging on the remaining vegetation include industrial mining activities (Latimer), diseases such as the root-rot fungus *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (Environment Australia), and introduced plant species that swiftly displace native counterparts (Prober and Smith).

Regarding Kinsella's ecopoetics of plants, the distinction I have posited between biogenic and anthropogenic death collapses through the interpenetration of human and vegetal living and dying. For Kinsella, the plant mirrors back to us the exigencies of our demise, mourning, and melancholia. Yet the physicality and ecology of its death remain. As the regional context of Kinsella's poetics, the wheatbelt poignantly underscores the historical and contemporary truncation of the potentialities of native plants—their deaths rendered *in toto* (as the ninety-five percent rate of clearance grimly attests), largely without ethical deliberation or expressions of care; and their lives socially constructed as impediments to modernist techno-industrial progress. Within this bleak ecological—and, arguably, anti-ecological—milieu, Kinsella characterizes his ecopoetic practice as "radical pastoralism" (a term synonymous with "poison pastoralism" and a variant of "anti-pastoralism"). To be sure, Kinsella's radical pastoral is one in a long line of different conceptualizations of the pastoral by commentators. In *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) and, later, in the essay "Does Pastoralism Have a Future?" (1992), the critic Leo Marx identified a peculiarly American version—the so-called complex pastoral—in which the pastoral idyll of the landscape intersects with ecological counterforces that destabilize the idyll. Ecocritic Greg Garrard later proposed the term "radical pastoral" as a poetics of resisting the marginalization of nature and engendering "a genuine counter-hegemonic ideology" (464). Garrard built upon critic Terry Gifford's contemporaneous identification of the *anti-pastoral* as a counter-tradition embodying the principal tension of "how to find a voice that does not lose sight of authentic connectnedness with nature, in the process of exposing the language of the idyll" (Gifford, *Green Voices* 55). More recently, Gifford has underscored the proliferation of versions of the pastoral—including the anti-pastoral, postmodern pastoral, post-pastoral, and others—highighting the incidence of historical shifts in meaning ("Pastoral"). Whereas the term *pastoral* came to denote, in the history of English literature, any work describing the countryside in distinction to the city or court

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(Gifford, "Pastoral" 19), the post-pastoral attempts to reach beyond the original restraints of the pastoral (26). In particular, post-pastoral works depict a collapse of the human/nature divide alongside an awareness of the problems triggered by such a collapse (Gifford, "Pastoral" 26).

As representative of the pastoral, consider the idyllic depiction of botanical harmony in the image of Wordsworth's "[…] host of dancing Daffodils; / Along the Lake, beneath the trees, / Ten thousand dancing in the breeze" (qtd. in Robinson 38). In sharp relief, Kinsella's radical pastoralism of plants fuses lyrical impressions of the wheatbelt environment and a naturalist's first-hand observations of flora with a prevailing sense of the disruption of the vegetal idyll through "linguistic disobedience" often enacted through the insertion of poetic fragments into the text (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 127). Kinsella's botanical imagination is rooted equally in the regional (Phillips and Kinsella) and global (Gander and Kinsella) ecological crises. Deeply personal and observationally rigorous, his botanical poetics is not delimited by speculative, objective distance but, instead, is entangled corporeally in native plantscapes and histories of place (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics*). The long-term biopolitical campaign to eradicate native flora is an extension of the region's troubled colonial past. Despite being an ecocidal locus for plants, the wheatbelt and South-western Australia, more generally, retain vestiges of floristic diversity as islands within the pastoral, enabling Kinsella to maintain "authentic connectnedness with nature," in Gifford's original terms, while subverting the literary tradition of botanical idyllicism and the regional Anglo-Australian histories of habitat destruction.

Indeed, Kinsella re-interprets the radical pastoral for an Australian context. In *Disclosed Poetics* and elsewhere, Kinsella sharply differentiates between the *anti-pastoral* and *radical pastoral*. For Kinsella, the Australian anti-pastoral characterizes poets located in (or writing about) rural spaces who challenge the bucolic myths promulgated by colonial culture and literary heritage (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 9). Although, in Kinsella's analysis, few pastoral Australian poets can be described as radical, most poets exhibit acute awareness of the history and limitations of the genre as "an idyllicised representation of the rural world, most often for the allegorical delectation of urban or town audiences" (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 11). Critic Dennis Haskell characterizes the anti-pastoral aesthetics of Kinsella's *The Silo: A Pastoral Symphony* as "an exorcism" (Haskell 94) of the colonialist history of land appropriation and the poet's personal remorse in partaking in the devastation during his youth. As Kinsella comments on his awareness, "Death was a fantasy / made real / in the bush enclaves" (qtd. in Haskell 94). In contrast to the anti-pastoral, the radical pastoral upends "the norms of pastoral telling, of pastoral singing, and pastoral convention" and expresses a desire for "radical change" (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 10). In the former, "the clearing of native vegetation [and] the poisoning of land, water, and air" are textualized in their full extent and affect—rather than codified through linguistic sleights of hand—as "an active undoing of the [pastoral] tradition" (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 10–11). Additionally, for Kinsella, the Australian pastoral tradition is "a vehicle of nationalist yearning" and "the ultimate tool of nationalistic sentiment" (Kinsella, *Spatial*

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Relations 191)—and, for that reason, a subject of poetic subversion at least partially rendered through engagement with plant-death. His practice of radical ecopoetics forms a sharp critique of the pastoral as a tradition underlying the ecological devastation of the wheatbelt and the related displacement of Aboriginal cultures throughout Australia (Reed).

Kinsella's poetic engagement with plant-death reflects, on the one hand, the ruination of the wheatbelt ecosystem, on the other, positive and negative environmental memories from his predominantly rural upbringing. Although Kinsella grew up mostly in the suburbs of Perth, his family retreated regularly to a farm outside York, Western Australia, where he nurtured a naturalist's ability to observe the flora, fauna, and fungi of his immediate environs (Hughes-d'Aeth 20) but also committed acts of ecological trangression, including the wanton shooting of birds (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 39). A mechanic and farm manager, his father worked the open country where industrial-scale broadacre farming eventually supplanted the unique sandplain vegetation known as *kwongan* (Lambers). An early immersion in rural places and the engendering of environmental awareness based on the interplay between life and death—"I wandered the bush as a child quoting Keats" (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 223)—certainly appears to have counterweighed any inclination toward *plant blindness* during his upbringing. Formulated by environmental educators, this term denotes the prevalent inability to notice the flora of one's surroundings or the ingrained understanding of vegetal life as the stationary backdrop to animal and human activities (Wandersee and Schussler). To the contrary, Kinsella's ecopoetics exhibits pronounced botanical attunement, but within the delimitations of the wheatbelt and as a function of a radical pastoral ethics, in the manner he has conceptualized it. Instances from his non-fiction writings point to an abiding consciousness of flora, particularly the wheatbelt eucalypts that sustain ecological interrelationships in a state of death-within-life. He comments on "the straggling York gums with their mud-encrusted termite colonies wrapping around their trunks, winding up through *the dead wood the living wood embraces* [emphasis added]" (Kinsella, *Spatial Relations* 106). Here, we are reminded of the vegetal capacity—particularly manifested by the gum trees of South-western Australia—to exist in a condition of death-within-life that is internally supportive (of its living wood) while also externally imbricated (with termite colonies). Indeed, as Aristotle noted, plants "increase or decrease in all spatial directions"—a habitus facilitated by their vegetative entelechy (700).

If the dead wood of the York gum is emblematic of biogenic death—the decline, decay, and demise of plants as adaptive, ecological beings—then the slaying of the Swan River jarrah is representative of anthropogenic death. Kinsella's ecopoetics intersects with both forms of death in the wheatbelt. Yet, to understand the poet's textualization of human impacts on vegetal life further, it is crucial to consider *botanical melancholia* as a plant-attentive expression of environmental melancholia (Lertzman) and solastalgia (Albrecht, "Solastalgia"; Albrecht, "'Solastalgia': A New Concept"). Renee Lertzman defines *environmental melancholia* as "a condition in which even those who care deeply about the well-being of ecosystems and future generations are paralyzed to translate

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such concern into action" (4). For Lertzman, following Freud's well-known analysis of unresolved mourning, environmental melancholia can involve anxiety, ambivalence, sadness, loss, and despair, as well as an anticipatory sense of mourning the ecological losses to come (6). Moreover, one can be locked in a state of inactivity and isolation as a result of the general social lack of recognition of such losses. Although ecological threats have the potential to shatter traditional certainties (such as air, water, seasons, and the existence of flora), Lertzman argues that, in due course, environmental melancholia can become a source of active engagement in the protection of human and non-human well-being. Correspondingly, *solastalgia* recognizes "the pain or sickness caused by the loss or lack of solace and the sense of isolation connected to the present state of one's home and territory" (Albrecht, "'Solastalgia': A New Concept" 48). Defined as the "homesickness one gets when one is still at 'home'" (Albrecht, "'Solastalgia': A New Concept" 48), solastalgia entails emotional distress that is intensified through the first-hand experience of one's home-place (for Kinsella, the wheatbelt) deteriorating in the past, present, and future.

Following Lertzman and Albrecht, *botanical melancholia* can be defined as a solastalgiac condition in which people who identify intimately with plants are either paralyzed or called to action by the anxiety, despair, and grief of witnessing the loss of individual specimens (the jarrah) or whole botanical communities (the wheatbelt). The model I put forward aims to offset an object-cathexis paradigm of environmental mourning, which risks relegating plant-death to a signifier of human mortality, of societal decline, or of "hyperobjects" (Morton), particularly climate change and species extinction. Shunning a human-centered paradigm of ecological grief, botanical melancholia recognizes the imbrications between biogenic and anthropogenic processes of plant-death. In certain instances, the manner in which a plant dies might not entirely concern a human mourner: the life of a plant disappears regardless of the causes. What is more certain is that the widespread annihilation of plant individuals and assemblages for long-standing, botanically-minded occupants of a place, such as the wheatbelt, can be an ongoing and seemingly inexhaustible source of despair. In acknowledging plants as percipient subjects, the model of melancholia I present conceptualizes their deaths as events that terminate the potential for more of their lives led with dignity. This entails the distinction between "plant life" (biology, species, abstraction, generalization—the social construction of the vegetal) and "the lives of plants" (ontology, experience, materiality, sensoriality—their lives to live independently of human desires and interventions). As the following section elaborates, botanical melancholia is pivotal to appreciating Kinsella's radical pastoralism as a wellspring of indignation, activism, reflection, and, even, wonderment vis-à-vis the demise of plants.

Poeticizing Plant-Death and Human Melancholia: Gums, Almonds, Wattles

I have suggested that *plant-death* is an imprecise term and have, therefore, attempted to discern between contrasting nuances of death in the vegetal world by applying the biogenic-anthropogenic typology. Whereas biogenic death involves the

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demise of plants as an ecological event, anthropogenic death signifies human extermination of the entelechy of vegetal ensoulment (remember the jarrah), as well as the burden of botanical melancholia. Anthropogenic death can mirror back to us—as the perpetrators or witnesses—our complete reliance on the vegetal foundations of human existence. The perilous neglect and senseless maltreatment of botanical life can precipitate the physical, social, and spiritual decline of human beings. Of course, the biogenic deaths of plants can also prompt mourning and melancholia, but, I assert, to a lesser degree than anthropogenic (or anthropogenically-exacerbated biogenic) forms. Kinsella's poetry textualizes plant-death and the unforeseen transactions between both sides of the typology. The four-part "Idyllatry" (Kinsella, *Armour* 34–43) is representative. The poem's title amalgamates the words *idyll* and *idolatry*, signaling Kinsella's critique of the fetishization of techno-industrial agriculture in contradistinction to the traditional Indigenous ecological knowledge and practices of the wheatbelt.

The opening of "Idyllatry," a fourteen-line sonnet variant titled "*Laetiporus portentosus*," centralizes the presence of the white punk bracket, a species of polypore fungus traditionally used by Aboriginal Australians as tinder and to transport fire between camps (Clarke 64). A saprotroph that consumes the dead heartwood of living trees (Fagg), the fungus has "injected rot into the heart / of the eucalypt" (Kinsella, *Armour* 34, ll. 2–3). Conversely, the surface of the fungus "is breached by numerous / invertebrates, larvae that will interphase / with our sense of space, the air / we breathe" (Kinsella, *Armour* 34, ll. 5–8). The opening sonnet of "Idyllatry" reminds us that the omnipresence of death in nature is the upshot of ongoing evolutionarily-grounded exchanges between organisms. Ecological beingness as a function of *lives-within-deaths* and *deaths-within-lives* means that all things—animal, vegetal, fungal—are in dialogical relation and dynamic equipoise. Rather than the neocolonialist images of pastoral idolatry of the poem's successive three parts, the sonnet in its last six lines culminates with the fungus as an object of environmental veneration—a "halo we might walk beneath" (Kinsella, *Armour* 34, l. 12). End-rhymes punctuate the final sestet: "distract from grief" (l. 11) and "walk beneath" (l. 12), then a decisive off end-rhyme with "carried fire" (l. 13) and "smouldering tinder" (l. 14). Kinsella emphasizes that, for Indigenous cultures across Australia, the fungus was—and, in places, still is—a "companion species" (Haraway) that, like many plants and animals, furnishes precious means of sustenance while reinforcing cultural identity and heritage. And, so, the final two lines—"the first people here carried fire / in its smouldering tinder" (Kinsella, *Armour* 34, ll. 13–14)—invoke plainly but potently the fifty-thousand-or-more-year history of Nyoongar people's sustainable inhabitation of the wheatbelt. For Kinsella, the region's pastoral idyll collapses under the weight of a traumatic history of interlinked ecological devastation and cultural genocide. While prefigured in the sonnet, these postcolonial dimensions are more fully drawn out in contemporary terms, as we later learn of the Western Australian government's convenient forgetting of Kinsella's proposal for a "'wheatbelt forum' / where indigenous communities / could discuss their issues with white / farming communities" (*Armour* 39, ll. 15–18). The poet's desire for

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reconciliation stands in startling alignment with his young son's innocent yearning to shed his Anglo-Australian identity and become Nyoongar after some exposure to the indigenous language in school (40, ll. 4–9).

With the Aboriginal underpinnings of Kinsella's radical pastoralism rendered ostensible, the poem's second part, "The View from Here and Now," consisting of seven quatrains, intensifies the consideration of belonging and nativeness in the wheatbelt plantscape. The poet relates his gazing over the Avon River from a touristic viewing platform assembled from "treated-pine" (Kinsella, *Armour* 43, l. 2)—a plantation species that, in its presence as a material in the built landscape, poignantly emblematizes the near-complete eradication of native eucalypts. The seventh quatrain laments the "plant blindness" (Wandersee and Schussler) of the non-Indigenous, settler culture in the concluding lines, "And what breaks / the bursts of wattlebloom, takes / paperbarks for granted, insert / of amenities, these local assets" (Kinsella, *Armour* 36, ll. 25–28). Allusions to the wattle (*Acacia* spp.) flowers and paperbarks (*Melaleuca* spp.)—two plant icons ubiquitous throughout South-western Australia—embody the fragmentation of the native plantscape as a consequence of an entrenched privileging of a narrow Anglo-Australian perspective on botanical (dis)order. Indeed, denigrative attitudes toward the native flora of the Australian landmass—as strange, straggly, scrubby, prickly, ugly, worthless—reinscribe historical biases based in European landscape aesthetics (Ryan 88–109). However, Kinsella affirms that the "amenities" and "assets" are the phenomenally well-adapted and primordial plants themselves, not the recent-arrivals-by-comparison colonialist infrastructures and mechanisms. The critique of pastoralist consciousness and convention accelerates in the third part, "An Idea of Disorder," comprising twenty-three quintets exposing the gruesome face of everyday country life, especially appalling for a self-confessed "vegan anarchist" (Kinsella and Lucy 11). For instance, at the edge of a woodland reserve, the carcasses of sheep have been unceremoniously dumped, "[…] Flesh and clumps of wool / detached from the frame" (Kinsella, *Armour* 37, ll. 18–19).

A prevailing tone of disillusionment closely connected to the effects of botanical melancholia is evident in the mid-section of "Idyllatry" as Kinsella scrutinizes the naturalization of perverse anti-ecological (and, specifically, anti-botanical) values. What emerges is a radical pastoral manifesto and poetic act of catharsis that troubles the ingrained logic of agricultural production: "Anyway, it's all lies. / I've spent half my life living / in the middle of this and don't believe / any of it. I don't believe in growth, / and I don't believe anyone's being fed" (Kinsella, *Armour* 38, ll. 39–43). The scene surrounding the ever-more brackish, poisoned, and desiccated river approaches botanical apocalypse, with "stands of York gum / with track-marks set by termites, jam tree / weighed down by mistletoe, a black- / shouldered kite circling above the dead / York gum, just skin and bones" (Kinsella, *Armour* 40-41, ll. 92–96). Kinsella insinuates that the anti-pastoral prospect of devastation is not biogenic but anthropogenic. The unspoken agreements between trees, termites, and parasites that upheld dynamic balance over vast expanses of time have been disrupted by the same colonialist forces that have rendered the river more saline and sent its guardian spirit, the Wagyl, into

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retreat. As the York gum "loses bones / proportional to the blast" of storms (41, ll. 97–98), Kinsella's evocations reflect Renee Lertzman's analysis of environmental melancholia as one being "paralyzed to translate such concern into action" (4). The poet's self-conscious dread of inaction and anxiety over ineptitude to galvanize radical change immediately follow the succession of bleak plant-death images. In a last melancholic concession, he states, "I feel no guilt not being out there, helping. / I cherish the action of the flora and fauna, / but have nothing to observe that might / traumatise those around me into / preserving the habitat" (Kinsella, *Armour* 41, ll. 102–106).

Yet, when all else fails, it is poetry that serves as the activist's medium, as Kinsella paradoxically observes himself claiming to observe nothing as an expression of his feeling ineffectual when confronted with regional ecological disaster. Before the fourth and final part, "Idyllatry" (titled after the poem itself), the third part, "An Idea of Disorder," concludes with a prodding allusion to a navigation marker on a hill where a rare orchid species grows—an image so resonant that the botanically melancholic poet "can't bear to look / back at it" (41, ll. 110–111). Affective identification with native and naturalized flora is similarly palpable in the poem "Where the Almond Tree" (Kinsella, *Armour* 29) in which Kinsella grieves the interrelated deaths of an almond tree and a wattle as a corollary of prolonged drought in the wheatbelt. "Where the Almond Tree" evokes plant-death as a relational phenomenon contingent on the activities of other organisms (i.e., insect larvae and parrots). In its very exclusion of the word "died," the title reveals emotional reluctance to acknowledge the death of cherished flora as well as a pronounced absence of existential resolution—a negation of the possibility that humans can eventually come to terms with plant-death particularly when it is precipitated on a widespread basis by ecological catastrophe. In the poem, plant-death is an intimate event analogous to the sudden sickness and decline of a family member at home. Moreover, the almond tree and wattle are deprived of dignity because of the intensity and totality of their deaths. The elegiac meditation opens with "Where the almond tree died, so died the wattle. / That parabola can take no life for long. If borers / are below the surface, / they will move on. They have killed the already dead" (Kinsella, *Armour* 29, ll. 1–4). Although exhibiting an affinity in his writings for the native flora of the wheatbelt, Kinsella here spurns *botanical nativism* as an ideology strictly opposing invasive, exotic, or non-indigenous plants (Coates 76). Instead, in their lives and deaths, the almond and the wattle forged an equilibrium, which was then fragmented by pastoral forces and abbreviated by the effects of climate disturbance. Kinsella continues, "[…] *It bothers me* / the almond tree died so intensely / it lost all moisture. And the wattle / died just as entirely [emphasis added]" (Kinsella, *Armour* 29, ll. 20–23). By the final lines, the paralysis of melancholia is not overcome by the textualized progression of grieving but by the feathers of parrots flying "at half-mast" (29, l. 27), implying an expansive, multispecies concept of mourning in which the poet is not isolated in his being troubled by plant-death: "because death is the most alive district/ to inhabit. We could say so much more/ if only we had the time" (Kinsella, *Armour* "Resurrection Plants at Nookaminnie Rock" 53).

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Conclusion

In closing this investigation of the significance of vegetal decay and demise in Kinsella's radical pastoralism, I wish to underscore that not all evocations of plant-death in his ouevre are burdened by botanical melancholia. For instance, "Resurrection Plants at Nookaminnie Rock" (Kinsella, *Armour* 53) presents a different version of plant-death and the potential for new life through the narrativization of the resilient mechanisms of the pincushion lily (*Borya* spp.), known for its ability to endure episodes of dehydration through metabolic arrest (Nikulinsky and Hopper 24). Sequestered at Nookaminnie, a boulder enclave near Quairading in the wheatbelt, the *Borya* defy, through their physiological adaptations, the "belief that the dead will stay dead / and there will be no lift, no rebirth" (Kinsella, *Armour* 53, ll. 11–12). What emerges in the midst of the poet's biogeographically-articulated contemplation of life, senescence, birth, and regeneration in nature is a plant ethics centering on intimate ecological knowledge, profound regard for endemic flora, and a recognition of the limits of proximate human-plant encounters. One must always tread conscientiously in fragile rock outcrop environments, stepping "carefully around these / wreaths hooked into granite sheen, holdalls / for a soil-less ecology" (Kinsella, *Armour* 53, ll. 14–16). The pincushion speaks to the poet—and speaks of the courting of death and the return from its brink—via a haptic, material presence, at once soft and bristly. Nevertheless, the plant "would say so much more if your boots / were off" (Kinsella, *Armour* 53, ll. 17–18)—if physical exchange could be consummated. Undergirded by sensitivity toward the granite outcrop habitats, the poet's ethics of stewardship come to restrain his impulse to sink more deeply into the inevitable mystery of co-constituted human-plant deaths. In its defiant brinkmanship, the resurrection plant exemplifies the contention that the event of death does not necessarily spell out the end of a plant's existence (Marder, *The Philosopher's Plant* 187).

More subtle in its radical pastoral subtext than "Idyllatry," "Resurrection Plants" textualizes vegetal death and near-death, principally, as a process of embodied, ecological marvel and, secondly, as suggestive of the possibility of ecosystemic renewal and social hope through respectful and reciprocal engagements with the plant inhabitants of one's place. Despite admissions of melancholic paralysis elsewhere in his oeuvre, further examples from Kinsella's botanical poetics resound with the call to rejuvenate the ill-treated wheatbelt through attentive engagement with native plants. An activist poetics resounds in the long poem, "Harsh Hakea (or Elements of the Subject's Will)," which is interspersed with fragments of planting the shrub *Hakea prostrata*, native to South-western Australia. "I will check the Harsh Hakea / planted hopefully restoratively / on the steep incline of Bird Gully" (Kinsella, "Harsh Hakea" 151, pt. 15, ll. 6–8). Foregrounding the percipience of the hakea as a subject with its own will in the poem's title, Kinsella enunciates an ideal of radical pastoralism that spurns cynicism, inaction, and melancholy in favor of working collaboratively with the inherent intelligence of the vegetal. After all, those plant taxa that have endured the harsh, arid, and nutrient-deficient Western Australian landscape must have stories to tell, lessons to impart, and actions to inspire, if only the masses would learn to listen. As such, we find

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in the radical pastoral poetry of John Kinsella an empathic attentiveness to plant *life* and plant *lives* that does not recoil from their deaths and dying—biogenic (e.g., "Resurrection Plants" and "Harsh Hakea"), anthropogenic ("Idyllatry" and, to a lesser extent, "Where the Almond Tree"), and the expressions of life and death between. Circumscribed in part by the botanical denizens of the wheatbelt, Kinsella's pastoral vision recognizes the region's traumatic legacy of the abuse and eradication of other-than-humans—a history in which he himself once participated—while conveying, with clarion hope, the potential for more sustainable and ethically-grounded relations to the wheatbelt plantscape for the benefit of all inhabitants.

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"La Questione Animale" di Anna Maria Ortese: *Alonso e i visionari* e l'etica del soccorso

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Abstract

L'elaborato si propone di analizzare il pensiero ecologico di Anna Maria Ortese, concentrandosi su *Alonso e i visionari*, testo che, seppur trascurato dal pubblico e dalla critica, può essere considerato il manifesto dell'intera poetica ortesiana. Il credo dell'autrice è infatti rivolto ad annullare la differenza tra umano e non umano, a combattere per l'inclusione dell'animale nel circolo etico, a difendere i diritti di tutti gli esseri viventi e non viventi, alla ricerca di una forma di pensiero più inclusiva e che si fondi su nuovi valori come l'amore, la pietà, la partecipazione al dolore e il "soccorso" a tutte le creature e alla Terra stessa. Propongo di rileggere *Alonso e i visionari* da una prospettiva ecologica al fine di dimostrare non solo come l'autrice partecipi al dibattito su "La questione animale" al centro degli studi sull'animalità, ma come anticipi il pensiero sul postumano di Braidotti e le riflessioni di altri filosofi e pensatori del Novecento, tra cui Agamben, Cavalieri, Derrida, Deleuze e Guattari.

Parole chiave: Ortese, ecocritica, postumano, pietà, soccorso.

Abstract

This essay aims to analyze Anna Maria Ortese's ecological thought, which significantly distinguishes her last novel, *Alonso e i visionari*. I believe that the novel, which has been overlooked both by critics and by readers, can be considered as the manifesto of the author's poetics. Indeed, it summarizes the writer's tenets, devoted to annulling the difference between human and nonhuman world, to struggling for the animal's inclusion in the moral community, to proposing an understanding of intelligence that combines reason, compassion, and care for both human and nonhuman beings as well as for the entire planet Earth itself. I suggest reading the novel from an ecocritical perspective to illustrate how Ortese anticipates Braidotti's posthuman thought, and provides original theoretical frameworks and criteria for exploring fundamental issues of "The Animal Question" even before such themes commanded the attention of prominent twentieth-century philosophers such as Agamben, Cavalieri, Derrida, Deleuze, and Guattari.

Keywords: Ortese, ecocriticism, posthuman, piety, care.

Resumen

Este ensayo analiza el pensamiento ecológico de Anna Maria Ortese y examina la novela *Alonso e i visionari*, que puede ser considerada como el manifiesto de la obra ortesiana, aunque la obra no tuvo gran éxito de público ni de crítica en el momento de su publicación. El credo de la autora pretende invalidar la diferencia entre humano y no humano, luchar por la inclusión de los animales en el círculo ético, defender los derechos de todos los seres, buscar una tipología de pensamiento más inclusiva y que se base no solo en la razón sino en nuevos valores como el amor, la piedad, la participación en el dolor y la ayuda a todas las

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criaturas que lo necesiten, lo que la autora llama emblemáticamente "soccorso". Mi trabajo sugiere una lectura de la novela desde una perspectiva ecocrítica para mostrar que Ortese participa en el debate conocido como "La cuestión de los animales," y de la misma manera, anticipa el pensamiento de Braidotti sobre el posthumano y algunas consideraciones de destacados filósofos del siglo XX, como Agamben, Cavalieri, Derrida, Deleuze y Guattari.

Palabras clave: Ortese, ecocrítica, posthumano, piedad, socorro.

Negli ultimi decenni, gli studi critici coevi hanno unanimemente riconosciuto la centralità di tematiche ecologiche nella produzione di Anna Maria Ortese, in particolar modo ne *L'Iguana* (1965) e in *Corpo celeste* (1997), sorta di zibaldone di pensieri, divenuto oggi il testamento poetico dell'autrice.[1] Tra tutti i suoi romanzi, e non solo tra quelli che compongono la ormai nota "trilogia animale," *L'Iguana* è il testo che ha ricevuto maggior fortuna di pubblico e di critica, divenendo, per svariate ragioni, esempio emblematico della coscienza ecologica di Ortese. Deborah Amberson ed Elena Past hanno recentemente evidenziato come nel romanzo l'autrice napoletana respinge una netta separazione tra umanità e animalità (1), mentre Serenella Iovino ha notato che il protagonista del romanzo, Daddo, mediando tra regno umano e non umano, riesce a sfidare "la presunta incomunicabilità tra spirito e natura" (*Ecologia* 83). È innegabile che *L'Iguana*, questa "fiaba etico-ecologica" (Seno 78), sia un testo senza uguali nel panorama letterario italiano del ventesimo secolo, e che renda Ortese un'autrice "centrale per un discorso ecocritico" per la pluralità dei temi affrontati, tra cui, ricorda Iovino, "la solidarietà tra le forme di vita e l'interesse costante per il paesaggio" (*Ecologia* 76). Ritengo tuttavia che una simile attenzione debba essere concessa anche all'ultimo romanzo della scrittrice, *Alonso e i visionari* (1996), ritenuto da alcuni "il miglior romanzo pubblicato dalla Ortese dai tempi dell'ormai lontano *Porto di Toledo*" (Amigoni 120) ma passato inosservato, con poche eccezioni, agli occhi dei lettori e degli studiosi, e che con *L'Iguana* condivide, come ha notato Sharon Wood, il rifiuto della separazione dell'umanità dalla natura (Wood 152).

È proprio in questo romanzo che Ortese sviluppa una riflessione critica del postumano, che la porta a rigettare l'individualismo celebrato dall'Umanesimo classico e la superiorità della specie umana. Nel romanzo, la scrittrice si propone di annullare la distanza tra umano e non umano e di includere gli animali nella comunità etica, nodi centrali, questi, non solo del tessuto narrativo del romanzo (e dell'analisi che mi accingo a proporre di seguito), ma anche della prospettiva teorica che Rosi Braidotti elabora nel volume *The Posthuman* (2013). In modo analogo alla filosofa italo-australiana, Ortese individua nella "soggettività ecologica," nell'esigenza di una nuova "etica della terra" e della "condivisione," i punti cardine sui quali fondare una valida alternativa alla crisi del mondo contemporaneo, ai problemi che minacciano l'ecosistema e all'essenzialismo umanista.

[1] Si consultino a questo proposito gli studi di Monica Farnetti, Serenella Iovino, Sharon Wood, Cosetta Seno e Vilma De Gasperin.

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Questo studio si propone pertanto di esaminare alcune tematiche fondamentali di *Alonso e i visionari*, tra cui la presunta superiorità degli esseri umani e la cosiddetta "questione animale," l'interdipendenza tra mondo umano e non umano, e lo sviluppo di un'etica della pietà e della cura, paradigmaticamente definita da Ortese come "soccorso" o "partecipazione al dolore". Concentrandomi su tali problematiche, non solo ritengo che Ortese anticipi l'appello lanciato da Braidotti, per la necessità di un giudizio etico più equo che rispetti tutte le forme di vita (Braidotti 53), ma che possa essere considerata tra i pionieri della riflessione sul postumano in Italia. Ortese si interessa di tematiche proprie degli *Environmental* e *Animal Studies* e propone nuovi valori e una diversa forma di pensiero più inclusiva e aperta all'Altro (capace di colmare l'abisso tra uomo e ambiente) prima ancora che questi temi abbiano suscitato l'interesse di illustri pensatori contemporanei, tra cui Giorgio Agamben, Paola Cavalieri, Peter Singer, Gilles Deleuze e Félix Guattari.

Alonso e i visionari condivide con *L'iguana* e *Corpo celeste* l'aperta critica alla ragione, all'esaltazione della mente a scapito del corpo, al disprezzo della natura e al dolore inflitto all'altro, ma si distingue per la modalità con cui tratta questi argomenti. Il romanzo non mira a separare o differenziare gli esseri umani dagli animali, né ad individuare le abilità che decretano la superiorità o l'inferiorità delle due specie. Contesta, invece, la centralità dell'uomo, che nei secoli, e in nome dell'intelligenza, ha esercitato il suo potere sull'altro, sia esso umano, animale, vegetale o minerale, e suggerisce una visione del mondo simile a quella braidottiana, che si basa sul principio di inter-connessione di tutti gli esseri e il creato, su una concezione organica e vitale della materia, su valori etici ed estetici simili, che secondo la filosofa si trovano alla base della coscienza del soggetto postumano contemporaneo:

> Definisco il soggetto critico postumano all'interno dell'ecofilosofia delle appartenenze multiple, come un soggetto relazionale determinato nella e dalla molteplicità, che vuol dire un soggetto in grado di operare sulle differenze ma anche internamente differenziato, eppure ancora radicato e responsabile. La soggettività postumana esprime […] una parziale forma di responsabilità, basata su un forte senso di collettività e relazionalità […].[2]

In *Alonso e i visionari* alcuni personaggi possiedono una soggettività postumana che si avvicina a quella identificata da Braidotti. Tanto il professore Jimmy Op, uno dei protagonisti e co-narratore con Stella Winter del libro, quanto il piccolo Decio, di cui si tratterà più avanti, sono dotati di una soggettività nomadica e postumana "non fissa ed unitaria," giacché rifiutano l'"individualismo egocentrico," vanno oltre i limiti della propria specie, accolgono l'altro animale, avvertono ogni entità come materia soggetta a forze e a fenomeni di divenire, non separabile né dall'ambiente né dalla materialità che contraddistingue, a sua volta, gli esseri umani (Braidotti 49-50).

Emblematico risulta l'esempio del Professore americano Jimmy Op, il quale, a suo modo, riconosce quel *continuum* tra ambiente e umanità che la cultura, secondo Ortese, ha cancellato, e individua tra le cause della sua sofferenza e della sua malattia, il dolore inflitto

[2] Il brano è tratto dalla traduzione italiana del volume di Braidotti, *Il postumano,* 57. Laddove non specificato, mi riferisco alla versione inglese *The Posthuman*.

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all'altro animale e vegetale. Op è, inoltre, il primo a descrivere il cucciolo di puma, Alonso, che insieme alla famiglia Decimo incontra nel deserto dell' Arizona. Alonso è volutamente presentato dal professore in termini ambigui, che non privilegiano né l'animalità né l'umanità del puma, ma dove prevale l'idea di una sostanza in cui convergono caratteristiche umane e non umane. Ed è sempre Op a fornire una visione egalitaria del mondo, indicando come "la grazia dell'uomo" risieda "nella solidarietà e nell'unione di tutti gli esseri viventi" (*Alonso* 209). Aspetto, quest'ultimo, che rimanda all'ideale di comunità ritenuto da Braidotti, e dalla filosofia novecentesca, un elemento necessario per sovvertire la centralità dell'essere umano e per definire in termini differenti la soggettività, non più esclusa, ma spinozianamente "immessa e integrata nel processo di autogenerazione del mondo" (Esposito 32).

Attraverso un discorso inclusivo, e non sbilanciato a favore dell'umanità, Ortese giunge a minare la supremazia dell'uomo e il credo umanista, che ha celebrato la simmetria e l'armonia dell'essere umano a scapito delle altre specie; a sovvertire i binarismi che contraddistinguono il pensiero filosofico occidentale; a indebolire il potere esclusivo della ragione, e a criticare il principio che considera l' "umanità come misura di tutte le cose".[3] La scrittrice offre la sua alternativa alla visione antropocentrica anche attraverso il personaggio di Stella Winter.

Stella è alla ricerca di un pensiero fondato su premesse che non sono esclusivamente umane: "Mi ero rivolta ad un'altra razza, a un popolo, oltre l'umano, avevo sentito la divinità della nostra Terra, e madre, tanto tenuta a distanza" (*Alonso* 176), e che riconoscono e accolgono l'alterità in tutte le sue forme. Anche per Ortese, quindi, come per Braidotti, è necessario ripensare la nozione di "umano" e indagare l'essenza stessa dell'umanità rispetto all'animalità, dove la prima è ritenuta in possesso di certi tratti distintivi—tra i quali il *logos* e la soggettività—di cui la seconda sembrerebbe essere priva. In modo originale, quindi, Ortese contribuisce a quella disputa filosofica nota comunemente come "La questione animale," di cui si riassumeranno di seguito le posizioni principali.

Il dibattito, che si è soliti far risalire ad Aristotele e alla sua definizione dell'uomo come "animale razionale" (*Etica Nicomachea* I, 13), passa attraverso il neoplatonismo, per giungere poi a René Descartes, il quale inaugura un filone di indagine che mira a comprovare l'inferiorità filosofica degli animali rispetto gli esseri umani. Specificamente, nella quinta sezione del *Discorso sul Metodo* (1637), gli animali vengono presentati come veri e propri automi, privi di linguaggio e per questa ragione incapaci di dialogare con l'uomo. Trecento anni dopo, Martin Heidegger e Jacques Lacan si inseriscono in questo dibattito e condividono, in linea di massima, la medesima idea del pensatore francese. Sebbene Heidegger rifiuti la definizione tradizionale dell'uomo come "animale razionale" dotato di linguaggio e ragione (Agamben 50), questi percepisce un abisso tra uomo e animale, dato che quest'ultimo risulta intrappolato in un anello disinibitorio di causa-effetto per il quale può solo comportarsi istintivamente, essendo incapace di

[3] Idea individuata per primo da Protagora e divenuta principio universale con il Rinascimento italiano, Braidotti 13.

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"relazionarsi con il proprio essere e con l'essere fuori da sé."[4] Da ciò dipende essenzialmente la "povertà di mondo" dell'animale, che sebbene possa vedere l'"Aperto" non può però accedervi.[5]

Allo stesso modo, Lacan reputa l'animale una "macchina inceppata" (Lacan 31), e perciò privo di *logos*, affermazione che lo avvicina ad altri pensatori, da Aristotele a Descartes, da Kant a Lévinas, i quali sostengono che l'animale non umano non possiede né linguaggio né inconscio, differendo pertanto dall'umano per la sua incapacità di fingere o mentire. Tra i filosofi che si oppongono alla concezione dell'animale iniziata con Descartes si distingue Jacques Derrida che, in *L'animale che dunque sono* (2006), sovverte il cogito cartesiano, contesta l'automatismo dell'animale e la presunta incapacità di rispondere agli stimoli esterni, e supporta il giudizio del filosofo inglese Jeremy Bentham, secondo il quale anche l'animale è in grado di avvertire il dolore. Giudizi questi già anticipati da Giacomo Leopardi, il quale seguendo i sentieri battuti da Voltaire e Hume, sostiene in diverse opere che gli animali possiedono molte delle stesse capacità umane, ma in forme differenti (Ditadi 50-51).

Si può sostenere che Ortese, in modo simile a Leopardi e Derrida, prenda le posizioni di chi, all'interno del dibattito, mira a indebolire la divisione uomo-animale. La scrittrice condanna sia la presunta supremazia degli esseri umani sugli animali, sia il potere che essi esercitano su altri esseri umani ritenuti inferiori. Entrambe le forme di violenza e coercizione, spiega Ortese in *Corpo celeste*, derivano dal privilegio attribuito alla ragione in epoca moderna, il cui fine è sempre stato quello di "dichiarare e dimostrare—con carte false—la inferiorità, quando non la insensibilità assoluta" di bestie, donne, vecchi e bambini e della stessa Terra (150). In *Alonso e i visionari* la superiorità umana sembra essere invece la diretta conseguenza di ciò che la scrittrice definisce "teoria della conoscibilità," secondo la quale solo parte del mondo è realmente conoscibile, quella cioè dell'uomo; mentre la sofferenza delle altre creature viventi rimane sconosciuta. I sostenitori di questa teoria avvertono una netta separazione tra umano e non umano, e negano all'altro non solo il diritto di esistere ma anche quello di soffrire, entrambi aspetti cruciali della riflessione e della lotta allo "specismo" che Ortese affronta nel romanzo.

L'abisso tra umano e non umano, perpetuato da coloro che credono nel "diritto dell'uomo superiore," è colmato dall'autrice attraverso la proposta di estendere la nozione di "vita" anche agli esseri non umani. Ortese individua, in questo modo, una delle prerogative del soggetto postumano di Braidotti, che concepisce la vita non più come "proprietà esclusiva e diritto inalienabile di una sola specie, quella umana" (60) ma come processo, forza vitale e presupposto comune all'intero creato. Attraverso le

[4] "the animal cannot enter in relationship with the being that it itself is or with beings other than itself." Heidegger 272-73. Per il commento del passaggio heideggeriano rimando a Oliver, che così chiarisce: "Animals behave, whereas humans engage in the self-reflexive activity of comporting themselves. Animal behavior is locked into its instinctual ring, whereas human comportment is intentional and free" (Oliver, *Animal Lesson* 201).

[5] La povertà di mondo animale, dunque, sarebbe riconducibile per Heidegger al fatto che, contrariamente agli esseri umani, gli animali "vivono" ma non "esistono," e all'impossibilità di penetrare l' "Aperto," ovvero "il luogo dove si verificano i fenomeni dell'essere" e quindi il linguaggio. Si vedano Calarco (46; 34) e Oliver "Stopping the Antropological Machine" (4).

parole della narratrice, Stella Winter "suppongo sia sbagliato parlare di animali, la vita è una" (*Alonso* 21), Ortese introduce una correzione cruciale alla cultura vigente. Afferma infatti che sia inesatto parlare o distinguere gli umani dai non umani considerato che entrambi sono esseri viventi e che c'è solo una vita a questo mondo, che non richiede nessun attributo o specificazione. Ammettendo che gli esseri umani e non umani esistano allo stesso modo, Ortese, dunque, prelude a una forma di vita comune e indifferenziata per entrambe le specie, preannunciando ciò che Giorgio Agamben definisce in *L'Aperto* "nuda vita," una vita "che non è né animale né umana, ma solo una vita separata ed esclusa da se stessa" (43) e che si pone secondo il filosofo italiano oltre la distinzione classica tra *zoē* e *bios,* rispettivamente tra la vita come mera esistenza e la vita politica e sociale.

Il fine ultimo del romanzo non è quello di umanizzare gli animali per dimostrarne la superiorità, né di provare l'inferiorità degli umani. Al contrario, l'intento principale dell'autrice consiste nel mettere a fuoco le capacità e le peculiarità che animali umani e non umani condividono, per dimostrare non solo che gli esseri umani non possiedono nessun diritto per sfruttare o servirsi degli animali, ma che gli animali, come le piante e gli altri esseri viventi e non viventi meritano una maggiore considerazione, essendo parte dello stesso ecosistema abitato dall'uomo. In questo modo, dietro una intricatissima vicenda, Ortese sembra realizzare con il romanzo una ibridizzazione delle categorie "umano" e "animale" (Crivelli, "L'Iguana" 86), dove le rigide barriere che distinguono l'umanità e l'animalità si sfaldano. Il puma Alonso, per esempio, è descritto come una "fiera bambina" (19), capace di sospirare e gridare (40, 60); mentre sono gli esseri umani ad essere assimilati alle "fiere, imbevute della nostra siffatta cultura" (206).

Vi sono, inoltre, casi in cui l'animale influenza profondamente l'esistenza degli individui. Ne è una testimonianza il rapporto che il piccolo Decio, figlio dell'illustre accademico Antonio Decimo, istaura con il puma Alonso. Sin dal primo incontro con l'altro animale avvenuto in Arizona, Decio considera Alonso un suo pari ed è l'unico a prendersi cura di lui, a mostrargli affetto e a rivolgergli cure e attenzioni. La vicinanza di Alonso sembra provocare una graduale perdita di umanità in Decio e, dalle parole del narratore, emerge che il puma non solo è legato al bambino da un sentimento fraterno, ma che come Decio, Alonso risulta dotato di una voce. Sin dall'inizio, quindi, la principale differenza tra umano e non umano decade e tanto l'animale come il bambino sembrano appartenere a una stessa specie. Non è un caso che Ortese faccia riferimento alla lingua parlata dalle due creature, elemento massimo della differenza tra uomo e animale e prova fondamentale, secondo i filosofi, dell'inferiorità della bestia. E risulta altrettanto significativo che la *langue* di Decio e Alonso è un idioma di amore e affetto piuttosto che un linguaggio espressione di un concetto o diretta conseguenza dell'intelligenza, aspetto questo che prelude significativamente alla concezione ortesiana di Ragione, su cui mi soffermerò più avanti.

Nelle parole di Decio, inoltre, è possibile individuare una traccia del suo tentativo di approssimarsi all'animalità. Nell'episodio in cui il bambino manifesta la volontà di prendere in braccio il cucciolo di puma, la voce narrante riporta come il piccolo Decio ricorre deliberatamente a una forma scorretta della lingua—"Lo volle di nuovo in

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braccio, in *baccio*, ridendo per il suo volontario errore" (*Alonso* 23; mia l'enfasi). Lo sbaglio, di cui Decio sembra essere consapevole attesta la volontà del bambino di distanziarsi dall'umanità che lo separerebbe dal puma, per accoglierne a pieno invece l'animalità. L'errore ortografico, dunque, diventa un "segno" della distanza dall'umano e si può significativamente collegare alla riflessione di Derrida sul linguaggio.

Nel volume *L'animale che dunque sono*, risulta evidente la volontà del pensatore francese di coniare un nuovo termine in grado di nominare l'animale in modo più rigoroso e senza ricorrere alla parola "animale," incapace, secondo Derrida, di esprimere la molteplicità di relazioni che caratterizza la vita animale, troppo generica per indicare ogni essere vivente tranne l'uomo. Il neologismo a cui Derrida giunge è l' "*animot*" e rappresenta la risposta alla prima violenza fatta dagli esseri umani verso gli animali, "una parola l'animale, un nome che gli uomini hanno istituito, un nome che essi si sono presi il diritto e l'autorità di dare all'altro vivente" (Derrida 62). Ricorrendo a un vocabolo che non esiste nella lingua francese, Derrida fonde "animaux" e "mots," animali e parole, per indicare "né una specie, né un genere, né un individuo, ma un'irriducibile molteplicità vivente di esseri mortali […] una sorta di ibrido mostruoso" (Derrida 82) e contemporaneamente per rimandare proprio alla parola, al linguaggio, tradizionalmente negato agli animali.

L'espressione usata da Decio, "in baccio," potrebbe essere interpretata alla maniera derridiana, come un neologismo che si allontana dal concetto di umanità e che non può essere ricondotto a nessuna distinzione di specie. Nella lingua di Decio troviamo pertanto una traccia della prossimità umana al mondo animale e di quella continuità umano-non umano che Ortese si propone di affermare. Inoltre, non è solo nella lingua di Decio che animalità e umanità si mescolano insieme ma, come ha notato Tatiana Crivelli, anche nello stesso puma, nel cui sguardo convergono due sentimenti differenti: il "profondo dolore della natura per i crimini commessi dall'umanità" e il desiderio dell'uomo di interagire con il mondo e con il creato ("Alonso the Poet" 424). Il puma ortesiano, come l'*animot* di Derrida, rappresenta dunque una molteplicità di significati e relazioni che non si possono ridurre a una singola immagine o specie. Alonso è pertanto contemporaneamente puma, cane, bambino, Mutamento, Innocenza, bontà, pace. Ma soprattutto Alonso, come il gatto di Derrida, chiede con il suo sguardo, "non di povera bestia, ma di padre di umanità," (*Alonso* 47) di essere riconosciuto.

Il puma, in modo ulteriore, non è considerato come essere "privo di mondo" soltanto dal piccolo Decio, ma anche dal fratello Julio. Questi gli parla alle orecchie credendo che il puma possa intenderlo e mostra inizialmente una forte dose di affetto e empatia per Alonso, ancor più quando il padre colpisce l'animale con un fermacarte: "[Antonio Decimo] ho lanciato dalla finestra un piccolo fermacarte: lo vedevo, in giardino, abbandonato ai piedi di Julio, e la cosa mi dava molto fastidio. Eccolo che piange, ora lo scioccone, e Julio mi getta uno sguardo che non gli ho mai visto, da fiera anche lui, pieno di sorpresa, non vorrei dire di odio" (*Alonso* 60). Il brano, incluso dal professore Antonio Decimo in una lettera a Jimmy Op, rivela un suo atto di violenza gratuita nei confronti dell'animale e, contemporaneamente, testimonia "l'animalismo" di Julio. Lo sguardo bestiale che Julio rivolge al padre, autore di quell'atto, può leggersi

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inoltre come espressione di ciò che Deleuze e Guattari definiscono "divenire animale," quel fenomeno che non indica la semplice imitazione umana di atteggiamenti o comportamenti animali, ma piuttosto una forma di energia che, attraversando il soggetto e ciò che lo circonda, spinge l'umano a infrangere i limiti della sua stessa umanità. Come i pensatori francesi spiegano in *Mille Piani* (1980):

> Un divenire non è una corrispondenza di rapporti. Ma non è neppure una rassomiglianza, un'imitazione, e al limite, un'identificazione [...]. Anzitutto i divenir-animali sono di un'altra potenza, poiché non hanno la loro realtà nell'animale che si imiterebbe, a cui si corrisponderebbe, ma in se stessi, in quel che ci cattura all'improvviso e ci fa divenire *una vicinanza*, *un'indiscernibilità*, che estrae dall'animale qualcosa di comune, molto più di ogni utilizzazione, molto più di ogni addomesticamento, di ogni imitazione: "la Bestia." (Deleuze e Guattari 834, 960-61)

Nello scambio osmotico che si realizza tra Julio e il puma, l'umanità dell'uno e l'animalità dell'altro diventano inseparabili. Alonso, dopo aver accusato il colpo, scoppia in lacrime e cerca rifugio e protezione da Julio, il quale, a sua volta, accoglie l'animale, risultandone quasi contagiato. Se per i lettori e, forse per lo stesso Julio, la sua animalità deriva dal riconoscimento dell'animale come creatura vivente e dal suo aprirsi all'altro, per il professore Antonio Decimo l'animalità del figlio acquista termini negativi. Julio, irascibile, ribelle, anarchico e spesso violento con il padre, incarna quanto più di istintivo e irrazionale esista nell'animale e viene pertanto ridotto dal padre, nonostante la sua apparenza fisica, allo stesso livello gretto e inferiore degli animali.

Il testo rivela che è proprio dalle idee del Professore Decimo e dal circolo di intellettuali di cui era a capo, che nasce quel gruppo politico (o associazione banditesca) a cui moltissimi studenti e il figlio Julio aderiranno.[6] La causa dei comportamenti ferini di Julio, dunque, non è da ricercare nell'influenza negativa del puma, ma in quella "filosofia della libertà" (*Alonso* 130), in quella forma di intelligenza e di disprezzo per tutte le creature ritenute inferiori all'uomo che Julio impara a far sua apprendendola proprio dal padre Antonio, esponente dell'intellighenzia romana e sostenitore del diritto dell'uomo di "fare giustizia sulla vita" anche a scapito degli altri esseri. In questo aspetto, il Professor Decimo si distingue radicalmente dal collega Jimmy Op che, al contrario, "valuta i deserti e le difficoltà del mondo" (*Alonso* 12), e conclude che dipendono in gran parte dall'allontanamento della cultura contemporanea dallo stato naturale:

> "[...] io vedo le cose da americano... noi non abbiamo un vero culto della mente, non vediamo differenze, in fondo, tra un teorema e un albero, tra natura e uomo. O non più. È tutto cambiato dai tempi di Emerson" disse pensosamente. "Nel senso che il culto dell'uomo, della ragione, è ormai cosa superata?" "Del suo primato—della sua priorità—direi. Decimo, del resto, agiva anche lui del tutto naturalmente. Il disprezzo della natura, fa parte proprio dell'uomo 'naturale', dell'uomo che non vede l'unità del tutto, ma solo il proprio particolare [...]". (*Alonso* 20)

Risulta interessante il fatto che Op sottolinea, in questo contesto, la sua nazionalità americana e la pone in relazione a un particolare, e differente, sguardo sul mondo. Le discrepanze che il professore individua tra il suo pensiero e quello europeo, lasciano

[6] Come la "teoria del distacco" o quella esposta da Antonio Decimo nel suo libro *Tregua e Travestimento*, sulla condizione immutabile del dolore (Ortese, *Alonso e i visionari* 82, 95).

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presupporre che Ortese stia qui commentando la mancanza di una tradizione filosofica specificamente italiana, volta a indagare la separazione tra uomo e natura, e a cui la scrittrice vuole, a suo modo, supplire. Non è un caso, pertanto, che Ortese attraverso Op abbracci il pensiero neoplatonico e quello di alcuni suoi autori prediletti, come Blake, Shelley e Keats, e giunga fino a Emerson, al quale allude apertamente.

Ciò che il professore americano, come la stessa Ortese, osserva con amarezza è la distanza che l'umanità ha posto tra sé e la natura, cosa che tra l'altro lo stesso Emerson osservava già a sua tempo, quando sosteneva che gran parte della gioia dell'umanità risiedesse proprio nella "relazione occulta tra l'uomo e la natura" (Emerson 19) e nella interconnessione tra uomo e ambiente spesso non visibile all'uomo. Da questo allontanamento nasce allora, secondo Op, "quella religione della specie umana" o la figura dell' "uomo nuovo" che dimentica la relazione e l'unità del cosmo, si concentra solo sull'umano e rinnega l'altro animale. Dunque la distanza tra umano e non umano si produce in questo momento per Op, come per Ortese, quando l'essere umano prende coscienza della propria condizione e di non essere quindi animale, "Il bruto veniva odiato, proprio perché l'uomo non era più bruto" (*Alonso* 20). Affermazione quest'ultima che sembra richiamare il giudizio di Agamben, il quale sostiene che il differenziarsi dagli animali è insito nella natura umana. Ciò avviene dal momento in cui l'umanità ha sviluppato, quando ha sentito il bisogno di definire cosa o chi fosse, un proprio dispositivo, che il filosofo italiano definisce "macchina antropologica," responsabile in epoca moderna della cesura tra umano e non umano.[7] Secondo Agamben, uno degli obiettivi della filosofia contemporanea è quello di disarmare la macchina antropologica che produce la separazione tra umano e non umano. Il disegno auspicato dal filosofo rispecchia la visione ortesiana, che condanna e si impegna a sovvertire sia ciò che Antonio Decimo e il nuovo Julio professano (cioè la superiorità degli umani e il diritto a esercitare qualsiasi forma di potere sugli animali e su tutti gli esseri non dotati di ragione), che il giudizio del criminologo Edwin, quando sostiene che il vero problema sia stato considerare allo stesso modo tutti gli esseri viventi (*Alonso* 75). In altre parole, Ortese "rifiuta apertamente qualsiasi idea di un privilegio etico ed ontologico posseduto dagli umani in un discorso di giustizia e libertà" (Iovino, "Loving the Alien" 185), e mostra le ragioni per cui il mondo non umano e l'intero ambiente meritano la stessa considerazione e attenzione, finora riservata esclusivamente agli umani. Appare così evidente che la scrittrice non solo contribuisca a minare l'abisso che separa l'uomo dall'animale, ma vada oltre questo, pensando ad una specie indifferenziata a cui tutti gli esseri e oggetti del creato possono appartenere, e ad una più profonda unità del cosmo.[8]

Nel tentativo di realizzare il suo progetto egalitario, la scrittrice apre creativamente la strada a quelle riflessioni, proprie della filosofia contemporanea, che

[7] La macchina antropologica, in due varianti, antica e moderna, è stata ed è in azione nella nostra cultura. Nella modernità funziona "escludendo da se stesso come non umano un soggetto già umano," cioè animalizzando l'umano, mentre nell'antichità operava in modo opposto, umanizzando l'animale (Agamben 37-38).

[8] Si veda il giudizio di Emanuele Trevi a proposito di *Alonso*, opera in cui Ortese si mostra platonicamente convinta "della fondamentale unità del cosmo: unità della sua essenza e delle sue leggi implacabili" (Trevi 92).

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mettono in dubbio la nozione di "speciesism," termine coniato da Richard Ryde ma diffuso da Peter Singer e Paola Cavalieri, per indicare il privilegio che gli esseri umani hanno conquistato a spese delle altre specie, o per dirla con Cavalieri: " La nozione di specismo potrebbe essere in realtà usata per descrivere qualsiasi forma di discriminazione basata sulla specie [...]. Il termine è stato coniato sul modello di razzismo e sessismo. Il neologismo allude così al pregiudizio intra-umano che l'egalitarismo contemporaneo condanna".[9] Per Ortese non solo l'ambiente e gli animali vivono con o senza l'uomo e hanno il diritto di farlo, ma possiedono le stesse caratteristiche, o in alcune casi capacità, degli esseri umani. Le modalità attraverso le quali la scrittrice critica lo "specismo" risultano davvero esemplari.

In primo luogo, si può constatare che il puma possiede la capacità di ricordare: "Il puma continuava a guardare lontano, e fu allora [...] che compresi qual era il centro dei suoi ricordi—di povera bestia, non umani, ma pur sempre ricordi" (*Alonso* 54). Ai quei filosofi che sostengono che gli animali non possiedono le capacità che contraddistinguono gli umani, la scrittrice sembra rispondere leopardianamente, affermando che gli animali sarebbero dotati di una loro forma di memoria, che non è né superiore né inferiore a quella umana, ma, secondo il celebre giudizio di Rousseau e che Leopardi riprende nei *Paralipomeni della Batracomiomachia* (1831-37), differente per intensità o per grado di perfezione (Ditadi 26). Il giudizio di Leopardi sembra anche risuonare nei pensieri del Professor Antonio Decimo, quando si chiede se anche nelle bestie sia presente "qualcosa" assimilabile alla coscienza umana, e se gli animali siano in grado di provare dei sentimenti come l'amicizia e il dolore.[10] Questi suoi quesiti ricalcano inoltre il tono delle celebri domande di Jeremy Bentham, nella *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislations* (1789). In questo testo il filosofo inglese intuisce il punto di stallo e la vana insistenza della filosofia cartesiana nel perpetuare la differenza tra animale umano e non umano e l'errore in cui è caduta chiedendosi se gli animali non umani potessero pensare, ragionare o parlare:

> I Francesi hanno già scoperto che il colore nero della pelle non è una buona ragione perché un uomo debba essere abbandonato, per motivi diversi da un atto di giustizia, al capriccio di un torturatore. Forse un giorno si giungerà a riconoscere che il numero delle zampe, la villosità della pelle o la terminazione dell'osso sacro sono ragioni insufficienti per abbandonare a quello stesso destino un essere senziente. In base a che cos'altro si dovrebbe tracciare la linea insuperabile? In base alla ragione? O alla capacità di parlare? Ma un cavallo o un cane che abbiano raggiunto l'età matura sono senza confronto animali più razionali e più aperti alla conversazione di un bambino di un giorno, di una settimana o di un mese. Supponiamo che così non fosse; che cosa conterebbe? La domanda da porsi non è se sanno ragionare, né se sanno parlare, bensì se possono soffrire.[11]

[9] The notion of speciesism could actually be used to describe any form of discrimination based on species [...]. The term was coined on the model of racism and sexism. The neologism thus alludes to the intrahuman prejudices that contemporary egalitarianism condemns" (Cavalieri 70; traduzione mia).

[10] Come si legge in Ortese, "Realmente queste creature – anche le fiere, anche!—sembrano possedere qualcosa che si chiama, per quanto oscura, coscienza, e l'amicizia, anche leggera, dell'uomo o dei ragazzi per loro ricorda ad esse qualcosa, le commuove. Ma sono poi - mi domando- capaci di piangere interiormente, come noi da giovani, per una donna o per la morte del padre? [...]È questo quello di cui vorrei accertarmi" (Ortese, *Alonso* 54).

[11] Il giudizio di Bentham, tratto dal diciassettesimo capitolo dei *Principi della morale e della legislazione*, è riportato da Ditadi (764).

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Il pensiero di Bentham inaugura ciò che allora appariva una nuova prospettiva, secondo la quale gli animali, come gli umani, erano in grado di percepire il dolore, la paura, lo stupore. Risulta emblematico che sia proprio il professor Decimo, sostenitore della pura intelligenza, a mostrarsi dubbioso e ad ammettere la possibilità, anche se per pochi attimi, che anche gli animali possano provare sentimenti tradizionalmente associati agli esseri umani. La critica che la scrittrice muove ai sostenitori della differenza tra mondo umano e non umano sembra qui farsi più pungente, se si considera che il professore mette in discussione il pensiero antropocentrico di cui egli stesso è fiero portavoce.

Alla luce delle osservazioni di Bentham, inoltre, è interessante notare che il puma Alonso esperisce una forma di meraviglia simile a quella umana, ampliando il ventaglio delle abilità o delle qualità che tanto l'animale quanto l'essere umano condividono. Per Ortese, come Leopardi, Bentham e Derrida, la specie umana e quella non umana si approssimano non solo perché come creature viventi anch'essi sono soggetti alla finitudine e alla morte, ma anche perché è impossibile negare che essi soffrano, sentano pietà per l'altro, partecipino alla formazione del mondo, provino meraviglia.

Il puma pertanto, come tutti gli animali ortesiani, perde lo statuto di inferiorità e passività che secondo l'immaginario culturale contraddistingue l'animale, cessa, in altre parole, di esistere come "soggetto morale passivo," come sostiene Iovino in *Ecologia Letteraria*, diventando coattivo, dando vita, cioè, a un complesso umano-non umano che risulta inseparabile (39).

Inoltre, il puma e gli altri animali, per Ortese non possono e non devono essere considerati o trattati semplicemente come materia bruta perché non dotati della ragione umana; e soprattutto non esiste niente, per la scrittrice, in grado di giustificare il loro sfruttamento. Tale posizione sembra dialogare perfettamente con il pensiero e le posizioni di Peter Singer in *Animal Liberation* (1975). In particolare, secondo Singer, sarebbe immorale decretare la superiorità dell'uomo sull'animale eleggendo l'intelletto come parametro, così come lo sarebbe escludere dalla comunità etica gli esseri umani affetti da disturbi psichici o altre disabilità mentali. In entrambi i casi, la mancanza di intelligenza non deve implicare un diverso trattamento. Allo stesso modo, Ortese mira a scardinare il "diritto dell'anima" inventato dall'uomo per sancire la propria superiorità e di cui, come ricorda De Gasperin, gli animali sono privi (214). Come Singer e Cavalieri, anche Ortese pertanto riconosce la centralità di abbattere lo specismo e di puntare invece sul bisogno di una "visione inclusiva", dove l'Altro è accettato e accolto nella sfera morale, malgrado la sua mancanza di ragione. Quest'ultima cessa dunque di esistere come fattore discriminante che stabilisce la differenza tra specie. Lo sviluppo di una coscienza ecologica in Ortese va allora di pari passo con la necessità di una riforma del *logos* tradizionale, che nei secoli ha reso la Ragione un mezzo di legittimazione della superiorità umana.

Affinché una visione profondamente egalitaria ed ecologica del mondo, ciò che Braidotti definisce "zoe-centred egalitarianism" (60), sia effettivamente realizzabile, occorre, in prima istanza, ripensare e agire sulla nozione di Ragione, includendo in essa quelle componenti che la razionalità ha sempre escluso tra cui i sensi, il corpo, i sogni, gli

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istinti e la stessa animalità. La scrittrice già ne *L'Iguana* individua l'"Intelligente amore" come risposta alla ragione ordinatrice. Questa consiste in una forma di conoscenza in cui filosofia e poesia si congiungono dando vita a un pensiero "filosoficopoetico", in cui anche il pensare consiste in un atto d'amore che ricorda da vicino la "ragione poetica" o amorosa della filosofa spagnola María Zambrano.[12]

Analogamente al logos amoroso dell'*Iguana*, in *Alonso e i visionari*, Ortese propone un'intelligenza che il professor Jimmy Op definisce in modo emblematico "cosa dolorosa" (*Alonso* 126). Non solo il pensiero astratto è qui ridotto alla stregua di cosa materiale, ma questa forma di intelligenza include i sensi e le emozioni, riconoscendone la centralità nel processo conoscitivo. La ragione per Op, come per Ortese, è infatti sinonimo di accoglienza piuttosto che di esclusione, e si fonda su nuovi valori come la compassione e la cura non solo per gli esseri umani e non umani, ma per l'intero ecosistema. Questo slancio, questo aprirsi all'altro, che il professore americano porta in qualche modo già rinchiuso nel nome (Op sarebbe il diminutivo di Opfering, "offrire" in tedesco) è una forma di premura e di attenzione che Op condivide con il protagonista dell'*Iguana* Daddo, e che, come nota Iovino, si approssima a quell' "etica della cura" di cui parlano Luce Irigaray ed Emmanuel Lévinas ("Loving the Alien" 197).

Ortese elabora un'etica simile basata sulla pietà per tutti gli esseri del creato e sulla cura dell'altro (diverrà ad esempio il "soccorso" ai deboli e agli indifesi in *Corpo celeste*) e sulla condivisione, ciò che la scrittrice definisce in *Alonso e i visionari* "partecipazione al dolore". Accogliere in pieno l'altro significa per Ortese condividerne la sofferenza: "la partecipazione, davvero profonda, al dolore del mondo," spiega l'autrice, "è più che la compassione; questa dura un momento. La partecipazione, invece una volta iniziata, non finisce più" (*Alonso* 230). È questa scoperta che rende il romanzo non solo cruciale all'interno del corpus ortesiano ma anche "necessario," come lei stessa sostiene.[13] Alonso diventa infatti un invito a includere nell'intelligenza anche la carità e l'amore per l'altro, e nel riconoscere nel puma, nell'altro e soprattutto nell'animale lo "spirito del mondo," "la sua mitezza e bontà" (*Alonso* 245). Da questa consapevolezza ha origine l'impegno della scrittrice, come riferisce a Luigi Vaccari, che al puma protagonista del romanzo del 1996, ha fatto una promessa che si propone di mantenere: "Io ho un debito col puma, perciò ho scritto questo libro […]. Si hanno debiti anche con le creature di altre specie, se ci sono. E bisogna rendere loro giustizia" (41).

In *Alonso e i visionari,* Ortese dà prova della sua coscienza postumana e sviluppa una concezione vitale e materiale del reale, dove spariscono le divisioni di genere, di razza e di specie; dove gli "umani appartengono alla stessa schiera di animali, draghi e uccelli" (De Gasperin 215); e dove l'antropocentrismo esclusivo della cultura moderna—"fondata sul diritto, per l'uomo […] di considerarsi e agire come il Primo e il migliore" (*Alonso* 205)—è sovvertito e sostituito da una forma di "umanesimo evoluto che ridispone l'umano all'orizzontalità" (Iovino, *Ecologia* 21). In questo romanzo prende

[12] Per la prossimità dell' "intelligente amore" ortesiano alla "ragione poetica" di Zambrano si veda Di Rosa (62-82).

[13] "Qui grido la mia indignazione per la crudeltà del mondo. Per le creature oppresse: i vecchi, i poveri, i bambini, gli animali. I più deboli che hanno bisogno di tutto e sono in balia degli altri" (Polla-Mattiot 95).

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forma il progetto della scrittrice che mira alla "pacificazione di tutti gli esseri viventi" (Clerici, "Malinconia" 16) e a un ideale di comunione di tutto il creato. È questa l'alternativa che Ortese offre ai lettori e alle lettrici contro il pensiero antropocentrico, e che non differisce dalla visione inclusiva e aperta all'altro non umano e alla Terra tutta, a cui Braidotti giunge in *The Posthuman*, dove la filosofa individua "a new way of combining ethical values with the well-being of an enlarged sense of community, which includes one's territorial or environmental inter-connections" (190). L'impegno di Ortese è allo stesso modo rivolto indistintamente alla Terra e alle sue creature e non esclusivamente all'uomo; a un progetto etico che per realizzarsi, sostiene Cosetta Seno, deve necessariamente "contenere in sé un elemento di speranza e visione" (111), nel duplice senso di progetto e di immaginazione. Ancora una volta, Ortese sembra precedere Braidotti, quando individua l'importanza della componente visionaria affinché tale progetto si realizzi.[14]

Rimane infine un'ultima domanda irrisolta: chi sono i visionari ortesiani? Quelli che "partecipano alle vicende umane" (Zangrandi 144), "coloro che mettono in pratica il 'realismo delle persone libere'" ovvero "gli uomini e le donne che hanno la capacità di porsi delle domande semplici, hanno il coraggio di fare; coloro che sanno superare la pesantezza del presente storico per guardare al senso delle loro azioni in un futuro che si può ancora modificare" (Seno 139)? Bisogna aggiungere, visto che tra i visionari ci sono proprio Decio, Op, e la stessa Winter, che quest'ultimi sono coloro che non si soffermano sulla differenza tra umano e animale, coloro che, citando Donna Haraway, "non sentono più il bisogno di tale differenza" (10), e realizzano che l'uomo non è più al centro del mondo, ma piccola parte, egli stesso, di un macrocosmo. Dobbiamo anche noi allora unirci alla schiera dei visionari, ritenere che l'uomo non sia più il solo e indiscusso protagonista sulla scena, ammettere che l'inumano influenza la nostra soggettività e la nostra percezione del mondo, non considerare la bestia come essere inferiore, ma al contrario aprirci e dimostrare cura e rispetto per l'altro. Assicurarci che la ciotola di acqua per il cucciolo sia sempre piena, come puntualmente appura il professor Op nel romanzo, perché—come chiosa la scrittrice alla fine del suo libro—il puma "non visto…verrà."

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[14] Sostiene Braidotti: "A prophetic or visionary dimension is necessary in order to secure an affirmative hold over the present, as the launching pad for sustainable becoming or qualitative transformations of the negativity and the injustices of the present" (Braidotti 192).

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Alternative Economies for the Anthropocene: Change, Happiness and Future Scenarios

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Abstract

This article analyzes the cultures of the alternative economies that have emerged in Spain as a response to not only economic crisis, but also climate change and global warming. After drafting a conceptual map of alternative economies, the essay focuses on a number of local environmental projects in Spain that can be considered as examples of "alternative biopolitics". These projects involve networks of human and non-human realms such as other species, crops, the monetary economy, the metaphors that render relations between human and non-human life, and alternative constructions of the meaning of life. The second section problematizes contemporary purely eco-systemic perspectives by introducing considerations of individual fulfillment and happiness. In the conclusion, the alternative economies are reconsidered in light of future scenarios in which their impact as well as individuals' well-being may vary significantly. Bringing together frameworks of cultural studies and environmental studies, and juxtaposing systemic ecological analysis with narratives of individual happiness and frustration, this article offers a new approach to understanding alternative economies as novel environmental cultures of great potential importance for the future of the planet.

Keywords: alternative economies, environmental restoration, local currencies, happiness studies.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza las alternativas económicas y culturales que han surgido en España como resultado de la crisis de 2008, pero también como respuesta a la crisis ambiental y el calentamiento global. Tras trazar un mapa de las economías alternativas, el ensayo se enfoca en una serie de proyectos ambientales considerándolos como ejemplos de una "biopolítica alternativa". Estos proyectos incluyen redes de ámbito humano y no-humano, como, por ejemplo, otras especies, cultivos, la economía del dinero, las metáforas que expresan las relaciones entre la vida humana y no humana, así como también construcciones alternativas del sentido de la vida. La sección final problematiza la perspectiva ecológica, considerando las posibilidades de la satisfacción y felicidad individual. En conclusión, las economías alternativas se reconsideran a la luz de escenarios futuros, según los cuales su impacto en el bienestar individual puede variar de modo importante. Conectando los marcos de los estudios culturales y ambientales, y yuxtaponiendo un acercamiento sistémico de la ecología y las narrativas individuales de la felicidad y frustración, este artículo ofrece un análisis innovador de las economías alternativas como culturas ambientales con un enorme impacto en el futuro planetario.

Palabras clave: economías alternativas, restauración medioambiental, monedas locales, estudios de la felicidad.

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> Cause that's what life's all about: To arrange and rearrange and rearrange. (Pete Seeger)

In my trips to various sites of alternative economies in Spain, I look for images of happiness emerging from abandoned construction sites—covered these days with steel nets to prevent the homeless from occupying unfinished buildings. I have learned that for activists one of the sources of happiness is the very realization that a change is necessary, especially if the conviction comes as a result of synergy between various voices. This is an ethical and epistemological satisfaction in recognizing that one has understood the situation and acted accordingly. On 25 July 2009, Ton and Carmen walked with other citizens of Vilanova i la Geltrú to the town's lighthouse, where they all joined the Transition Towns movement—a movement aiming to build an equitable, participatory, and sustainable society, one that will slow Global Warming and make the necessary preparations to survive it. Ton, a social worker, inspired by the ideas of Bernard Letaier and by the music of Pete Seeger, would soon launch a social currency to allow the unemployed and underemployed to exchange services and locally produced goods without conventional currency. This newly created currency allowed the realization of projects that could not be launched earlier for financial reasons. Ton and Carmen gave it the name of the music of love, "turuta," which is traditionally played during the annual fiesta of Vilanova i la Geltrú, when people throw candy at each other and dance. In this way, memories of joyful togetherness were connected to the project of the alternative economy in town. Since that first night in July 2009, every 25th of July, Turutians—as the members of the association are called—gather by the lighthouse on the beach. As the night falls, people sing, dance, talk and think of new projects. These and other gatherings when *ciudadanos* get to know each other better and form a community based on similar values have been among the most satisfying experiences of their alternative economy.

In an article on "Changing the Intellectual Climate," Castree et al. (2014) argue for the involvement of Environmental Social Sciences and Humanities in research on Climate Change because separating the sciences from the humanities risks insulating research from those key "human dimensions" that determine its very significance. They describe, for instance, how different conceptions of well-being may frame plural notions about appropriate transformations. Castree et al. suggest that the problem of "global environmental change" in the human context should be approached as a complex systems problem: "A single, seamless concept of integrated knowledge is thereby posited as both possible and desirable, one focused on complex systems" (np). Although the proposed complex system would include a wide array of knowledges, not only knowledge derived from different academic fields, but also forms of non-academic, activist knowledge and different cultural epistemologies, its "seamlessness" is understandably questionable.

Ecology is a science that has always dealt with the complexity of the biosphere and the unforeseen consequences of interdependence between all of its multiple elements. Ecological complexity emerges from the interactions between the organisms

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and their environments, but while ecology cares for species, ecosystems and the biosphere as a whole, it is somewhat indifferent to the fate of individuals (Anand and González). Writing from the perspective of environmental humanities, I propose to complicate purely systemic ecological approaches by considering narratives of individual fulfillment and happiness both in the present and in future scenarios. My project incorporates ethnographic material collected in various sites of alternative economies in Spain, especially Cardedeu and Vilanova i la Geltrú, on which I will focus. Further sources are interviews with the activists Ton Dalmau, Carmen Dastis, Juan del Río, Miriam Urbano Flecha, Beatriz García and others, as well as the fictional accounts *Memorias de la Tierra* by Miguel Brieva and *Cenital* by Emilio Bueso, which afford insights into and from the future.

Mapping the Change

There are different interpretations of the nature of the current crisis. While it is well known that capitalism generates crises that, if taken advantage of, are profitable for its economic elites, Edgar Morín (2011) defines crisis as an event that reveals what usually remains invisible, forcing those around it to recognize flaws and injustice within the system, and releasing forces of transformation. Various other scholars view the current alternative economies as a symptom of the culmination of an ongoing crisis of capitalism (McKibben) or even more broadly as the crisis of Modernity (Caraça). While previous crises of capitalism were to some extent transitory, this one has a more permanent appearance due to the general decline in job availability caused by the structure of the prevalent economy, the information and communication technology revolution, the growth of the world's population, and the environmental destruction and climate change. According to Bernard Letaier, "The historically unprecedented convergence of the four megatrends—the Age Wave, the Information Revolution, Climate Change/Species Extinction and Monetary Instability—points out that business as usual is just not a realistic possibility" (87). Similarly, Manuel Castells and Joao Caraça (2012) conclude that the crisis is systemic, because it reveals "a non-sustainability of certain values" as the guiding principle of human behavior and consequently "any substantial socio-economic restructuring of global capitalism implies the formation of a new economic culture" (4). These thinkers also observe that social disintegration and violent conflicts can only be prevented by the rise of new social and economic practices which consider "value of life as a superior form of human organization" (13). These cultural changes are the objectives of the alternative economies that have emerged as a result of the current crisis.

In the introduction to *Memorias de la Tierra,* Zuth Egdebius Mö, writing from the future in the planet Zutón about the possibly already non-existing Earth (what really has happened is not revealed), reflects that when the biosphere of the planet was on the verge of collapse, most of the humans inhabiting it seemed to ignore this threat, but there were some exceptions: "… although a small minority, some humans had sufficient lucidity to understand and anticipate their imminent decline, even trying to prevent it"

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(6)[1].[2] Two pages later, two future scenarios are considered and contrasted in an image where the Earth is divided in half. The upper (northern) part shows nature in the service of economy ("economizar la ecología," 8) and where as a result, thirty years later, armed soldiers guard the one last tree of the planet. The lower (southern) part of Earth represents an alternative scenario, where a minority promoting change manages to subordinate economy to ecology ("ecologizar la economía," 8). In 2043 a young couple that initiated the change in 2010, now aged, congratulate themselves: "in the end we managed to halt climate change, and tomatoes again taste like they used to" (n.p.).[3] But, in order to read this scenario, the reader has to turn the book (or laptop) upside down, and this effort itself is the metaphor of what needs to be done to save the planet: unlikely and counterintuitive, it is yet easy, and once done, not upside down anymore.

A few pages later the extent of the change is represented by a vignette, titled "Revolución mundial" (World revolution, 59). A small lab mouse menacingly gets hold of the whiskers of a huge cat, which pledges "Do not hurt me please, Mr. lab mouse! It was not my idea... It was society that made us like that and nature!" (59).[4] This apparently simple image has various layers of meaning highlighting the role of science that constructs hierarchy in the very experiments where knowledge is produced. It also shows that the concepts and ideas that capitalism presents as natural laws may be in fact constructed to maintain the status quo of power. As this and other vignettes show, change involves a complex set of processes of deconstruction of meaning, rather than a simple reversal of hierarchy. Brieva's "Instrucciones para salvar el mundo" (Instructions to save the world, 164) include: think by yourself independently of the media, become the owner of your time (by throwing the TV out the window), consume and travel as little as possible, do not cast a vote within a two party system, and ultimately, begin to imagine a different world. The vignette, titled "El gran salto revolutivo" (The Great Leap of Re-evolution, 167), calls for more value to be given to the traditionally feminine work of care and reproduction, returning also significance to "nature." Finally, "Instrucciones para habitar el mundo" (Instructions to live in the world, 173) encourage the reader to sit before the Ocean contemplating and asking oneself existential questions "Quién soy? Qué soy?" (Who am I? What am I?, 173). While answering them one should remember one's life, one's family and friends, but also the people that one does not know with whom one shares the Earth. One's flesh is made from the same particles as the rest of the universe; we are a minuscule part of the universe that surrounds us, which is consoling and motivating. All these reflections and more are necessary to build an alternative culture that would halt the environmental disaster.

Change has many faces. Projects of socio-political, economic and cultural transformations undertaken in the face of the impending environmental disaster have been multifarious. They call for direct democracy and restitution of the commons, the

[1]"aunque de manera muy minoritaria, algunos humanos sí parecían tener la lucidez suficiente para comprender y anticiparse a su inminente declive, incluso para tratar de evitarlo".
[2] All translations have been made by the author unless otherwise stated.
[3] "por fin hemos conseguido que no cambie el clima y que los tomates vuelvan a saber a tomates".
[4] "No me haga daño señor rata de laboratorio! No era mi idea... Es la sociedad que nos ha hecho así... la naturaleza".

end of "economism," a global tax on wealth, citizens' control of central banks, political transparency, open source knowledge and technology, basic income guarantees, and more. They rethink work outside of the profit matrix: Should it be for public good? They rethink time, food, media and consciousness: Should we slow down? They rethink money: Would it work better given a pure exchange value and ridden of interest based profit? And finally, these movements focus on the environment. The restoration and health of ecosystems that are thought of as homes for many species become objectives of newly structured local economies. In various cases, nature is no longer thought as a passive material (re)source, but rather as a partner in a life characterized by give and take between the human and the non-human.

Alternative economies start small. They focus on those areas that the neoliberal market leaves out. They incorporate the unemployed, provide opportunities for the excluded, clean polluted areas, reestablish environmental diversity and focus on maintaining sustainable economic practices that decrease monetary gain, but allow tissues of living spaces and creatures to heal. In these "transition" initiatives, objects habitually trashed receive a second chance and urban gardens begin to form a significant part of city life. These gardens are spaces where herbicides, pesticides and artificial fertilizers are substituted with a mixture of old and new bio-mimetic solutions worked out by permaculture and agro-ecology.

Permaculture constitutes a systems approach to environmental crisis. It is a practice framework, worldview, and movement aiming at constructing an economy that would work with nature rather than attempting to master it. Its first principle is an interactive observation of the environment which allows for a high quality design of habitat that would conserve energy and benefit all its members. Its biomimetic approach involves learning from ecosystems to construct one's own. Permaculture is a model of a trans-disciplinary endeavor, as it connects various kinds of knowledge and know-how, such as engineering, design, construction, architecture, water management, agriculture and nutrition, as well as education, art and narratives. Permaculture's emphasis on whole system design is heavily influenced by the work of the ecologist H. T. Odum, who represented relations between diverse ecosystems by analyzing the flow of energy between them. However, "despite a high public profile, permaculture has remained relatively isolated from scientific research" (Ferguson and Lovell 251). Although it developed in parallel with agroecology, in the scientific literature it is mentioned only in passing, as an alternative approach to agriculture. Agroecolgy itself is a novel holistic approach to the management of agriculture that draws on traditional knowledges and new technologies, while aiming at the long-term and multi-species sustainability of agroecosystems (Altieri, 1995). In alternative economies, human lives change not only through transformations of the community, but also through different relations with objects, plants and animals. Mutual aid networks in alternative economies provide care for children and the elderly, assistance with house and garden, repairs, construction and education. The growth of alternative economies has been slow on purpose. Like members of the *Indignados* movement, the activists of alternative economies in Spain

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say that they "go slow because they go far". They think of their communities as laboratories for future society, where there is a lot to learn.

The Transition Towns movement can be viewed as a signature of alternative economies. Founded in 2006 in Totnes, England, the movement seeks "to create healthy human culture and to reduce CO_2 emissions" (*Totnes Town in Transition*). Red de Transición España (Net of Transition-Spain), announces that "Transition is a manifestation of the idea that a local action can change the world, Red de Transición". [5] Comprised of grass-roots community initiatives, the transition movement seeks to creatively transform local socio-economic structures in the face of climate change, peak oil, and on-going environmental crises, connecting the need to repair environmental and political damage. Transition strives to create to an organic model of democracy based on social deliberations where all the stake-holders participate in debates and vote directly on projects. While they literally take up responsibility for the piece of Earth under their feet, they are also aware that the organization they propose can only work in a smaller-scale, local context. Most of the Towns in Transition initiatives are wary not to outgrow their limits, but the movement is expanding through the networking of hundreds of Transition Towns all over the world.[6]

Transition is by no means the only alternative economy initiative in Spain. For example, by 2014 there were 70 alternative economies experimenting with social currencies such as *boniato* in Madrid, *ecoseny* in Tarragona and Barcelona, *demo* in the Canary Islands, *ekhi* in Bilbao, *puma* in Sevilla and *turuta* in Vilanova y la Geltrú. These social currencies provide networks of support for communities plagued by unemployment and poverty. Local money can be obtained by volunteer work at community projects that are always available, and through selling services and products including second-hand objects. Among those who become involved in alternative economies, no one goes hungry and no one is lonely. There is a considerable variation among the ways that different communities structure their alternative currencies. Some are printed and based on the Euro, while others are just a mutual credit balance system. In some cases, all work is considered to have equal value; an hour of open heart surgery equals an hour of floor sweeping. In others, participants fix prices for their services. In general terms, however, alternative economies move in the same direction in the sense of prioritizing community well-being over economic growth. Non-human animals and plants are considered to be a part of the community. This no-growth or even de-growth aspect of alternative economies is what they share with various slow movements, such as "slow food," "slow towns," eco-villages and, in part, also the cooperative movement.

Yet another different form of post-capitalist economy is the P2P (Peer to Peer) economy. According to Michel Bauwens (2014), the co-founder of P2P, the post capitalistic economic systems may be already taking over capitalism. The P2P economy is a cooperative framework, where people contribute their best expertise to social projects that they are interested in on a voluntary basis and *pro publico bono*. Wikipedia, Lenovo file sharing, Airbnb House Exchange, Relay Rides, SnapGoods, E-Bay or OuiShare

[5] "la Transición es una manifestación de la idea de que la acción local puede cambiar el mundo".
[6] According to Wikipedia, in 2013 there were 1130 transition initiatives registered in 43 countries.

platforms engage people into direct exchanges of goods and services aiming to avoid the large multinational firms and governmental agencies as mediators. In P2P networks, the participatory threshold is kept very low, but the feedback from peers is constant, ensuring a high quality of the contributions. An important part of P2P economy is "fair use," an exemption from copyrights so as to assure a free flow of knowledge especially towards those who might be deprived of access to it due to their economic status. According to Voss (2007), in the ideal future, the basic income check will free all minds and hands to participate in P2P according to their work ethics, desires and needs.

Alternative economies of knowledge based on open source technologies and publications, are an essential part of the change. Among various others, the Madrid based publisher and educational venture, Traficantes de Sueños, puts into practice the ideal of free culture.[7] While a commercial publisher prints books that can be sold, Traficantes chooses to publish texts that bring change. Their books hold Creative Commons licenses. They are uploaded on the Traficantes website for everyone to download for free. When this publishing initiative began in 2003, various observers wondered if the project would be economically viable without state subsidies. There were doubts if people would buy printed books if they could read them for free on the Internet. Today, given that Traficantes has already established itself on Madrid's cultural scene and moved to a new prominent location near Tirso de Molina, it is becoming clear they have succeeded. According to Beatriz García (2016), editor of Traficantes, the sale of printed books brings in 80% of the income, while the remaining 20% comes from members' contributions and public events such as Nociones Comunes (Common Notions) seminars, which deliver lectures unveiling the flip side of common assumptions that are in fact constructs subservient to hegemony.

In *Envisioning Real Utopias* (2010), Erik Olin Wright distinguishes three possible scenarios of change: *ruptural*, through a break with the existing system, *interstitial*, that seeks to build "new forms of social empowerment in the niches" of the existing system, and *symbiotic*, that increases social empowerment while at the same time strengthening the system. The emerging alternative economies trouble these categories. Even if they are growing in the spaces not taken by the global economy, they are *ruptural* in their focus on future transformation, and *symbiotic*, since they delay systemic collapse by building communities' resilience.[8] The members of the communities involved in alternative economies projects are themselves divided in this respect. While some, such as Cooperativa Integral Catalana, dream of a rupture of capitalism, others would like to transform it through alternative community networks. Most of the alternative

[7] Ateneu Candela in Terrassa, La Casa Invisible in Málaga, and la Universidad Nómada in Madrid, are connected to Traficantes through the Fundación de los Comunes. There are also similar ventures in other towns, such as La Hormiga Atómica in Pamplona-Iruñea, La Pantera Rosa de Zaragoza, Synusia de Terrassa and La Fuga in Sevilla.

[8] Resilience is a complex and widely contested term. Used both in psychology and ecology, it signifies a capacity of an organism or ecosystem to bounce back to an optimal state of functionality after undergoing stress. Susie O'Brian (2012) argues that the concept of resilience has "aligned itself with the ideals of neoliberalism" as "there is a non-coincidental relationship … between the rise in the value of 'resilience' and the dismantling of environmental and social welfare programs" (np).

economies are politically ambidextrous, because their goal is to protect local life, preparing it to face a challenging future whose details are not fully known.

Alternative Economies in the Environmental Context: Vilanova i la Geltrú[9]

Alternative economies create special kinds of socio-ecosystems by restoring their environments with the idea of human and non-human species well-being in mind. Urban gardening, new city design for food production and cohabitation of multiple species, agro-ecological farming and permacultural design of living spaces are examples of refurbished alternative ecosystems. It is, however, through deep structural transformations of local economies that a non-destructive relationship between economic activities and the environment are built. Vilanova i la Geltrú's alternative economy attempts this through the ingenious construction of their new currency: *turuta*. *Turutas* are created by the volunteers who invest their time in the project of regeneration of the local ecosystem (10 *turutas* per hour). As a matter of principle, this alternative economy can be only built *as* the environment is restored. Before food is produced or before local festivities occur which are paid for with *turutas*, park or ecological zone space is given back to plants and animals, and water and soil are cleaned. This reverses the habitual relation between the economy and the environment that has always been one of consumption and destruction.

Care for non-human life results in an alternative form of biopolitics—administration of life understood as a whole in its human and non-human forms.[10] Both the modern economy and the dynamics of the socio-economic conflicts in the 20th century owed their metaphors to social Darwinism that naturalized predatory behavior as a mechanism of the market. Thus modern biopolitics is often legitimately characterized as "necropolitics," the production of death rather than life (Mbembe, 2013) and the "necroeconomics" that Warren Montag (2013) defines as the market-driven passivity of "letting die." Alternative economies imply a biopolitics inspired by an ecological vision of symbiosis, where changes are based on models of plant life rather than those of human/animal confrontation, the latter of which provided metaphors for modernity and capitalism. These new economies are consciously moving away from confrontational patterns towards a model of a forest, where all trees are passing resources to each other through a network of roots and symbiotic fungi. According to one narrative, local alternative cultures would spread by finding niches in the monolith of the global capitalism like weeds (Marder, 2013). In this view, alternative economies

[9] The alternative economy in Vilanova i la Geltrú has been growing slowly, like other similar initiatives in Spain and elsewhere. In 2010, Vilanova organized a national meeting of alternative currencies with 15 participating social currencies, but at the next such meeting in Seville in 2012, 32 alternative currencies were represented. By August 2014 in Vilanova, 30 businesses were accepting *turutas* and 300 people participating in the exchanges. Among the participating businesses are organic farms, an organic bakery, local food and garden stores, computer stores, health services such as macrobiotics, yoga, massage and psychotherapy, restaurants, hairdressers, musicians and photographers. In June 2014, Vilanova's municipal counsel recognized *turuta* as an official "moneda social" (people's money) and granted the association space in the town hall Office of Environment.

[10] See Beilin (2015).

are not fighting against the global system, but merely growing within it, and strengthening roots to survive a possible future collapse of civilization as we know it. Future change is conceived, however, in a non-confrontational and non-violent way, as a slow, surreptitious, and bloodless takeover.

Thinking how to restructure money for such a transformation, Letaier (2005) represents it through a body metaphor:

> Money is modern society's central information system, akin to the nervous system in our own bodies. Mutations in a nervous system are relatively rare but rather important events in the biological evolution of a species. Similarly, a change in the nature of our money system has the potential to facilitate a fundamental shift in our societies (np).

In Vilanova i la Geltrú's alternative economy website, the traditional conception of money is transformed by references to plant-life. The local currency is imagined not as blood, but rather a tree-resin where the new economy is represented visually as a tree "We are like a tree that can give many fruits. The fruits are the enterprises, establishments, all that is offered… The trunk, the wood are all the members" (transcióvng).[11] The shift from human-body to plant-body metaphor stages plant life as a matrix of the change. This has great environmental significance, since plant life implies a different ecological dynamic where the consumption of resources characteristic of modern biopolitics is substituted by plant production. Plants not only feed animals, they also consume CO_2 and produce oxygen, slowing down global warming. With few exceptions, human societies have done more or less the contrary. A tree as a founding metaphor of an alternative economy points out the direction of ethical and economic transformation: planting trees is not enough, we should become more like trees in our relations with the rest of the world: contribute more, consume less, grow more slowly. This is also a reflection about time.

The commonplace notion that time is money may need to be reconsidered. While in some cases, in fact money can buy us time, more often than not our time gets consumed in pursuit of money to pay for commodities that lose their luster and must be replaced. As a result, we spend or rather waste time to get money whose value is deceptive due to planned obsolescence and other commercial strategies. Very few manage to earn enough to retire early while they are still able to enjoy life. For this reason, critical thinkers propose to transform the system by decreasing working time for the sake of leisure, or what J. Nørgaard (2009) calls an "amateur economy" that comprises volunteer contributions to the causes that matter. In the words of Stephanie Rearick (2015), in the development of alternative economies "the photosynthesis level is time." If we had time, we would plant more gardens, cycle instead of driving, repair things rather than buying new ones, and last but not least, we would think and, perhaps, realize that we do not need to work all these hours to buy stuff that breaks to be happy. But is that really so? While there seems to be no doubt that the efforts of alternative economies to transform a destructive economic system are meritorious in the face of the

[11] "som com un arbre que pot donar molts fruits. Els fuits són les empreses, els estabiments, tots els oferents…. El tronc, fusta … tots els socis/es".

impending global warming, there are doubts about how their de-growth models, where consumption of industrially produced goods has to be drastically reduced, will affect individual human well-being and behavior.

The Happiness Factor

People have come to associate happiness, progress and success with commodified consumption and these very same concepts, defined through economic growth and gain, are responsible for social stratification and environmental depletion. Joseph Stiglitz's and Amartya Sen's (2013) research on people's self-reported life satisfaction and happiness shows, however, that these are false constructs. The post-war growth has not really made high income countries' citizens happier (while self-reported happiness was surprisingly higher where income per capita was much lower). Since the 1990s, research problematizes purely economic measures of well-being. McKibben (2010) argues that *more* has always been considered as a synonym of *better* and while it is so to a certain extent, since deprivation of basic goods makes people suffer, beyond a certain threshold of earnings, *more* is not *better* anymore. In 2009, *The Observer* published a meaningfully titled article "Forget GDP: Happiness is the secret of success" that noted the change of rhetoric of British and French leaders who called to move economic focus from GDP to GWB (General Well Being). *The Observer* accompanied the article with the picture of a couple embracing in front of an ocean, tacitly dialoguing with one of the discoveries of Happiness Economy that having regular sex makes people happier than earning lots of money. According to Stiglitz, "looking at GDP without accounting for environmental damage in the figures gives an artificial picture" (2009, np). Stiglitz and Sen (2013) argue that GDP is misleading as a measure of success while social health is declining as a result of an excessive speed of life and environmental toxicity.

Different strands of ecological economists theorizing post-growth (John Barry, political science), self-contained economy (Jorge Riechmann, philosophy), de-growth (Joan Martínez Alier, economics), and deep economy (Bill McKibben, Environmental Studies) argue that the vision of well-being not only needs to be disassociated from growth and economic gain, but that it also needs to include a transformed relation with natural environment, because a healthy, flourishing biosphere is essential not only for economic security but also for everyday human health and joy. Interspecies relationships and vegetarianism are both also discussed within the work of the aforementioned scholars. Both Riechmann (2005) and McKibben (2013) devoted whole volumes to reconsidering human treatment of animals, and David Harvey (2012) argues that through learning from animals, humans should search for environmental solutions as a species. Limiting growth for the sake of well-being has a number of other positive consequences. On the level of everyday praxis, it amounts to reducing the number of hours of work, and a greater individual flexibility that contributes to community power in decision-making when investments are considered. The trend to reliance on exchange and acquisition of second-hand goods prolongs the durability of objects and strengthens

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social networks. A smaller array of durable goods leads to "living with less" (Riechmann, 2005),[12] but in a more meaningful way, as objects passed from generation to generation accumulate memories and significance. Demaria et al. (2013) note that voluntary simplicity in the degrowth movement becomes an important source of "meaning of life" (197). As a result, more value is given to house work, child care and other forms of community care and environmental regeneration projects (Barry, 2014). These economic changes require a dramatic transformation of role models, motivation structures, and a wholly different kind of "cool." It is clear that consumption would need to be reduced, house sizes decreased, and cars given up. While this vision of happiness exists in thinkers' writings, it is not clear to what extent today's society agrees with it. As the well-known UK environmental activist George Monbiot has written, "no one has ever rioted for austerity, people have taken to the streets in the past because they want to consume more goods, not because they want to consume less" (qtd. in Leonard and Barry, 7). We may have a false image of what makes us happy. But changing ideas may perhaps also affect a transformation of the perception of happiness.

Juan del Río, coordinator of the network of the transition movement in Spain works three days a week as environmental manager and spends the rest of his time building the Towns in Transition movement in Spain and elsewhere. He organizes workshops and gives lectures all around the world, while writing books and articles. This rigorous lifestyle forced him to move out of Barcelona and share an apartment in a small town belonging to Barcelona's metropolitan area, Cardedeu, where life is cheaper. He does not have a car, he takes his vacations on the bike, and he commutes to the city by train. But, in Cardedeu, he has become a part of a vibrant community that shares his ideas and precisely this is what he values the most. This town of approximately twenty thousand, located an hour by local train from Barcelona, has a rich network of associations such as *Cardedeu autosuficient*, Time banking and a Co-op that has begun to coordinate its activities with Tarragona's Co-ops network. We met in *Esbiosfera*, an urban garden with its own organic restaurant, secluded in a fenced green oasis, which is a place of gathering of activists connected to the alternative political and environmental movements in town. I find out that it often also functions as a school where adults re-learn how to make certain foods, grow certain crops, and how to transform their physical and mental life to feel better. In his recently published *Guía del Movimiento de Transición*: *Cómo transformar tu vida en la ciudad* (2015) del Río questions the separation between the reform of individual interior life and that of the society. He explains that these two realms transcend each other, as human emotions and values are co-constructed through relations with others. According to del Río, a solitary hero cannot save the world and because of that, social and political change requires first and foremost that we improve strategies of communication, cohabitation and the solution of conflicts. This "in common" dimension is hard to construct, but it cannot be overestimated because it is the criterion of reality. Del Río begins a chapter of his book with a quotation from Raul Seixas: "A dream dreamt alone is only a dream. A dream

[12] In *Un mundo vulnerable,* Riechmann imagines a chair that could last through several generations like a house.

dreamt by many is a reality" (Del Río 138).[13] This is not only about what is real but also about happiness.

Conill, Castells et al. (2014) focus on the transformation of values and lifestyles in Barcelona's alternative economies. The authors distinguish a group of people who, like del Río, "dared to live alternative ways of life" motivated by a "quest for the use value of life and for meaningful personal relationships" (211). These are "the transformatives", who are willing to earn less money in order to employ their time in ways that contribute to socio-political and environmental change.[14] The "transformatives" construct an alternative vision of the meaning of life that involves an effort to live according to ethical and political values emerging in the face of ecological crisis. They value their own activities for pursuit of better future and personal happiness more than their careers within the global economy or state institutions. In contrast, the group of "adapted" (a majority among older people) values beyond anything jobs, earnings and profits, which give meaning and security to their lives. Conil, Castells et al. (2014) recognize that participation in the alternative economies involves varying degrees of risk, whose perception differs among "transformatives" and "adapted" due to the difference in their values. While "adapted" cannot understand why talented professionals would choose to work and earn less, risking to lose their jobs and have insufficient savings, "the transformatives" dread having to spend all their time and energy feeding the economic system that is consuming them and the world altogether. Working two or three days a week for the system and spending the rest of the time transforming it is in their personal alternative economy of happiness, a compromise with the world. In del Río's work as well as in Barry's writings, individual happiness must be posited as a main attraction of an alternative economy of life.

Both Barry and del Río stress that freedom from "corporate time" (O'Brian, 2012) allows one to develop more human and non-human relations and gain freedom for reflection and creativity, all three being important factors of human satisfaction. Images that Barry shows during his conferences feature father and son jumping from a rock to the ocean together or walking up a mountain path (Madison, 2013). In del Río's posts on Facebook, groups of friends stand in circles smiling or laughing, always in gardens, forest or on mountain slopes. In this way environment connects post-growth imaginaries with images of pleasure. To build enthusiasm for change, people must be convinced that they are improving their well-being rather than giving up satisfaction. Del Rio often repeats that "if it is not fun it is not sustainable", "if there is no good food, it will not work" and finally "without music there is no revolution."[15]

It is also true, however, that not all the images of alternative economies that I collected are pristine and not everyone I talked to appeared to be happy. For example, Germán, an agro-ecologist, who takes care of a community farm in Zarzalejo, firmly

[13] "Un sueño que se sueña solo es solo un sueño. Un sueño que se sueña conjuntamente es una realidad"
[14]Authors of this publication interviewed 800 people and divided them into two groups: *transformatives* that initiate and lead the alternative practices, *practicioners* that participate in some of them and *adapted* who remain as a part of main-stream culture.
[15] "si no es divertido no es sostenible", "si no hay comida rica, jamás funcionará", "si no hay música, no hay revolución".

stated that rather than taking care of the crops, he would prefer to drink piña coladas in the Caribbean, but his salary does not allow him to take such extravagant vacations. He took the only paid position created by the local alternative economy, because he liked the ideal and also needed a job, and he is still visibly passionate about what he does, but also growing tired of certain elements of the dynamic. In order to close the self-sustainability circle that permaculture and agro-ecology describe, animal-produced fertilizer is needed and the community does not own animals. On the other hand, natural methods of weed control do not work all that well and lots of manual weed removal has to be done. When Germán calls for help, and people come to pull weeds during the weekends, they quickly get tired and complain. Germán's own children come reluctantly to work in the field. While it is clear that the neoliberalized global economy is destructive and that it needs to be transformed, it constructed a number of needs and pleasures that are hard to give up. Only the future will show if (and which) alternative economies will manage to make people happy.

Future scenarios

Seen from the point of view of individual comforts and freedoms, we, the people of the privileged and rich North, may actually be living in the happiest moment of our history, protected from the wars on our peripheries and blissfully ignorant of the damaging scarcity of basic goods. Yet neither Barry nor del Río or any other environmental activists and critics are really optimistic about the future. Theirs' is a *spem contra spero* kind of optimism. They believe in the need to act as if it were still possible to repair humans and the Earth altogether even if they are not sure what the future holds. Today's prevalent mood of environmental studies is also doom-laden. Scientists predict that if the temperature on Earth rises beyond the tipping point of four degrees, civilization will most likely collapse due to the unrest following catastrophes and loss of habitat. Timothy Morton (2007, 2013) coins the term "dark ecology" for the world that has already ended, overwhelmed with destructive processes that take our freedom away, affect our thinking and embed us in "hyperobjects," one of which is Global Warming. In Roy Scranton's *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene* (2015), the world is also on a fast track spree towards the Apocalypse and our main task is to find ways of dealing with the catastrophes heading our way. Black humor with a corrosive edge is the signature of Miguel Brieva's cartoons on the subject of Global Warming. On one of them God announces to human kind his new invention: flippers. On another titled "Bienvenido al fin" (Welcome to the End), two old friends sigh with a sense of relief entering through the gate: "Look, hard to believe, home at last."[16] In Mike Davis' essay "Who Will Build the Ark?" the discursive framework is also ambiguous. So what are the future scenarios?

According to Letaier (2005), if the current economic system continues, slowly transforming itself towards a more sustainable economy, and if we manage to avoid

[16] "Pues mira, a lo tonto, a lo tonto, ya hemos llegado."

cultural fragmentation following the collapse of cosmopolitan global society, alternative economies will help avoid poverty caused by the growing unemployment and will foment projects focused on restoration. They will constitute supplementary local socio-economic systems that develop a mutually beneficial coexistence with the global market. If, however, climate change leads to a collapse of the global system due to unforeseen catastrophic events, today's small-scale economic experiments may provide ways for a longer-term survival serving as a bridge towards the post-capitalist economy. This is not at all an optimistic scenario even for an alternative economies' enthusiast such as Letaier. He predicts that the rupture of the global system of exchange would lead us back to a world with isolated city-states governed by more-often-than-not authoritarian rulers with wild hordes in the open. Such an image appears in various climate fictions,[17] such as *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy, and in a Spanish setting, in Emilio Bueso's *Cenital.*

Cenital is an eco-village established by a group of survivalists led by the young visionary, Destral, just before the collapse of the global system. They are governing themselves through direct democracy, and as in the P2P economy, everyone contributes the kind of work that they like and are best at. However, this is not a happy vision, but, as Destral states, rather a nightmare. In spite of all their hard work, the inhabitants live in precarious conditions, always afraid of reaching the limits of the supply of food that their fields can produce. They had to surround their village with high walls, from which they defend it against the attacks of outsiders in bloody battles. Their freedom is limited by the simple lack of condoms that forces them to raise more children that they want to bring into their grim world. But, outside of Cenital, things are much worse. In what remains of Valencia, armed bands are confronting each other and various groups unable to get or grow food resort to cannibalism. Considering what is happening in the outside world, Cenital, which has grown out of an alternative economy, is not the worst of nightmares, as long as they have sufficient food. Various scholars have argued that "sufficiency" is emerging as a leading concept for the future.[18] Adopted by alternative economies and their *transformatives* as a principle of ethical life, it is, *nolens volens,* alsofinding its way into the corporate narratives and product designs of various industries. Slowly, much too slowly, sufficiency, as the basis of alternative economies of life, is transforming the system from within.

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[17] These fictions show the world where the processes that now have only begun are much further advanced. Not only does the climate appear changed, ocean waters covering parts of the continents, and petroleum having run out, forcing people to abandon big cities where large quantities of food can be no longer transported, but also the economy and culture have developed further along the lines that today are only possible scenarios.

[18] Princen, 2005, Augenstein and Palzkill (2015)

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Editorial

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In *Invisible Cities,* Italo Calvino conjures up an imaginary dialogue between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan. The subjects of their conversations are, as expected, cities. More unexpected, however, are the *natures* of the cities, meticulously arranged in a geography made up of memory, signs, desire, eyes, names, the dead, the sky. These cities are themselves classified according to uncommon features: they are continuous cities, hidden cities, thin cities, trading cities. Talking of Zaira, "city of high bastions," Marco reveals to the Khan:

> The city […] does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls. (9)

Like Zaira, every city contains its past in every segment and corner, just "like the lines of a hand." This past is represented by sedimentations and disaggregations in the innumerable ties that connect the city to its elements—elements that are at the same time natural and non-natural, material and semiotic, human and more-than-human, and whose layers constitute the backbone of the city's present as well. Traveling through Marco Polo's imaginary urban universe, we understand that cities are strange organisms made of signs and stuff, energy flows and stories. Their memory is at once metabolic and historical; their dynamics include competition and cooperation, survival and extinction, transformation and permanence, just as for all organisms. Because, as Christopher Schliephake writes in his cutting-edge study *Urban Ecology*, "the city, too, is a form of nature" (xvi).

Guest-edited by Catrin Gersdorf, this special issue of *Ecozon@* sets out to further delineate the speculative charter of "Urban Ecologies," a field that, to quote Schliephake again, views cities as something more than "spatial phenomena." Like Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, these urban agglomerations have:

> manifold and complex material interrelations with their respective natural environments, and […] harbor 'minds' […] of their own: Ideas, imaginations, and interpretations that make up the […] discursive side of our urban lives and that are stored and constantly re-negotiated in their cultural and artistic representations. (Schliephake xii)

Faced with the challenge of delving into these "minds," the Creative Writing and Arts Section explores the way the naturalcultural imagination of and around urban ecologies is conveyed by photos and poems. The first contribution is *Madrid Rio* by Laura Sánchez-Vizcaíno. A cinematographer and videoartist by training, and a naturopathic therapist by vocation, here Sánchez-Vizcaíno interprets a contemplative visit to the Madrid Rio

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Project (2003), a grand urban-ecological experiment thanks to which a river and its urban environment have been finally restored to a dimension of shared life. One of Europe's most ambitious endeavors of this genre, jointly pursued by Spanish and international landscape architects and engineers, the Madrid Rio is a restoration of the Manzanares River's original riverbed that directs the ring motorway underground, thus revitalizing not only the sense of place of the residents, but also the more-than-human destination of this ecosystem. As Sánchez-Vizcaíno explains in her description—a short but very insightful piece covering various aspects of the Madrid Rio plan—"citizens were consulted on how they envisioned a revitalized river-space, a major presence in traditional festivals and paintings of an earlier Madrid." Reminding us of Henri Lefebvre's remark that "every social space has a history, one invariably grounded in nature" (110), this socio-ecological restoration has thus helped to transform a depressed urban area into a new, meaningful ecology of the place's "mind," teeming with life and creativity. And this new urban ecology of mind is exactly what we read in Sánchez-Vizcaíno's artistic pictures, including the cover of this issue ("Y in Green").

The second contribution is *Racconti di confine_Critical Zones (Stories from the Border_Critical Zones)* by Pompeian architect and photographer Christian Arpaia. In these seven powerful black-and-white images, all shot in the Italian South, Arpaia captures phases of urban ecologies as episodes of a tranquil apocalypse. Silently, the built environment intermingles with the natural, up to the point of becoming organic, an element of a wider natural metabolism. This is the quiet apocalypse: the silent but indisputable revelation of naturalcultural dynamics of mutuality, that can show the demise of politics vis-à-vis rural abandonment or become oppressive and engulfing, like the geologic phagocytizations of the Anthropocene, where "the 'urban strata' of a major city and [its] geometrical complexity can seem limitless, almost fractal" (Zalasiewicz 121). This is clearly exemplified by "Caged_N," where "N" might stand both for Naples, whose hardcore urban structure is represented in the photo, and "Nature", here embodied by the volcano in the background and all the (in-)natural elements that make up the life of this five-thousand-year-old city. Even more dramatically, there is the photograph "Ashes," a portrayal of Naples' avant-garde science hub Città della Scienza, set on fire (probably by the local mafia) in 2013. As Arpaia explains in his eloquent (and here warmly recommended) description:

> This is the fate of the South: to be alive in spite of everything, in spite of bad politicians and of colonizations disguised as (short-term) "development" policies. Though, this being alive conveys very much the weight of a problematic life, which is often a struggle against the challenges of space_time_matter. Or against the threats of organized crime, as in the case of the City of Science ("Ashes") incinerated in 2013 and now slowly resurrecting.

However, the fate of the South is not solely one of demise and decline. The "original characters" of these lands, in fact, are not embodied only in quasi-relics such as abandoned agrarian houses ("Agrarian Reform") or old railway stations, but also emerge in the unexpected creativity of past concepts of the built environment. Basilicata's historic town Matera ("Matera") offers an example. From being the deserted backwater

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of poverty epitomized by Carlo Levi's novel *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, it has become a UNESCO World Heritage Site and will be the European Capital of Culture in 2019.

The Art Section continues with two lyrical sylloges that stretch the map of urban ecologies to semi-rural and post-pastoral environments. In the first, "Early Light and Other Poems," Kathryn Jo Kirkpatrick—a Professor of English at Appalachian State University and a recognized poet, winner of important awards—explores "an ethic of care across the boundaries of species and ability," as she declares in her illuminating statement. Inspired by the author's personal ecology of mind and places, one made of multi-species encounters and the intimate pain of living with a cognitively impaired parent, these poems express the blurred boundaries of domesticity (which can be co-evolutionary and more-than-human) and wilderness (which can be in turn *in/human*, in the sense of profoundly intimate and yet uncanny[1]). Emerging from her world of "sheepdogs, raccoons, nuthatches, black-capped chickadees, cardinals," cows, calves, and disabled mother, Kirkpatrick's poems embody the geography of a space that is impossible to understand from within species-specific outlooks. In these lyrics, the nonhuman is not merely symbolic or metaphorical, but also intrinsically alive as an individual always already in relation with other individuals, whether by way of bonds of blood, competition, or solidarity. This *inhabited* ecology of difference allows the human to better understand its role—evolutionary, ethical, and emotional—in a world whose real cypher is coexistence. The section closes with Dean Anthony Brink's *Five Poems*. A professor at the Taiwanese National Chiao Tung University, a poet, and a piano composer, Brink illustrates here the collapse of pastoral ideals (and dreams) vis-à-vis the crises of urban (and post-urban) environments. Here, as in Kirkpatrick's verses, global dynamics are interlaced with the lives of human and nonhuman animals. And powerful interlacements also tie the fate of our systems (husbandry, big cities, Anthropocenic sceneries) to things and elements. In visions of vast horizons, individuals are all trapped in inescapable mechanisms that produce material dead-ends and ethical inquietudes. As Brink writes in "Edenic Cul-de-Sac":

> While half up river
> salmon jump the perimeter
> islands lost to global warming gave way
> to airstrips and more Starbucks foaming
> while we say
> *what we've done to our earth is shoddy*
> and go on sewing echoes to empty bodies.

Starbucks, salmon, global warming, the earth, its landscapes, and all its inhabitants. Like Zaira's antennae and banisters and lightning rods, these are the *natures* of the Anthropocene city in which we dwell. If the city is "a form of nature," imagining urban ecologies through art is yet another attempt to nudge the mind of our time toward more *inhabitable* creativities.

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[1] See Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman*. On disability as "human wilderness," see Iovino, *The Wilderness of the Human Other*.

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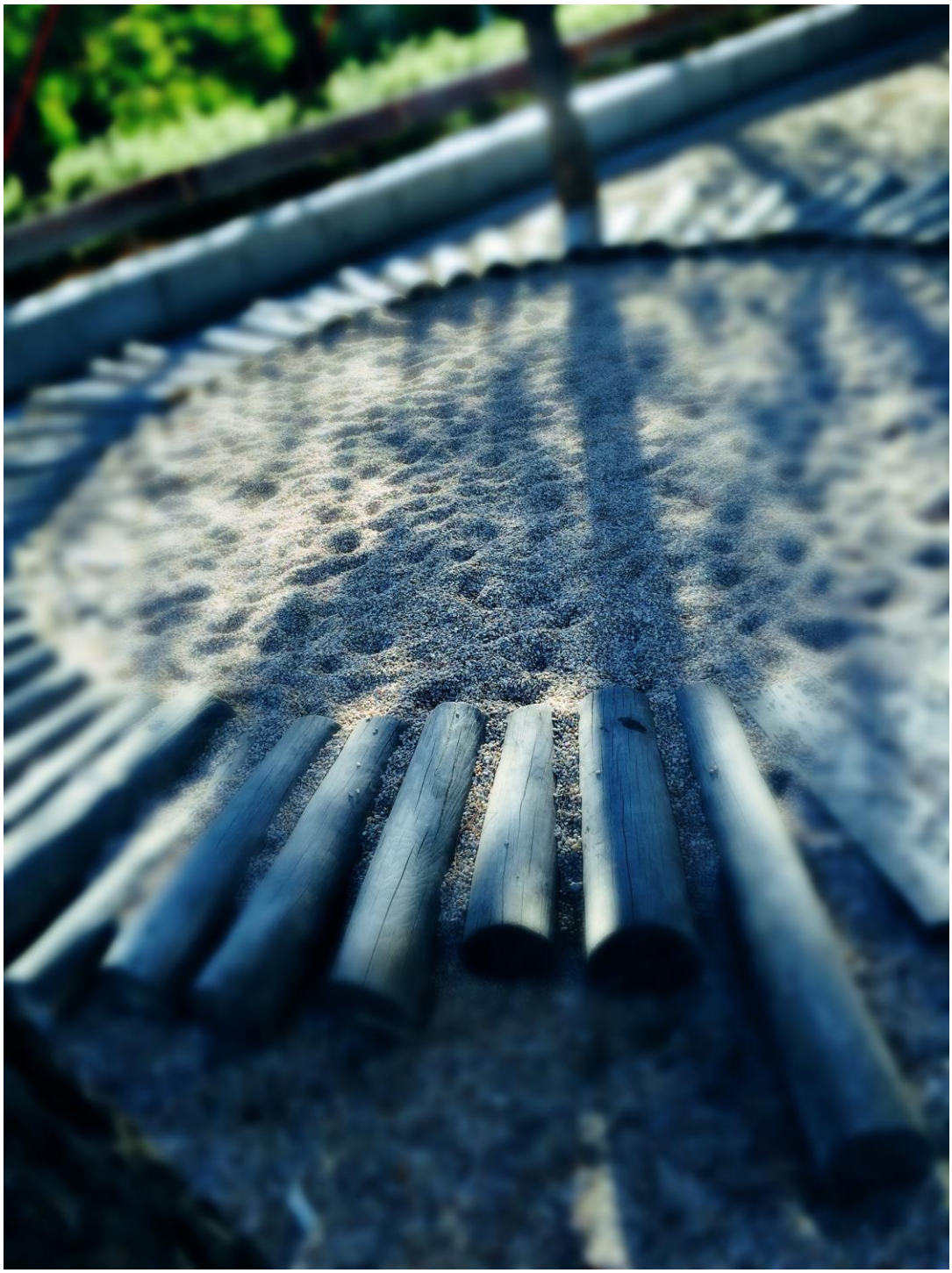
Madrid Río

Laura Sánchez-Vizcaíno



Circle of Fun

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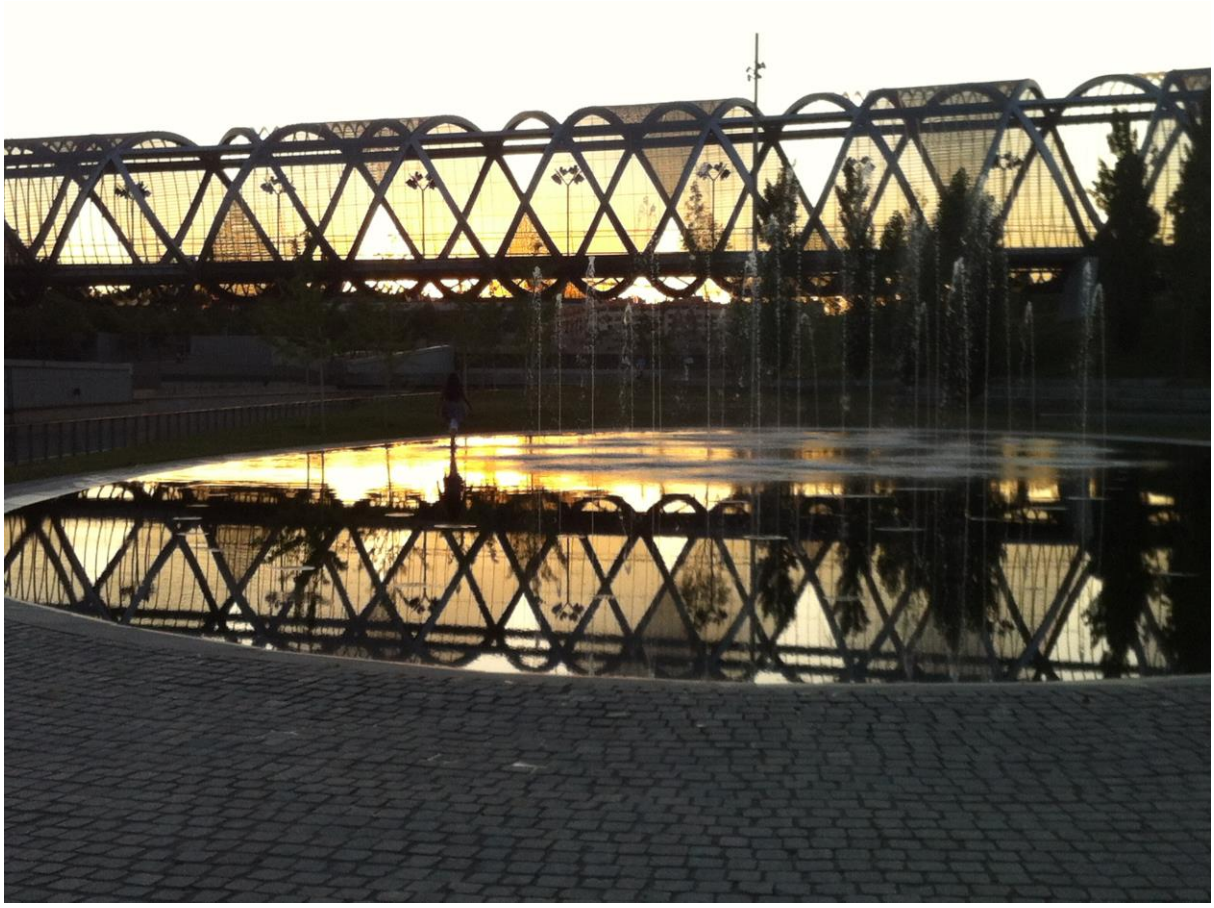

DNA in the City

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Giant Spider

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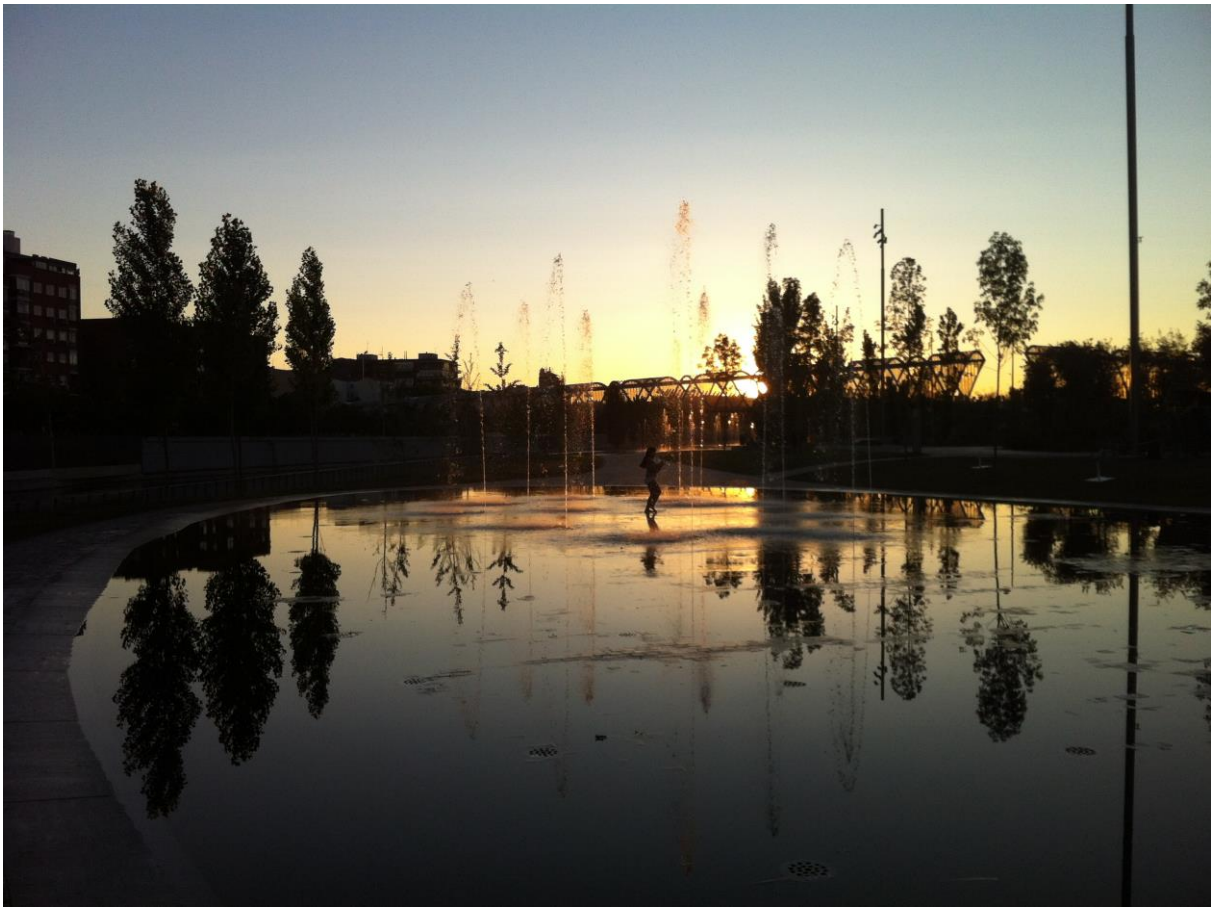

Madrid Beach

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Pigs in Charge

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Three Chances

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Storie di Confine_Critical Zones

Christian Arpaia

Caged_N

Naples, Suor Orsola Benincasa, corso Vittorio Emanuele - February 2015

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Ashes

Naples, Città della Scienza, Bagnoli – February 2015

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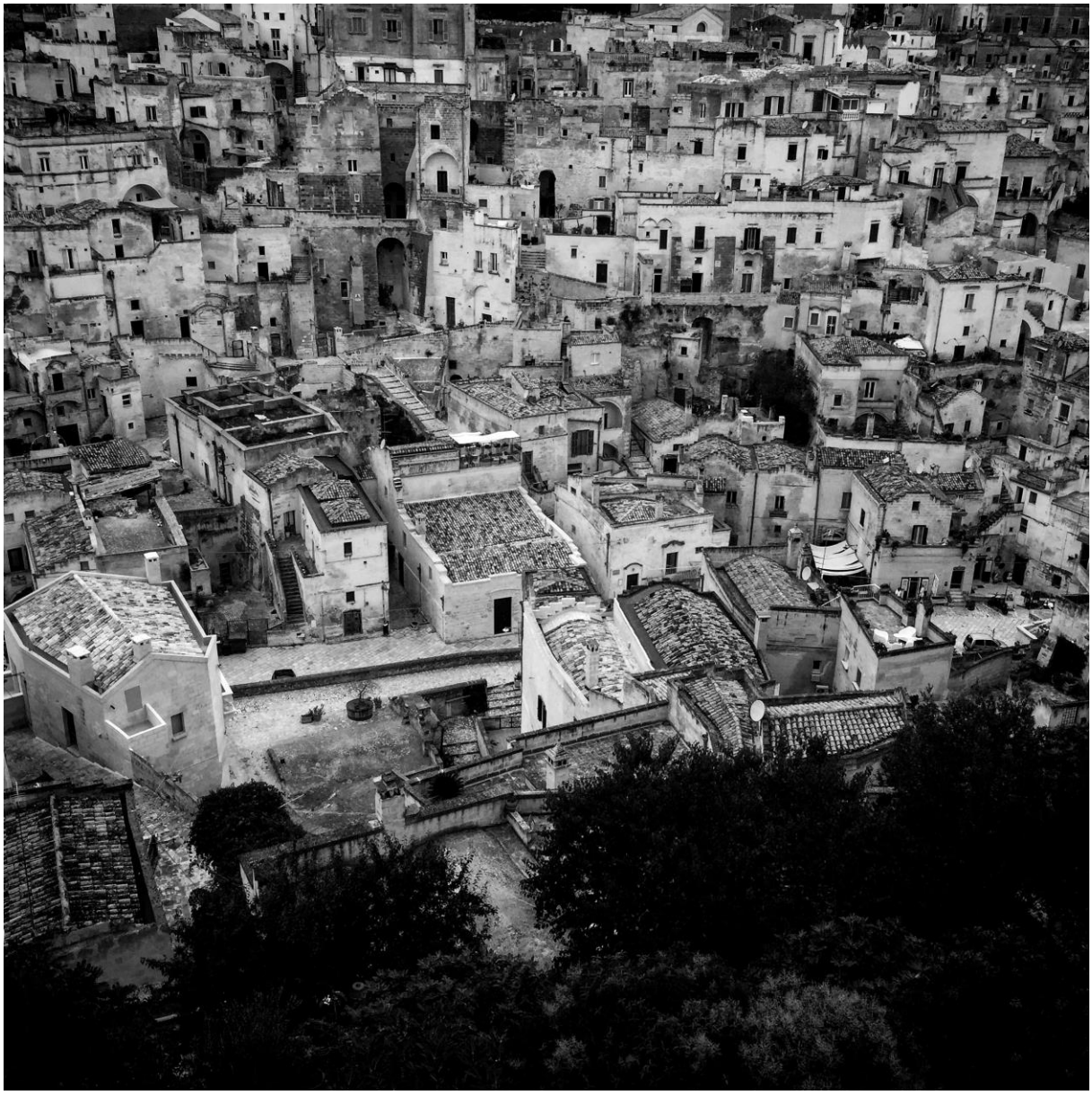

Matera
August 2015

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Minimo Strutturale
Bridge on the Basento River by Sergio Musumeci (1967)
Potenza - August 2016

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Piano regulatore
Bisaccia (Avellino) - August 2016

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Agrarian Reform

On the border between Basilicata and Apulia. Genzano di Lucania (Potenza)

August 2016

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Tre Confini Sottano

Railroad Matera_Ferrandina_Pisticci_Montalbano Jonico. Miglionico (Matera)

August 2016

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"Early light" and Other Poems

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Early light,

and his bark is crescendo and flourish,
a running up and down the scales

I've rarely heard from him. Rushed
out of sleep, I know enough

not to *shush*. Instead, I am up,
yesterday's shirt over my head,

and we are 30,000 years
into this, one urgency matching

another, his nose, my sight
his whiff of not quite right.

There in the dead leaves beside
the trashcan's green husk is

the other animal, raccoon
on its back, convulsions.

Rabies? Distemper? He'd hurl
himself into this ring of

infection, nose right up to
death. I hold his squirming,

muscular anger. Where does he
end and I begin? His vaccinations,

my hesitations. And I cannot help
this other, who has lived its whole life

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without me, swaying now, vulnerable
as a drunk, tiny paws on the glass.

My other's sharp barks shore
the boundaries. We are darned

domestication, mesh-bodied
behind the built. Foolish apart

but wise together, we wait
for the neighbor with the gun.

all night the cows and their calves

bellow across barbed wire
cows on the right at the pasture's brink
calves on the left in the muddy paddock
a road runs through them

cows on the right at the pasture's brink
why write bellow and not cry?
a road runs through them
one calf's younger than the rest and thinner

why write bellow and not cry?

they do not make the sounds we'd make
one calf's younger than the rest and thinner
all Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, too

they do not make the sounds we'd make
commotion in the soft, green hills
all Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, too
now that I know to hear them

commotion in the soft, green hills
but why commotion and not grief?
now I know to hear them
I walk the dogs each day to see

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commotion sounds so much like grief
they smash gates, tear down fences
I walk the dogs today to see
raise up my voice to join the keen

cattleman, he shuts gates, mends fences
says the nursing's all but stopped
I raise my voice to join the keen
brood cows bred to breed and breed again

the nursing's all but stopped
six years is what they get, not a bad life
brood cows bred to breed and breed again
though they could live for twenty years or more

six years is what they get, not a bad life
though he can't come to kill the cow he knows
they could live for twenty years or more
and so he hires another man who can

and even he can't kill the cow he knows
calves on the left in the muddy paddock
and so he hires another man who can
hour after hour they cry across barbed wire

Forecast

In Appalachia old-timers drop a bean
in a jar each foggy morning in August.
The number of beans is the number
of snows in the coming winter.

Who shall we ask for the forecast?
The blackcap chickadee fluffs her feathers
outside my window. She is hungry
for seed, and I can do that much.

Winter. I am learning winter
like each blue vein
in my mother's forehead.
It is late to learn snow

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so early in December. I
fill each feeder again and again
as my mother circles round
each word she cannot say,

watches it, fluffed and cold.
I want to fly like a nuthatch
into the delicate nest of her brain,
pull at the threads, re-weave each vessel.

Instead, I lose count of the foggy mornings,
the snows. My mother has never seen
this much winter. Morning rises pale as a forehead.
Evening closes like another blue vein.

Cardinal

Her eyes flit to the child's memory card—
the splash of red, the bob of the head—

then search my face. My mother is willing,
her blue eyes wide that had been hazel.

It takes a moment, less, for me to see
she's travelled back before Wyeth,

Monet, and Van Gogh, all the painters
she loved, back before representation

itself, before the cave paintings. She is sight
and being, ground hard into the moment.

Cardinalis virginianus is the bird she
hasn't yet seen. If that crested grosbeak

crosses her path again, she'll meet him face
to face, wing to wing. Now when the cardinal

comes to the feeder, I try to see him new.
And her, her too. My mother, a hinge, a door,

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a threshold through. Red in the bare branches.
From *cardo*, on which something turns

or depends—once I on her, now she
on me—that turning, that red bird.

What's lost is *cardinal*, the human word
but not the living bird.

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Five Poems

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PASTORAL CITY

Waves collapse – coral batten down.
Clouds appear on the cliffs by noon.

Driving to a diner – hearsay lowers
clearings in the stands of silence

facing off – unfaltering
news a never-ending ladder –

a chameleon turns to stone – a cat hisses –
ants deliver – roaches devour.

Rivers return storms flown inland –
waters rise – towns swept away.

Banyan trees dangle receding roots
thickening as they touch down

stirring mud – roadside, the sun circling.
A little boy stalking the grass says

"I won't hurt you pretty kitty."

JUST ANOTHER NAY-SAYER

In my day they stood by the idea of setting food out
despite what neighbor said of neighbors
letting cats fend for themselves in fields gone to seed.

Elsewhere, chickens hung themselves,
packed in parks, another tourist attraction.

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It was downright Oedipal, the way today is
divvied into edible and gluten-free

so the body digests the world more gently
you could say, given the old bachelor routine
all seemed more in order than before.

You just don't *want* to get it
is the thing I'm partial to, and it's hard
to play catch-up in between.

Imitation is one thing, but once a hair out of place
or those shoes, whose sad shoes, pointing
halfway—whose big idea? It's about time,

but caught in it doesn't mean leaving
your ruler on the library shelf forever.

Hey you, winner. What on earth
did you marry into we'd ask ourselves at coffee.

No one I know escapes slipping through.
Your only recourse ran away,

leaving yourself washing your hands
until all the towels reek and you do another load.

I didn't want to bring up anything off color,
it just comes out wrong. I am wrong, though like you,

I only did beer. Yet filth comes out of the lost,
dusting the world in spangled colors.
At least the talkers feel better about it.

AT THE ANTHROPOCENE COLLECTION

Simmer down, I tell myself. It's only a game
of lampposts and leashes.
The big firms
can't hold their end, too slick
and so we're moving out

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in circles, or why bother the soil?
Hand me that trowel.

Taters under burlap, sprouts cut in furrows.
Where'd that calf go?

Husbandry no longer ties us to turning the plot
and how we manage seed sets

spread in the dark to work first
under the loft,
if not cutting corners
on branding, leaving beaks and tails,

dumping leftovers in troughs
before hitting the hay early.

Sympathy guiding us
overseeing the land
closer to the animal.

Mornings pick up twigs into piles for bonfires
before heat sets hazards and fines.

HUSBANDRY

state animals climb
rotting pine planks
planting the gate

after dusk
whistles dictate perimeters

sad protocol assemblies against the past
happy the riots on ice

sad the hesitation
for more happy a prototype

sad a fly hemmed in by spiders
happy the rainbow braiding a pole

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nasty the dentist with bell
happy corn in decay

sad the blood pact
happy the analogy and break
or nested monarch

a measured sector
happy enables sad takes back

sad the continuum happy the arc
happy turns in unawares

under the wren
happy is a handful

sad in waves is boiling
happy antique

sad a concerto of footnotes
vermilions fudging physics

happy the faith through bedrooms
sad a brass experiment star incognito

happy the actor presumed prose
happy southernly

sad struggles syndicated
acquired pulse

EDENIC CUL-DE-SAC

Felt need gave way to firewalls,
the sweep of radar
taking many a pulpit
and wallflower neither of us had time for.

While the open garden makes open rebellion futile,
for every maiden lost there's a boy who's nubile.

As chains went, not a bad start.

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Given the overhead
we didn't deserve it, I mean a precarious fleet
blessed with undersea undertakings
joked censors.
While half up river
salmon jump the perimeter
islands lost to global warming gave way
to airstrips and more Starbucks foaming
while we say
what we've done to our earth is shoddy
and go on sewing echoes to empty bodies.

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Book Review: Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us*, trans. David Fernbach (London, New York: Verso, 2015), 306 pp.

By now, anyone in their right mind knows what it takes to avert environmental apocalypse: all we need to do is pollute less, emit less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, consume less, produce less, procreate less, and so on. However, as the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann pointedly noted in his book *Ecological Communication* (first published in 1985, translated into English in 1989), "whoever puts the problem this way does not reckon with society, or else interprets society like an actor who needs instruction and exhortation" (Luhmann, 133). In other words, to avoid getting bogged down in misdirected criticism, utopian or fatalistic scenarios about the end of the world, our solutions to the environmental problems of the twenty-first century should somehow be commensurate with the dynamics of an increasingly complex and interconnected world society. While this realization led Luhmann to construct a highly abstract and, according to some critics, rather unwieldly theory of modernity apparently immune to falsification, recent scholarship in the environmental humanities has adduced a lot of fascinating empirical data to show why humans continue to destroy their own life world, apparently much against everyone's advice.

The Shock of the Anthropocene by Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, two historians currently working at the Centre Alexandre-Koiré at the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris, is a highly incisive contribution to this rapidly growing body of environmental research. The original title of the book, somewhat hastily translated from the French by David Fernbach, reads *L'Evénement Anthropocène* (the Anthropocene event), which hints at the authors' intellectual indebtedness to the work of, among others, Michel Serres and Bruno Latour (and via Latour, Gilles Deleuze whose philosophy of the event has been very influential in French philosophy). This conceptual framework, combined with a commitment to thorough quantitative research, gives *The Shock of the Anthropocene* an edge in relation to some of the conceptually and empirically less grounded debates in the Anglo-American environmental humanities. But what makes it a most stimulating book, in the present reader's view, is the authors' willingness to point out the tenacity of what they call the "grand narrative" of the Anthropocene even in the work of their intellectual mentors and allies, including Latour and such leading scholars as Dipesh Chakrabarty.

What is that grand narrative of the Anthropocene? This can be stated rather simply: Overnight, as it were, we have entered a new geological era as a consequence of our tinkering with the environment. Only now, thanks to advances in climate science, we are coming to realize the implications of this potentially disastrous development,

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starting with the generalized use of fossil fuels during the industrial revolution but undergoing a massive "acceleration" after the Second World War. To call a halt to this man-induced environmental degradation in the Anthropocene, the grand narrative tells us, we need to develop technologies allowing us to counter global warming by technologically manipulating the climate. The authors do a good job explaining to readers not at home in the scientific literature that there can be no doubt that anthropogenic climate change has produced, as they put it, "a new situation for humanity, a new human condition" (24). What is also clear is that something needs to be done if we want to avoid the complete depletion of our natural resources and, eventually, the annihilation of the human race. So what is wrong with the Anthropocene narrative? Why not put our trust in the scientists who are now offering new ways of optimizing the atmosphere through technology? While the authors are clearly appreciative of the accomplishments of climate science, which they outline in remarkable clarity, the red line running through *The Shock of the Anthropocene* is that the question as to how we should deal with an endangered environment is too encompassing to be completely delegated to scientists.

Concretely, the authors see two problems with the Anthropocene narrative as brought to us by the Earth Sciences. First, while it ostensibly displaces the modernization narrative, the "anthropocenists," as Bonneuil and Fressoz call the climate scientists, in fact reproduce that narrative by suggesting that we are living in an age of unprecedented environmental reflexivity. This narrative of environmental modernization is no less teleological and therefore no less of a "fable" (77) than the one it displaces. To be sure, our forebears did not have the same scientific tools as we do today to measure the transformation of the earth's ecosystems, but this does not mean that they were completely ignorant about the implications of environmental deterioration. Drawing on a vast array of historical sources and statistics, Bonneuil and Fressoz convincingly document that the idea of a sudden environmental awakening is a "scientistic illusion" (287). The second problem besetting the Anthropocene narrative is that, by discarding a long history of politically charged environmental debates, it serves to depoliticize that history, thus obscuring the institutional and moral blockages that have prevented us from managing the environment in a more sustainable fashion in spite of frequent warnings about the pernicious consequences of pollution, waste, and economic globalization. Rather than as a kind of ecological enlightenment, therefore, Bonneuil and Fressoz explain the onset of the Anthropocene in terms of the "schizophrenic nature of modernity" (197), which has allowed us to exploit the environment in full awareness of its devastating implications for the survival of humanity itself.

Provocatively, Bonneuil and Fressoz argue that the Anthropocene narrative is intimately tied up with the emergence of what they, by analogy with Michel Foucault's influential concept of biopower, call a new "geopower" (87ff.). In this case, we are no longer dealing with nation-states controlling their populations through public health policies, risk management, economic liberalism, and the like; instead, the entire biosphere has become an object of knowledge and governance. Rather than impartial

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scientific instruments, the technologies developed by the anthropocenists, such as geo-engineering and synthetic biology, embody this "nascent geopower" (91). It is no coincidence, the authors suggest, that some of these technologies were developed in a Cold War context to confront the threat of nuclear annihilation. Neither is it a coincidence that the anthropocenists like to invoke a market logic when proposing to "optimize" the climate or when computing the environmental "costs" in terms of biodiversity "credits." What this shows is that the dominant Anthropocene narrative has facilitated the construction of a new conception of nature derived from neoliberal economics. Where it once imposed natural constraints on unbridled economic development and growth, the environment has now become yet another commodity on the market, or as Bonneuil phrases it elsewhere, it has become "liquefied" (Bonneuil 2015).

The consequences of this naturalization of the market and attendant denaturalization of nature, the authors insist, are disastrous. In the free market logic of the green economy, poor territories and the weaker sections of the population will be hit hardest by environmental policies and conservation will become the privilege of the wealthy nations. Given this, should we not do away with the term Anthropocene, which after all literally means "the age of man" and thus displays the kind of scientific hubris that Bonneuil and Fressoz target in their critique? Rather than replacing a widely used term that in itself does not differentiate between more and less reflexive forms of modernization, the authors propose to create a more nuanced narrative of the Anthropocene that factors in the long history of class struggles obscured by the grand narrative of the scientists. The authors outline several "grammars" of environmental reflexivity drawn from domains such as medicine, psychology, natural history, chemistry, and thermodynamics – all of which reveal that the current understanding of the environment as a market subject to optimization is neither uncontested nor inevitable. The main task of the environmental historian, therefore, is to repoliticize ecological debates by drawing attention to the power dynamics inherent in environmental policies. By thus restoring the long history of environmental reflexivity, the authors at the same time hope to reground the humanities, which by turning away from the natural world and leaving it to the scientists have indirectly contributed to "the great separation between environment and society" (33).

It is to be hoped that Bonneuil and Fressoz's call for a rigorous environmental humanities to critically examine the geopolitical dimension of the Anthropocene will be picked up by academics in the English-speaking world. If the present reader is to list one point of criticism, it would have to be that the authors are so emphatic about the excesses of (mainly American) consumer society that they run the risk of creating their own grand narrative, which might in turn eclipse from view alternative perspectives. For instance, the rise of China as an economic giant is mentioned as a mere afterthought in a footnote (252, n. 100) to the chapter on the "Capitalocene," although a truly "global reading" (228) would probably require that we grapple with such state-driven capitalism if the analysis is to be more than a history of Western capitalism and colonial imposition alone. Similarly, given the divergent ecological footprints of some countries

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in the Global South, one wonders whether the "ecological gap" (250) between Western debtor and non-Western creditor nations is as straightforward as the book suggests. Finally, the authors' forceful critique of technocratic scientism might easily tip over into a paranoid distrust of an all-pervasive geopower that could serve to reify the division between the sciences and the humanities that they are so eager to dismantle. But, on the whole, *The Shock of the Anthropocene* constitutes a serious engagement with ongoing debates in the Earth Sciences as well as a crucial reminder that the solution to our ecological problems requires not just new technologies but also a public debate on how we deal with our threatened environment.

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Book review: Katarzyna Olga Beilin, *In Search of an Alternative Biopolitics: Anti-Bullfighting, Animality, and the Environment in Contemporary Spain* (Columbus: Ohio State UP: 2015), 389pp.

In this groundbreaking work, Katarzyna Olga Beilin demonstrates how the violence perpetrated amongst humans has its roots in humanity's attitude towards animals and the environment. The distance created by the human/animal divide is the first step at a discourse that permits those regarded as "animals" to be tortured or destroyed for our own ends. As these acts of violence are applied to humans and our environment, inevitably this destroys humankind, as well. Beilin examines bullfighting and its imbrication in a deadly Spanish national biopolitics as one cultural extension of the human/animal divide, drawing on Foucault and Agamben's theories of biopolitics and bare life, as well as interviews, performance theory, and ethnography. In contrast to the vast majority of studies on bullfighting by Hispanists and anthropologists, Beilin not only analyzes pro-bullfighting stances, but also engages with the discourses and efforts of the anti-bullfighting movement over the past two centuries, demonstrating the positive change that it has effected on society at large over time.

Beilin begins the work by demonstrating how the juxtaposition of human and animal is at the foundation of modern biopolitics in Spain. Specifically, Beilin analyzes the symbolic power of bullfighting and the arguments that have been advanced both for and against the practice. As a national feast, bullfighting figures centrally in debates on national identity, tradition, masculinity, love and death, and other topics that structure a state biopolitics as well as alternative discourses of resistance. Key to this is Achille Mbembe's concept of *necropolitics* which, when applied to the biopolitics of bullfighting, becomes a spirituality that connects eroticism to violence and sacrifice. Via linguistic and cultural frames, this rhetoric builds, maintains, and justifies oppressive regimes that kill and let die. This morbid spirituality has been a cornerstone of Spanish "difference" and claims of superiority over other cultures, a claim that carries with it deep contradictions: while on the one hand the bullfighter, and by extension the Spanish people, seem to be freer, able to confront death with courage, this actually animalizes them. Just as the bullfighter, in the dance of 'kill or be killed,' becomes "bare life" in the ring, so do the Spanish people, manipulated by the rhetoric of necropolitics and spirituality, sacrifice themselves for the elites in wars. Bullfighting is thus used as a tool to manipulate as well as to provide catharsis, in which the people take out their anger and frustrations on the bull, instead of seeking real social change.

Beilin demonstrates how Hispanism has been complicit in promoting this necropolitics of Spanish identity, beginning with the postwar Hispanists in exile, who, in addition to promoting the literature of the Generation of 27 and a love of the Republic,

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also spread the myth of Spanish exceptionalism based on the spirituality they believed emanated from bullfighting. Key to this is Federico García Lorca and his *El teoría y juego del duende* (1932). Beilin engages with well-known bullfighting enthusiasts such as Savater (*Tauroética,* 2011*)* and is refreshingly critical of Ortega y Gasset's rather weak and unsubstantiated pro-bullfighting stance. However, she dedicates most of the work to authors that have largely been ignored by Hispanism—the voices of resistance. Pablo Berger's 2011 *Blancanieves,* various films by Luis Buñuel, and Carlos Saura's *La caza* (1965); the writings of Eugenio Noel, Leopoldo Alas (Clarín) and Mariano José de Larra, are all included, as well as a chapter dedicated to an analysis of Luis Martin-Santos' *Tiempo de Silencio* (1962)*,* here classified as an anti-bullfighting novel. These intellectuals subvert the national biopolitical discourse and provide alternate metaphors that lead to transformation over time. Surprisingly, Pedro Almodóvar's attitude remains ambiguous in his film *Matador* (1986); while critical of the political discourse of bullfighting, he aestheticizes it to appeal to what he believes is Spanish taste, at a political moment in which Spanish intellectuals and politicians were trying to rehabilitate bullfighting for the young Spanish democracy. While Almodóvar ultimately attributes responsibility for the violence to the Spanish public who, in his view, want to see some good shows, the reality is that most Spaniards are not interested in bullfighting. As Beilin demonstrates, in an analysis of artistic representations of Alaska and Juan Gatti ("La verdad al desnudo: Tauromaquia es cruel") and Albert Riera's photograph "Eau de Toroture," Spanish 'taste' does not overall align with the violence that is aestheticized and sexualized in the biopolitics of bullfighting, nor with the violent masculinity that it promotes. This is further demonstrated in Beilin's discussion of performances by animal rights activists, such as the 2008-2011 "We are the Bull", featured on the book's cover; and the demonstrations in Madrid in 2011 on the International Day of Animal Rights. According to the author, these disruptive performances subvert the hegemonic national archive, and further cultivate an alternative national discourse which, while it may still seem isolated or uneventful, collectively creates an impact, as seen in the Canary Islands' ban on bullfighting in 1991, and Catalonia's in 2010.

The changes in Spanish society's attitude towards bullfighting are also evident in the connection that the public and intellectuals made between bullfighting, animalization, and the War on Terror. By analyzing press debates in Spain from 2004-11, Beilin demonstrates the rhetorical connection between torture (Abu Ghraib), the War on Terror, and bullfighting as a part of society's necropolitics—the animalization of an 'other' allows us to justify inhumane treatment of them, as a part of what is defined at the moment as a greater good. The playwright Juan Mayorga is keenly critical of this discourse in his 2007 play *La paz perpetua,* which was inspired by the infamous Abu Ghraib photographs. The separation that Kant referred to in his original "Perpetual Peace", between ethics and politics, is addressed by Mayorga as a form of structural hypocrisy inherent in our own democratic institutions, for we ultimately justify torture and war against those who are deemed to be like animals, insignificant, dangerous, or "bare life." Mayorga utilizes what Beilin has called a "strong anthropomorphism" in this

play and others, to connect the inhumane treatment of animals to that of marginalized groups—in particular, immigrants and those accused of terrorism, who are in turn animalized in our society.

The search for an alternative biopolitics and a bridging of the human/animal divide coincide with environmentalism, in which we construct not only a new relationship between ourselves and animals, but also humankind and our environment. Human greed and necropolitics have resulted in the destruction of our environment, the consequences of which are demonstrated in various ways in *Biutiful* (Iñárritu 2010), *Nocilla Experience* (Fernández Mallo 2008), and *Lágrimas en la lluvia* (Montero 2011). The tone of these works, which Beilin describes as a "disquieting realism," communicates an awareness of the destruction being wreaked on the Earth, our bodies, and our psyche. All three works gesture toward the possibility, however elusive, of an ethical coexistence. While *Nocilla Experience's* dark humor mediates the disquiet by suggesting that we "get extinct with a nocilla smile," *Lágrimas* suggests that we fight against the doxa, or programmed cultural codes, that lead us to violence and the destruction of animals, the environment, and ultimately ourselves.

In the final chapter, "Debates on GMOs in Spain and Rosa Montero's *Lágrimas en la lluvia*," cowritten with Sainath Suryanarayanan, the authors analyze debates on bio-technology in Spain and places them in the context of the history of Spanish discourses on science. Although Spain historically has had a reputation as less scientifically progressive, and even cultivated its own image as 'different,', today Spain is the most enthusiastic supporter of biotech in Europe. Ironically, as Beilin and Suryanarayanan argue, citing Jorge Reichmann, this repeats on some levels old patterns of subservience to authority and power, with neoliberal multinational corporations and scientists in their employ taking the place formerly held by the Church and the Monarchy. Just as Bruna Husky, the protagonist of Montero's novel, must resist her programmed behavior, so too must humans resist and question cultural codes and rhetoric. Against the prevailing enthusiasm for biotech, the authors advocate what they call a "precautionary approach" as part of an ethics of life.

The book encompasses exhaustive analyses of literature, press debates, and theatre; film, performances, and other forms of visual culture; interviews with activists and philosophers, as well as pop songs and ethnography. It is, further, a call to arms for Hispanic studies and the Humanities and Social Sciences in general. Instead of creating entertainments for the elites (personified by the elegant *verónica* of the bullfighter's cape), we must engage with each other and across disciplines in issues of real significance. While it is true that human civilization is built on dominance of the animal, Beilin suggests that we can change; just as our genes are plastic and malleable, reacting to changes in the environment, so too can we reform our sociopolitical structures by promoting and nurturing an alternative biopolitics that empathizes with all forms of life.

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Mission Statement

Ecozon@ is a journal devoted to the relatively new field of literary and cultural criticism called ecocriticism. Ecocriticism can be broadly defined as the study of the representations of nature in cultural texts, and of the relationship between humans with other earth beings and their environment as seen in cultural manifestations. *Ecozon@* is one of the very few academic journals specifically devoted to ecocriticism, an exponentially growing field, akin to the more recently developing area of environmental humanities, and the only one to accept submissions in several languages.

Its principal aim is to further the study, knowledge and public awareness of the connections and relationship between literature, culture and the environment. As a virtual space, it provides a site for dialogue between researchers, theorists, creative writers and artists concerned with and by the environment and its degradation. Its pages are open to contributions on all literatures and cultures, but its special mission is to reflect the cultural, linguistic and natural richness and diversity of the European continent.

Research contributions are subject to double-blind peer review, and are accepted in five languages (English, Spanish, French, German and Italian), in order to increase visibility and broaden the participation of scholars who are not part of the English-speaking world. *Ecozon@,* in addition to publishing original research articles, also publishes creative writing, visual arts and book reviews which are reviewed by the editorial board. Publication is open to scholars and creators interested in ecocriticism from around the world. We recommend membership of EASLCE to our contributors and readers, but it is not a requirement for either.

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